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Burrowing owls enjoy new home



SCOTT ARTIS/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BURROWING OWL CONSERVATION NETWORK

A pair of burrowing owls are happily making their winter home in a new habitat built in the Baylands by Sears Point by a couple dozen volunteers last weekend.

The project, hosted by SonomaBirding.com, the Burrowing Owl Conservation Network and Sonoma Land Trust, built four artificial habitats for the burrowing owl. The owls used to be a regular fixture in the Sonoma Valley but ceased breeding in the area more than 20 years ago for unknown reasons. The organizations are hoping that building an ideal habitat on protected land owned by the Sonoma Land Trust will encourage the birds to colonize the area.

School children built two habitats in the area over the summer, and volunteers learned last weekend that two burrowing owls had moved into the space.

"They just sat out and watched us for five hours while we worked," said Tom Rusert of SonomaBirding.com.

Rusert said as soon as people left the immediate area, the birds hopped over to inspect their new digs, and quickly decided to stay.

