

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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CTUIR, Owl Research Institute Install Livestream Camera for Burrowing Owls

HERMISTON – The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Owl Research Institute (ORI) and Explore.org recently installed a livestreaming camera at the former Umatilla Army Depot to watch burrowing owls that nest there.

Lindsay Chiono, CTUIR Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Program habitat ecologist-biologist, said she along with ORI and Explore.org staff installed the camera outside a burrowing owl nest on April 7 for public outreach and education.

“People, including me, are excited at the opportunity to observe burrowing owl behavior that is usually hidden from view such as pair bonding and hunting,” she said. “Education is a critical element of conservation and species recovery. Naturally, people care most about the species they know about. The live video stream is a form of that education. It offers us a window into the owls’ lives, allowing us to watch the owls going about their business without being disturbed by our physical presence.”

The live feed can be viewed at <https://explore.org/livecams/owl-research-institute/burrowing-owls>, including at night thanks to infrared capabilities.

“The site we selected hosts two artificial burrows,” she said. “Typically, an owl pair nests in one burrow and stores food in the other. The site we selected has a good long-term track record. That is to say owls nest in it in most years, and most nests are successful with a relatively high average number of fledglings. The site has been used for nine years and hosted successful nests. It has produced chicks that reached fledgling age in seven of those years.”

Although there is only one camera currently, which is powered by solar panels installed for the project, Chiono said there may be opportunities to add cameras in the future.

She added that much of the land at the former depot is being transferred into CTUIR ownership with plans to rename it to *Papuumí Tanawtpamá Tičám*, which means “home of the burrowing owls” in the Umatilla language.

Burrowing owls are culturally important to the CTUIR, Chiono said, as there are traditional songs and stories about them.

“Unfortunately, burrowing owl populations are declining throughout the species’ range, and the owl is a conservation priority wildlife species from Canada to Mexico,” she said. “The primary causes of the owl’s decline are habitat loss through conversion to agriculture and other uses. The elimination of burrowing mammals like badgers, which construct the burrows in which the owls live, and pesticide use, which affects prey populations. Owls primarily feed on rodents and insects.”

DNR has conducted a burrowing owl project since 2008 that includes approximately 100 artificial burrow sites. Chiono said the project has grown from four nesting pairs in 2008 to more than 100 that produced about 400 nestlings in 2025.

The ORI, based in Charlo, Montana, is dedicated to owl conservation through research and education. For more information, visit www.owlresearchinstitute.org. Explore.org is a philanthropic live nature camera network and documentary film channel. For more information, visit <https://explore.org>.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: Two burrowing owls stand outside their burrow at the former Umatilla Army Depot near Hermiston. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Owl Research Institute and Explore.org recently installed a livestreaming camera to watch burrowing owls that nest on the property. This shot was recorded at night thanks to the camera’s infrared capabilities. EXPLORE.ORG

Caption2: A livestreaming camera is placed near two burrowing owl nests at the former Umatilla Army Depot near Hermiston. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Owl Research Institute and Explore.org placed the camera there for public outreach and education. The livestream can be viewed at <https://explore.org/livecams/owl-research-institute/burrowing-owls>. EXPLORE.ORG

Caption3: Denver Holt, Owl Research Institute founder and president, stands next to Lindsay Chiono, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Program habitat ecologist-biologist, after helping install a livestreaming camera near two burrowing owl nests at the former Umatilla Army Depot near Hermiston. EXPLORE.ORG