### NATURAL HISTORY:

#### Geographic Range:
- Europe ☐
- Asia ☐
- North America ☒
- Neotropical ☒
- Africa ☐
- Australia ☐
- Other Click here to enter text.

#### Habitat:
- Forest ☐
- Desert ☒
- Grassland ☒
- Coastal ☐
- Riverine ☐
- Montane ☐
- Other Steppes, prairies with short vegetation

#### Circadian Cycle:
- Diurnal ☒
- Crepuscular ☒
- Nocturnal ☐
- Other More nocturnal in the winter and diurnal in summer.

#### Cold Tolerance:
- To 70° F ☐
- To 60° F ☐
- To 50° F ☐
- To 40° F ☐
- To 30° F ☐
- To 20° F ☒
- Other Have been kept outdoors to -15 with access to heated areas.

#### Heat Tolerance:
- To 30° F ☐
- To 50° F ☐
- To 70° F ☐
- To 90° F ☐
- To 110° F ☒
- Other Click here to enter text.

#### Diet:
- Frugivore ☐
- Carnivore ☒
- Piscivore ☐
- Insectivore ☐
- Nectivore ☐
- Omnivore ☐
- Folivore ☐
- Other (Add Below) ☐

#### Captive Dietary Needs:
Adult need 15.5 +/- 1.86 kcal/day; 1 adult mouse/day is most common diet for an adult owl.
**Species Fact Sheets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Expectancy in the Wild:</th>
<th>Males: 6-8 years</th>
<th>Females: 6-8 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy in Captivity:</td>
<td>Males: 7.5 years (records 16+)</td>
<td>Females: 7.5 years (records 14+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BREEDING INFORMATION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at Sexual Maturity:</th>
<th>Males: 1 year (record 9 mn)</th>
<th>Females: 1 year (record 10 mn)</th>
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**Courtship Displays:**
The female will move towards or away from the calling male at the start of copulatory behavior. The male will then stop calling, stand and look down at the female with white patches exposed and feathers raised. The female will stand erect with exposed white patches. The male will then fly to the female and mount her, giving the primary call with or without the male warble and may terminate with a tweeter call. The male flaps his wings while mounted, probably for balance. He may scratch the female’s head and both may bill nip. Copulation lasts 4 - 6 seconds and is done 1 - 3 times per evening.

**Nest Site Description:**
In the wild, burrow sizes and shapes are dependent upon the species that first excavated them. All burrows have at least one turn to keep the nest chamber in darkness and a mound of soil at the entrance. The tunnel and nest chamber are lined with shredded cow or horse dung throughout most of the breeding season. Satellite burrows may be used by adults and chicks for protection from inclement weather or predators. A simple artificial burrow that has been successfully used in the wild consists of a plastic irrigation valve box (48cmx35cmx27cm) and 10 cm diameter perforated flexible plastic pipe. In captivity, wooden boxes, plastic coolers and valve boxes have all been used successfully. A removable top is recommended.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:**
The burrowing owl has the largest clutch size of any North American raptor, laying up to 12 eggs. The eggs are white when laid but soon become covered with flea excrement. Median clutch size in captivity is 2 (mean size is 2.7) although unhatched eggs are normally not reported.

**Incubation Period:** 28-30 days

**Fledgling Period:** 30 days

**Parental Care:**
The female alone incubates the eggs. In some areas, incubation starts after the first egg is laid while in others, it does not begin until the clutch is complete. During this period, the male feeds the female during the early morning and evening and stays within 250 m of the nest burrow during the day. During brooding, the adult male supplies all the food for the female and chicks. The female will start hunting as the young become less dependent. If the female dies, males of the western race may feed the chicks. Males in Florida have never been seen feeding chicks.
Chick Development: Burrowing owl chicks are altricial, weigh approximately 8.9 grams upon hatching and are partially covered with down. The eyes open on day 5 when the chicks also start exhibiting evasive behavior and producing the rattlesnake buzz when the nest is disturbed. On day 9, the egg tooth sloughs off. The chicks first emerge from the burrow at 10 - 21 days of age and stay cautiously near the entrance. After one week they can be seen running about flapping their wings but still stay close to the burrow. Four weeks after emergence they can fly well but remain within 50 m of the burrow. At this time they are foraging independently. By 8 - 9 weeks of age, the chicks are gathering the majority of their own food. Ten week old owlets are not easily distinguished from adults.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Burrowing owls have three types of social groupings: solitary birds, one breeding pair and a concentration of birds. Colonies consist of 9 -19 birds and there is no complex social order. Colonies break up after the chicks are grown and the owls become nomadic. Migrants are solitary during the winter.

Social Structure in Captivity: Most institutions house 1.1 adults. If 2 adult males are housed together, they tend to set up separate territories and do not interact – if the exhibit is not large enough, aggression will occur.

Minimum Group Size: 2

Maximum Group Size: 2 + offspring under 8 months of age

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes

Comments: Compatible with a wide variety of other bird species; turtles and small mammals. Most problems encountered are when the owls are breeding and/or have chicks.

Optimal Habitat Size: Successful breeding has occurred in a wide variety of habitat sizes.

Management Challenges: There are several non-AZA facilities that would like to join the SSP but USFWS law prohibits AZA facilities from transferring burrowing owls to these institutions.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Burrowing owls do make good tractable animals and the SSP has not been negatively affected when birds are taken from the breeding population for use in education programming,
## REFERENCES:


### COMPLETED BY:

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