



Burrowing Owls Printable Reading Comprehension

Word Count: 232 | Lexile 750

The burrowing owl is a small, long-legged bird that lives in open areas such as grasslands, deserts, and farms. Unlike most owls, it is active during the day as well as at night. Its name comes from its unusual habit of living in burrows underground, often ones dug by prairie dogs or ground squirrels.

Burrowing owls are easy to recognize. They stand only about ten inches tall, with bright yellow eyes and a short tail. Instead of nesting in trees, they line their underground homes with grass, feathers, or even bits of animal fur. Families of owls may live together in loose colonies, with several burrows close to one another.

These owls eat insects, small mammals, and reptiles. They hunt by swooping down from perches or chasing prey on the ground. Because they help control insect and rodent populations, they play an important role in their ecosystems. However, burrowing owls face threats from habitat loss and from the decline of prairie dog colonies. Conservation groups work to protect open land and encourage safe spaces for these unusual birds.

Watching a burrowing owl can be a surprise. Instead of hiding in trees, it may pop its head out of a hole in the ground. With its curious stare and quick movements, this little owl shows that big personalities can come in small packages.

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1. What makes burrowing owls different from most owls?

- A. They nest in tall trees.
- B. They hunt only at night.
- C. They live in underground burrows.
- D. They eat only insects.

2. Where are burrowing owls usually found?

- A. Grasslands, deserts, and farms
- B. Rainforests and jungles
- C. Arctic tundra
- D. Coastal beaches

3. How do burrowing owls help their ecosystems?

- A. By nesting in colonies
- B. By controlling insect and rodent populations
- C. By digging new burrows for other animals
- D. By planting seeds underground

4. What is one threat to burrowing owls?

- A. Too many insects
- B. Cold weather
- C. Predators like coyotes
- D. Habitat loss and decline of prairie dogs

5. Why might people enjoy seeing burrowing owls?

- A. They pop out of burrows and act curious
- B. They soar high above cliffs
- C. They gather in huge flocks
- D. They can mimic other bird calls

6. Which sentence best states the *main idea* of the passage?

- A. Burrowing owls are unusual birds that live underground and play an important role in their environment.
- B. Burrowing owls live in colonies and eat small animals.
- C. Burrowing owls are endangered and need protection.
- D. Burrowing owls are the smallest owls in North America.

7. What can you infer about why conservation groups focus on protecting prairie dog colonies?

- A. Prairie dogs are a main food source for the owls.
- B. Prairie dogs provide burrows that burrowing owls rely on for shelter.
- C. Prairie dogs scare away the owls' predators.
- D. Prairie dogs and owls compete for the same food.

Answer Sheet

1. C

2. A

3. B

4. D

5. A

6. A

7. B