

OWLS IN DANGER!

FAST FACTS

Name: Burrowing owl, sometimes known as ground owl
 Size: pigeon-sized
 Colour: sandy brown, to blend in with prairie habitat
 Hallmark: long bare legs; makes a hissing sound when cornered
 Habitat: open prairie
 Behaviour: hunts during the day and at dusk; scurries into nest hole if frightened
 Number in Canada: about 2700 pairs
 Status: threatened



Gerrn Oliver

BROOKS, ALTA. July 1986:

Bulldozers rumbled at the edge of a pasture. Their job was to level the land so that irrigation pipes could be installed. A few hundred feet away, in the path of the huge machines, eight young burrowing owls huddled around the entrance to their underground nest. The work crew foreman spotted the owls just

in time. He signalled the bulldozers to stop. As he approached to investigate, the young owls bolted into their underground home. No matter what the foreman did, he couldn't coax the frightened birds out again. Fortunately for the owl family, the foreman had read about a World

Wildlife-sponsored research project on burrowing owls in the area. He called researcher Colin Weir and asked for help.

Weir arrived with a shovel and carefully dug deep into the owls' nest. The terrified young owls hissed as he got close to them. One by one he gently lifted the owls out and moved them to new nest sites, where they would be raised by owl foster parents.



Leahon Mann



Operation Lifeline

Tim Beatty, of Sunbury Shores Nature Centre in St. Andrews, N.B., recently spoke to Natural History Society members about the work he does with right whales in the Bay of Fundy. As if that work isn't enough to keep him busy, Tim also wears another hat. He has managed to introduce a project into the N.B. school system that may find its way to Prince Edward Island before too long. Operation Lifeline, sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund, the Canadian Nature Federation and Canada Life, helps students learn about conservation. The main thrust

behind the project is endangered species and, although suitable for anywhere from grade 1 to 10, is used primarily in grades 4, 5 and 6. It is not just used in science class, but also English, mathematics, geography, etc. The heart of the project is the Operation Lifeline Kit, available in both English and French, which costs \$15. A teacher would use one kit - that is the only investment, and in N.B. groups such as the New Brunswick Naturalists and 4-H have purchased them for schools in their areas. Representatives from the Natural History Society, Island Nature Trust, Conservation Strategy and the School Board talked with Tim about what the project involved, and how it has worked for him. In N.B., 245 classes use the kit and each teacher has a person in the area (for example someone from a local naturalists club) to act as resource person, so that a teacher is not just given the kit and forced to find all the answers to questions that may arise. Some kits are already available here, and the NHS has decided to purchase six more (two in French) and give them to teachers who have an interest already in conservation. Their feedback will help determine if it is worthwhile to introduce them into the system as a whole.