

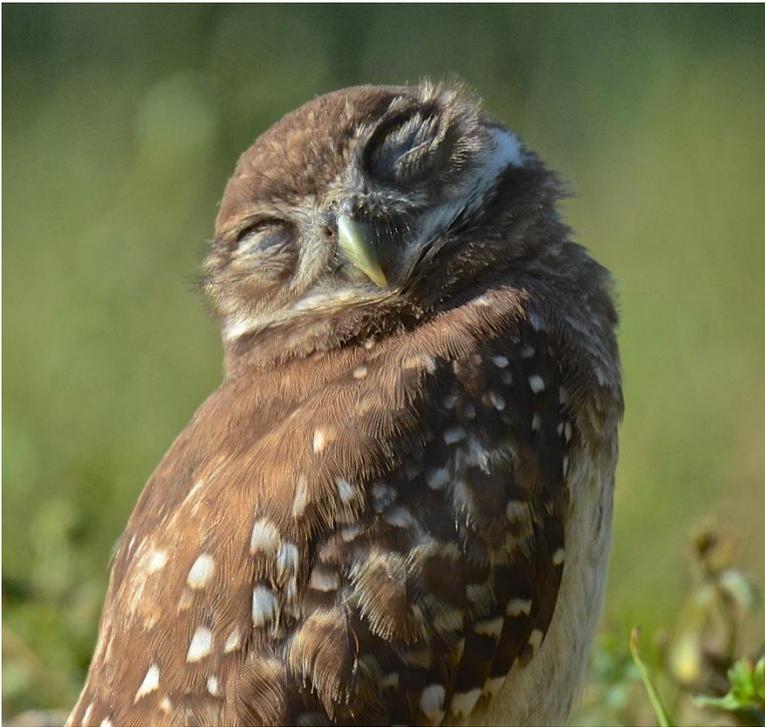
Project Perch's mission is to protect and nurture the Burrowing Owl in SE Florida.
A real life HOOT, join now!



Project Perch's BuOw Blog 23

Friday, August 14, 2015

Ethical Photography – Please Don't Love Us to Death



Sleepy Owlet

Susan Faulkner Davis submitted this photograph and article to The Nature Conservancy's "the New Wild" digital photo contest. She won an honorable mention. There is a "People's Choice Award" with this competition and it will be awarded by popular vote. She hoped it would be another way to get some traction for these little ones. We all voted for Susan's entry. This is her article:

"As evening approached, I had been photographing a family of 5 Florida Burrowing owls at Vista View Park in Davie, Florida. This little owlet sat apart from his family, atop the burrow, blissfully enjoying the sinking sun and approaching coolness. I photograph Florida's threatened and endangered birds, finding great joy in capturing them in peaceful and introspective moments. Florida has designated these pint sized raptors as a "Species of Special Concern". Their populations have decreased as human development has changed the face of Florida. Once at home in the vast central Florida prairies, they are now increasingly found in South Florida instead. As

forests are cleared and wetlands are filled to make way for humans, owls find their "wide open spaces" in parks, airports, schools, golf courses and the vacant lots of suburbia.

Once part of the Everglades, Vista View Park was originally "developed" as a landfill. Now it is a 272 acre park (monitored by the EPA), surrounded by ever growing suburbs, and provides habitat for a number of Florida Burrowing owl families. The owls dig their burrows along bike and jogging paths and at the edge of soccer and model airplane fields. The open land and the two small ponds within the park provide the insects and frogs to feed their growing families.

This year the park owls have been on the verge of being loved to death. A local photographer camped beside the roped off burrow areas for hours and days at a time, baiting the owls to make them more camera friendly. A video he captured went viral (millions of social media hits) and soon flocks of humans and photographers descended on the park crowding around the burrows at the end of nesting season. This whole drama led to a long overdue look at and conversation about what constitutes ethical behavior for a wildlife photographer. It also made park staff realize they need more protection in place for these increasingly threatened little raptors, especially during the vulnerable breeding/nesting season."

Thank you to Susan for her beautiful pictures and for raising awareness about ethical photography.

Sources:

Faulkner Davis, Susan. 2015. Personal Correspondence.