

From: [Gerry McChesney](#)
To: [Cosier, Susan](#)
Subject: Re: Farallones in Audubon
Date: 12/08/2011 08:59 AM

Susan,

My sincere apologies for taking so long getting back to you. The Farallon biologist is correct, it is Burrowing Owls, not Barn Owls, that prey on the storm-petrels on the Farallon Islands. The Burrowing Owls are migrants that arrive on the Farallones in the fall months when the non-native house mouse population is at an annual peak level. Instead of continuing on their southbound migration like most landbirds that show up at the Farallones do, many owls remain through the fall and winter, feeding on the smorgasborg of mice. During winter, the mouse population crashes and mice are no longer available in high numbers to owls. In late winter and early spring when storm-petrels are arriving back at the island to begin courtship and nest site prospecting, the owls switch to feeding largely on storm-petrels until the owls either die or leave the island to head back to the breeding grounds.

Barn Owls occasionally stop at the island but typically don't stay very long. They do feed on small seabirds, such as Cassin's Auklets, and may occasionally take a storm-petrel (although we haven't documented that at the Farallones), but not nearly in the numbers that the Burrowing Owls do.

Thank you for printing the correction.

Gerry

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cc

10/20/2011 12:57 PM

Subject Farallones in Audubon

Hi Gerry,

I hope that you're doing well. We spoke this summer about a piece I wrote for our September-October issue (the story as it was published is attached in a word document). We received a letter from a Farrallon program biologist regarding the story, and he said that burrowing owls, not barn owls, are an issue on the Farrallones, and that although barn owls occur once in a while, they don't feed on the storm-petrels. Originally I had written that burrowing owls ate mice, but that was changed in fact checking. Can you tell me which one is correct? If the published piece was wrong, we'll make the change when we put the piece on our website and write a retraction. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Susan

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