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# **Habitat Hospitality: Managing for Barn Owls**



# Overview

- Barn Owl Ecology
- Habitat needs
- Specific management practices
  - Habitat improvement
  - Nest boxes





# Barn Owl Life History

- Cinnamon upper, heart-shaped face, light underparts
- Raspy scream
- Open habitat (agricultural land, early successional, grasslands)
- Prey on small mammals, occasionally small birds
- Nest in rock outcrops, ledges, tree cavities, various human structures
  - Regurgitated pellets



# Barred Owl

- Stockier body
- Heavy barring on wings and back
- Grayish-brown, round face
- Varied vocal repertoire
- More riparian and woodland habitat
- Much more of a generalist





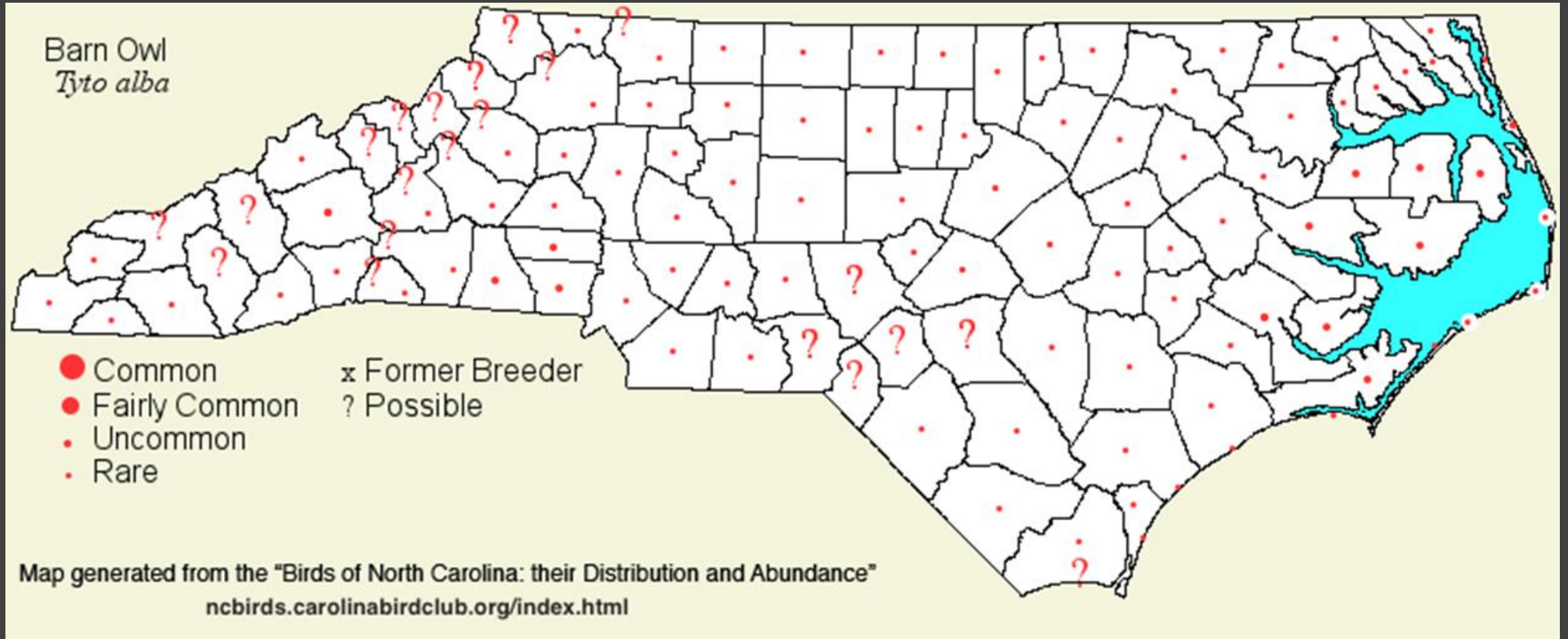
# Barn Owl Nests

- 2-18 eggs, average 4-6
- 1-3 broods
- Primarily Spring brooding; evidence of Fall nesting too
- Incubate for 29-34 days
- Fledge after 50-55 days
- Find their own home range at 13-14 weeks old

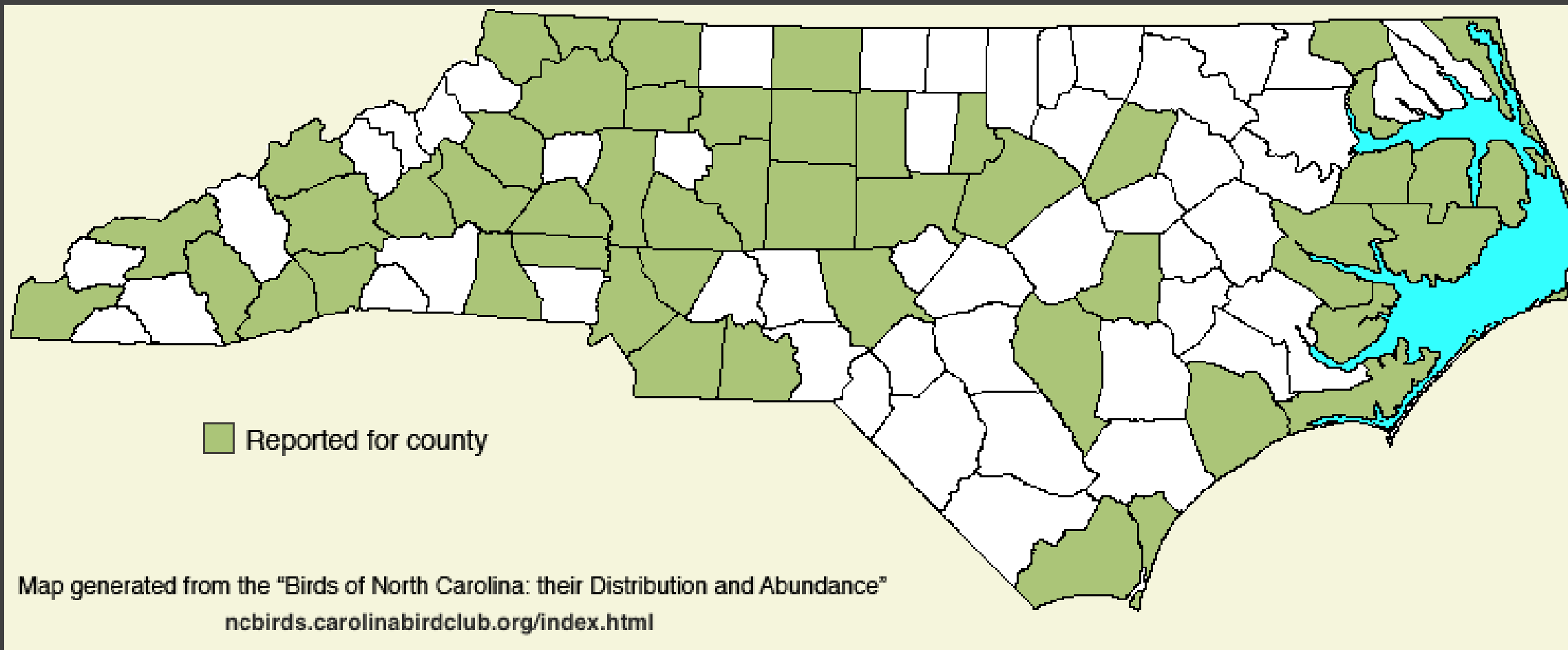






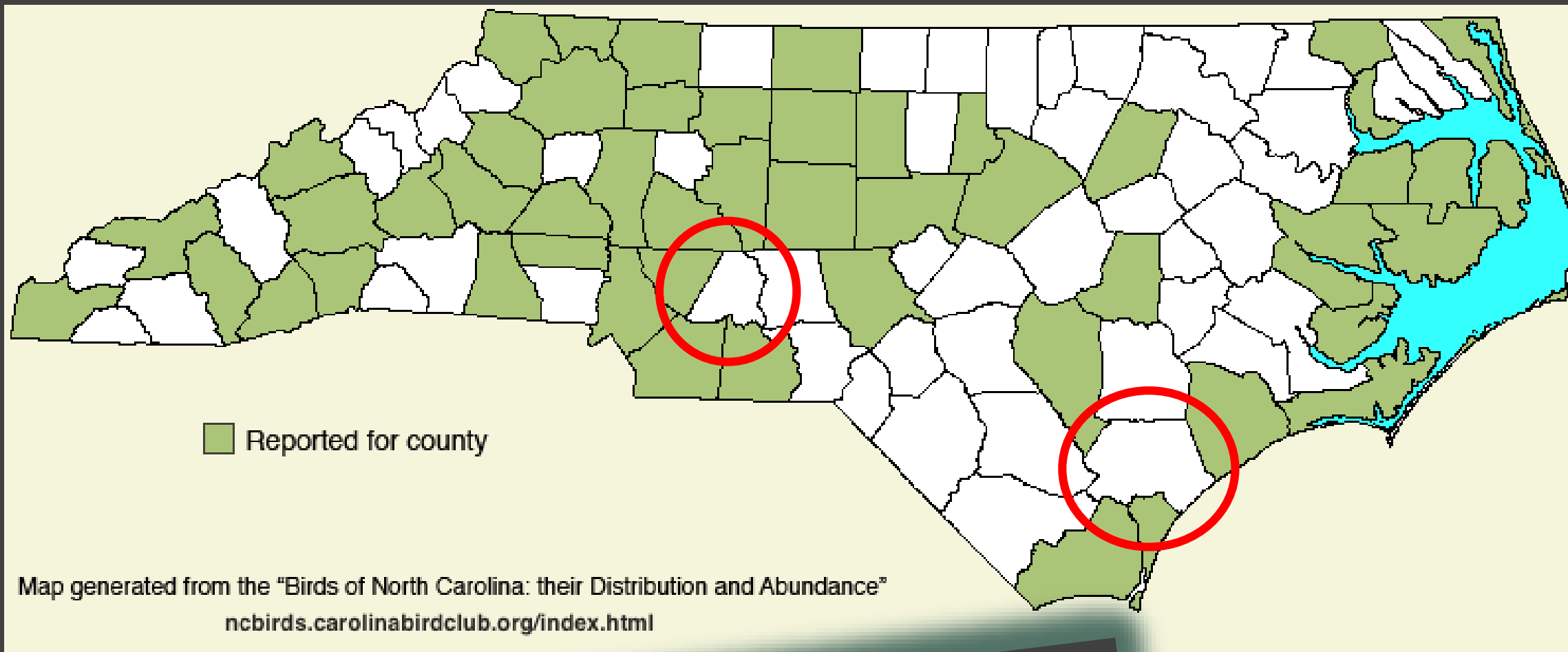


# Barn Owls in North Carolina



# Barn Owls in North Carolina





Barn **INCOMPLETE!** Carolina



# Can Barn Owls be Lured to Your Property?

Maybe.



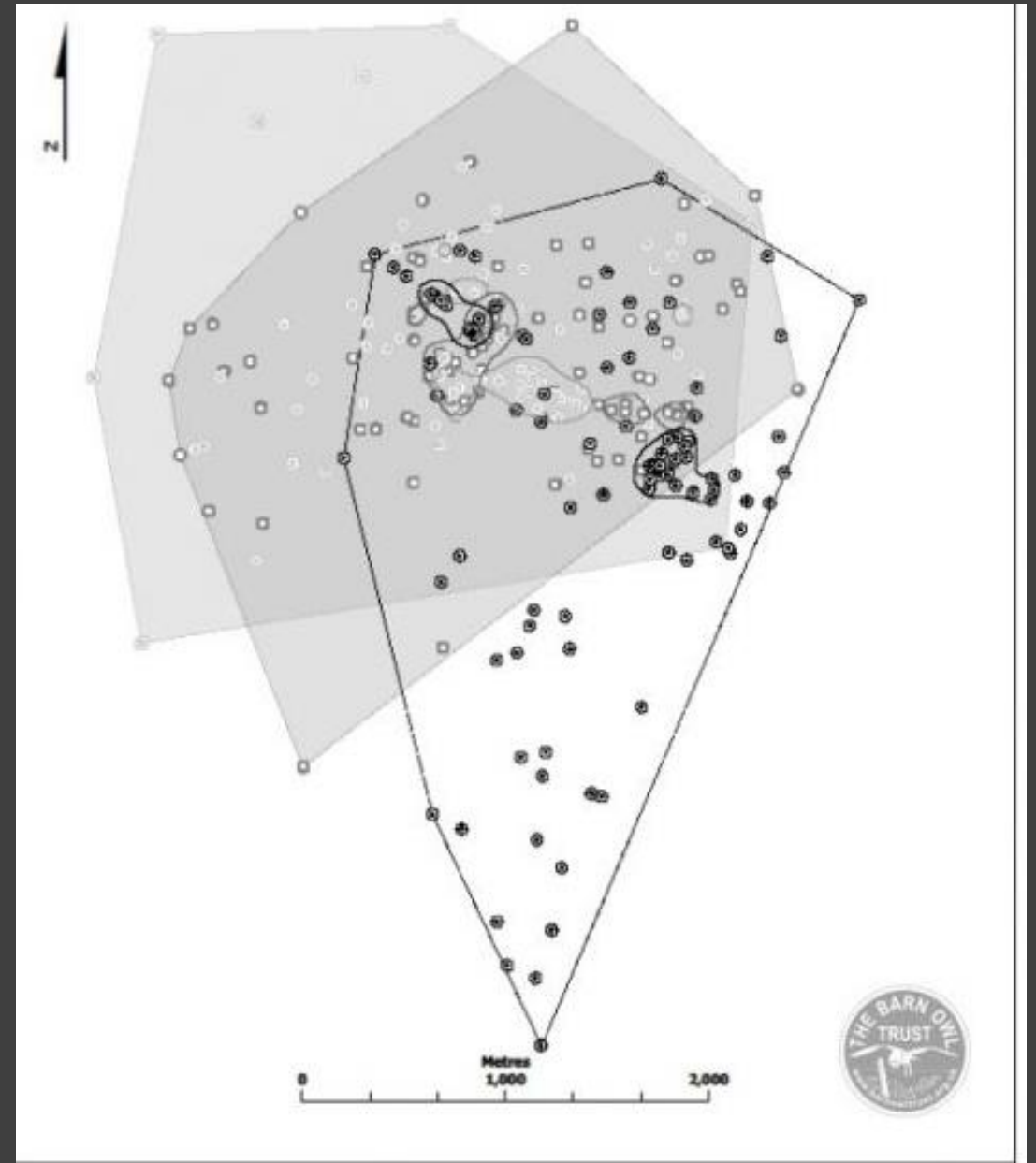
# Barn Owl-Friendly Habitat Management

- Food
- Water
- Cover
- Nesting habitat
- Management provides mutual benefits for many other species



# Home Ranges

- Summer home ranges of **740 acres**
- Winter ranges up to **12,300 acres**
- Include 1-2 nest sites, 1-3 main roost sites, and sites visited occasionally
- Overlap with other Barn Owls
- Stay in one home range its entire life

















# Early Successional Habitat

- Most trees have been removed
- Disturbance suppresses tree growth
  - Rx fire, disking, herbicide application, mowing
- Abandoned farm fields, clearcuts, field borders, savannas, prairies, and meadows
- Mix of grasses, forbs, legumes, wildflowers, vines, shrubs, and saplings
- Habitat is managed for vegetation beneficial to wildlife

# Habitat Management Tools

- Manage for deer
  - Food plots
  - Early Successional habitat
  - Fire or other disturbance
- Limit pesticide/rodenticide use
- Provide nesting habitat







# Signs of Barn Owl Roosting

- Whitewash
- Pellets
- Feathers
- See a Barn Owl



# Isenhour Nest Box

- Designed by John Isenhour, NCWRC
- Made to more closely mimic size of structures owls were choosing
- Made from 250-gal IBC tote on wooden base











# Interior Nest Boxes

- Much smaller footprint
- Easier to install
- Plywood construction
- Plans available online
- Less weather tight
- Prevent predator intrusion







# NCWRC Barn Owl Project

- Properties awaiting nest box installation
- Monitoring nest boxes
- Always looking for new BNOW sites
- Banding Juveniles
- GPS tag to see where juveniles disperse
- Nest box temp and light sensors





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