



# **EXPERIMENTING WITH METHODOLOGIES FOR RELEASING CAPTIVE RAISED GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKENS INTO THE WILD**

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# Nebraska 2015







## **GPC RELEASE - PREPARATIONS, METHODS, MONITORING**

- **Raise in 'natural' environment from young age**
- **Feed natural food**
- **Limit human interaction**
- **Acclimate for ~2 weeks at release site**
- **Release near wild birds (existing booming grounds)**
- **Return to original gene pool**
- **40,000 acre ranch without hunting**
- **Track to monitor survival**
- **Compare with wild resident young-of-the-year**



# **Poults were kept in 30m x 100m flight pens at Sutton Center's Oklahoma breeding facility**





# Minimized contact with 'shrouded' humans





## Catch wild young-of-the year to compare survival



*Night lighting crew: Dan Lipp, Dr John Toepfer, Brandon Gibson*







# **RADIOED BIRDS**

## **Wild-caught 2017**

13 females

6 males

## **Captive raised**

### **2017**

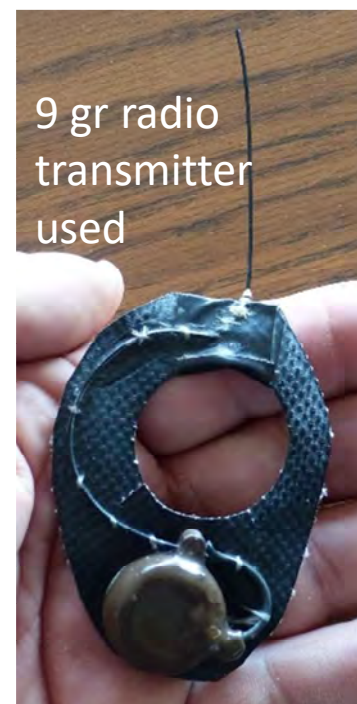
27 females

21 males

### **2018**

26 females

29 males





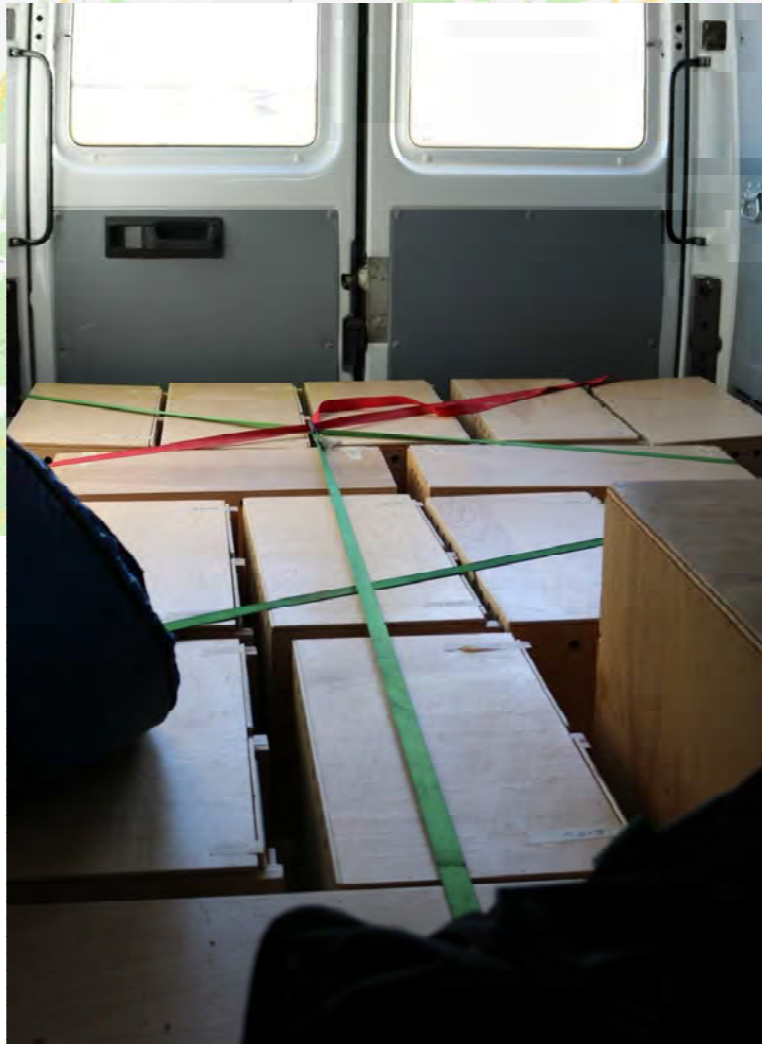
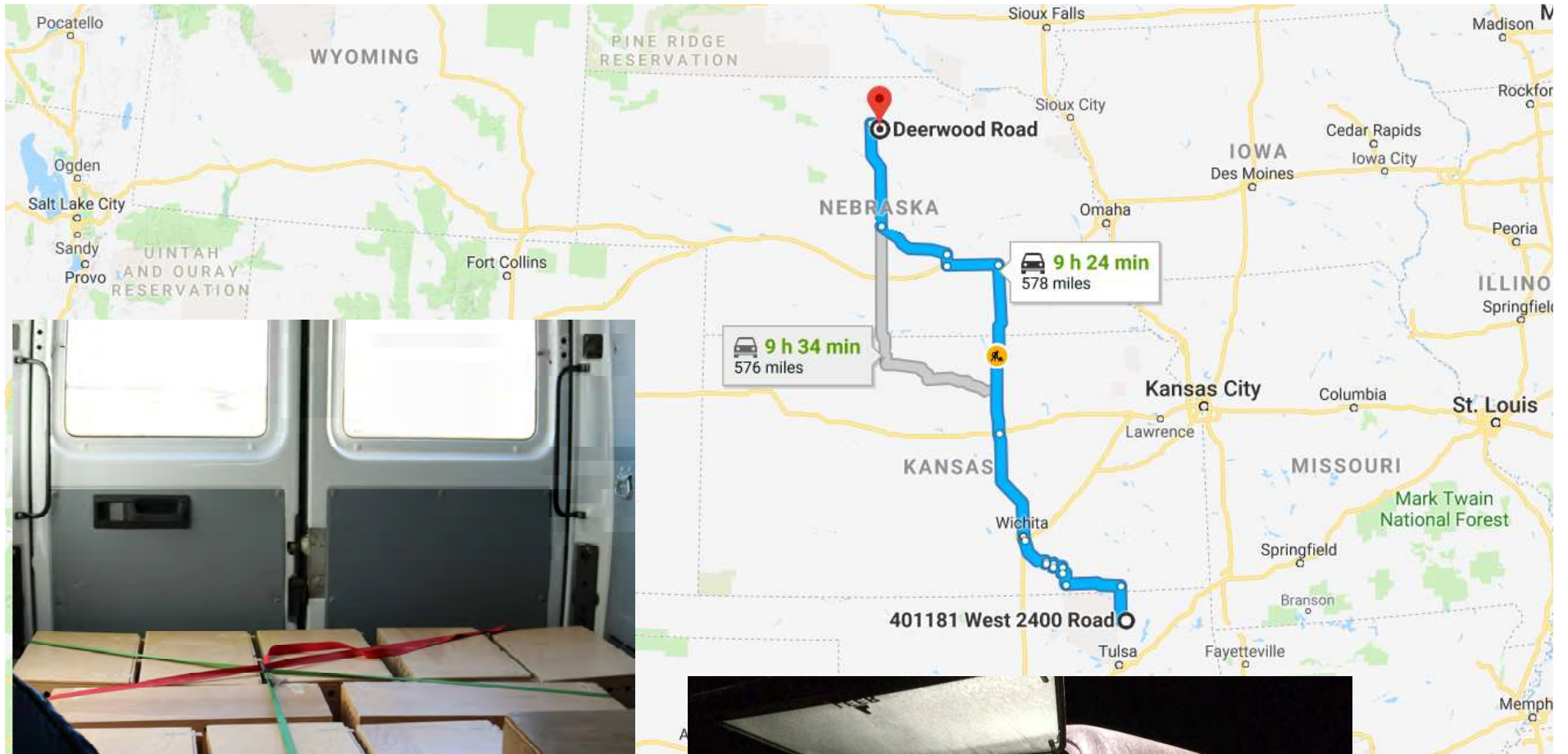
## Acclimation pens for soft release of prairie-chickens



























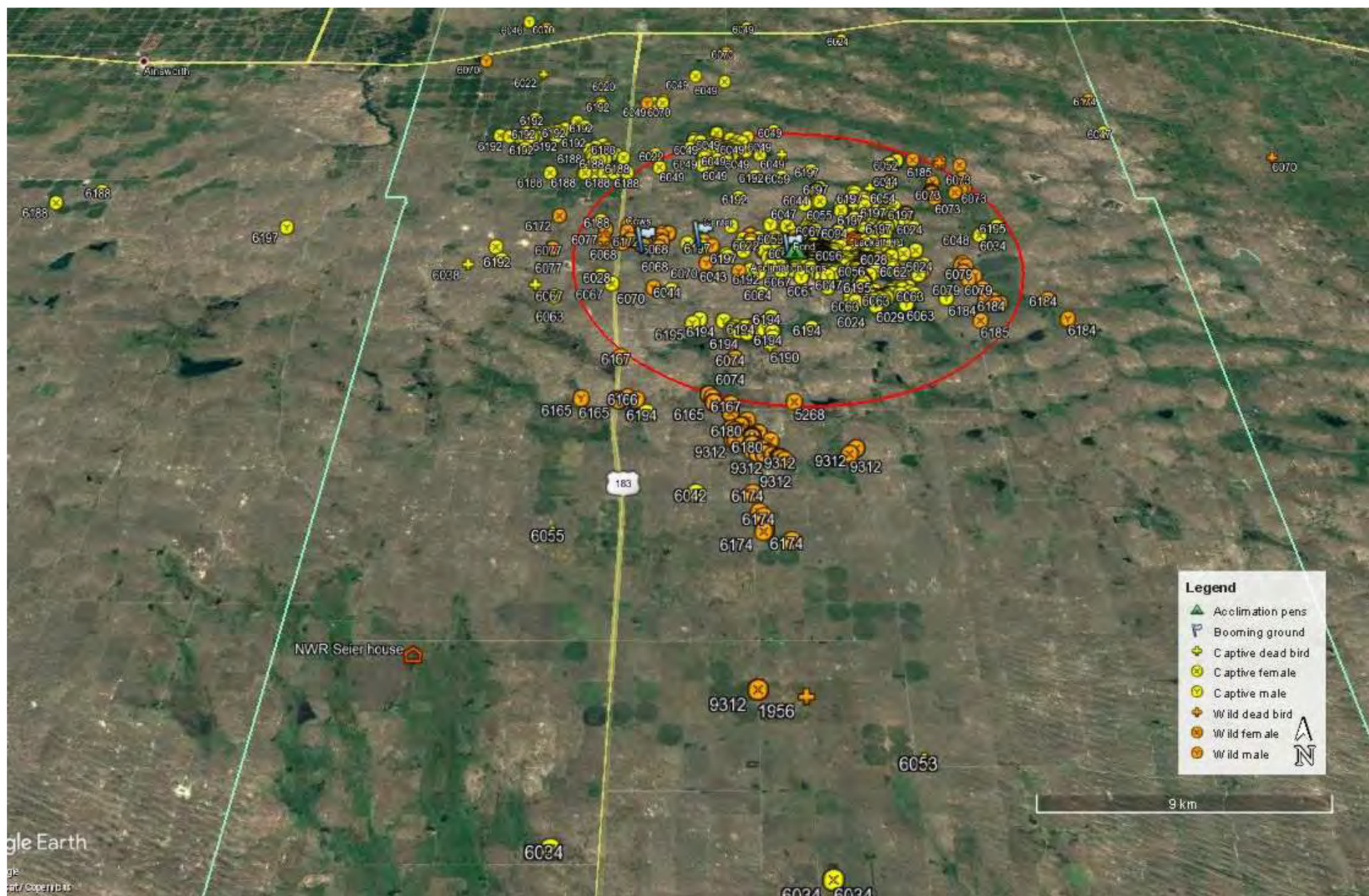




Wild and released prairie-chickens on top of acclimation pens

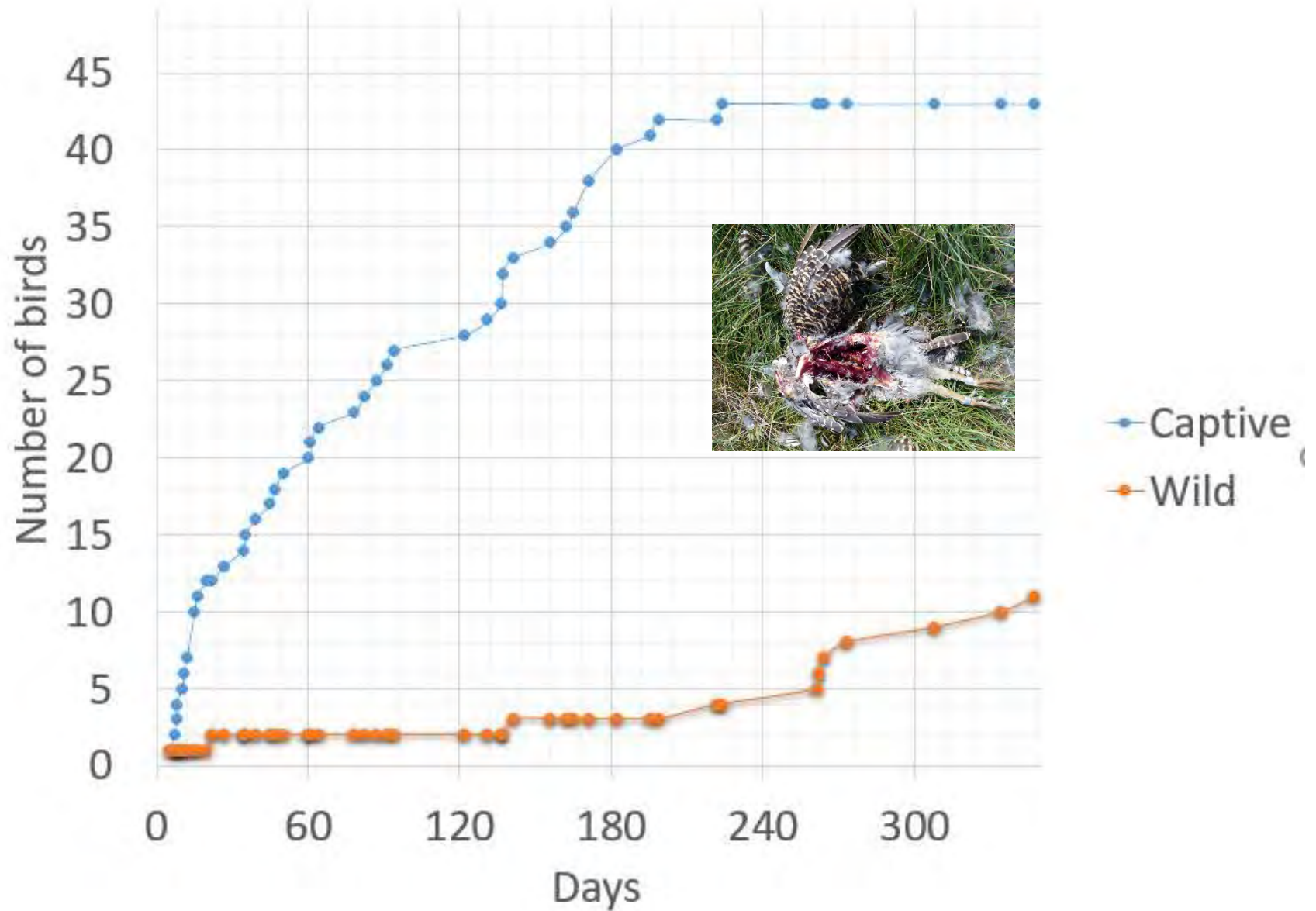




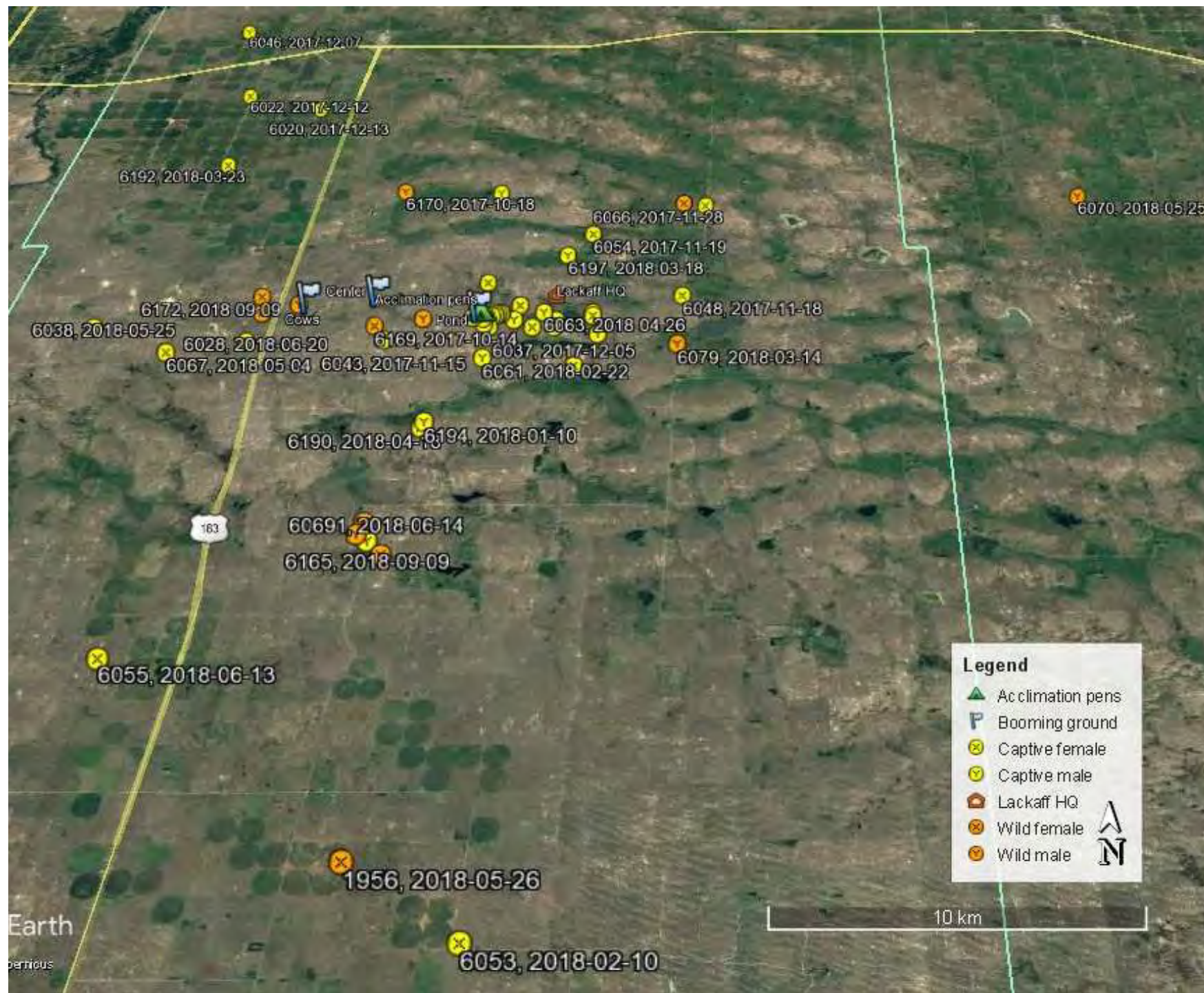




# CUMULATIVE MORTALITY









**Fate and mortality causes of  
young-of-the-year  
greater prairie-chickens  
Oct 2017-September 2018  
tracked in Rock County, Nebraska**



<b>Fate</b>	<b>Wild</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Captive raised</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Alive</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Unknown cause</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Mammal</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Failed transmitter</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Raptor</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Intact</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

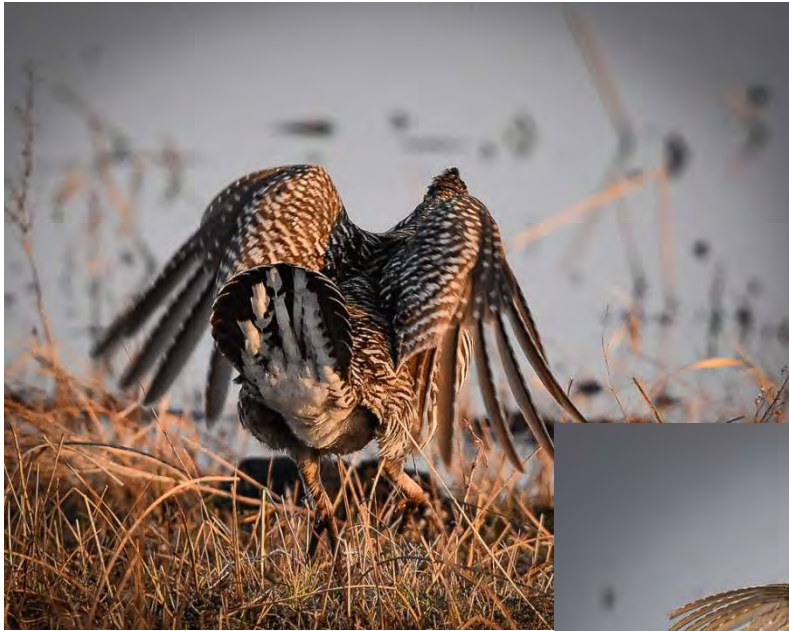


## Historical mortality causes of prairie-chickens and pheasants in Wisconsin

	Wild GPC	Wild GPC	Released GPC Pheasants*	
Years	1996-2000	1972-1974	1974-1976	
<i>n</i>	713	52	32	
Mammal	24%	25%	47%	58%
Raptor	55%	50%	38%	24%
Wire	7%	2%	0%	
Other/unknown	15%	23%	15%	18%

\*(Dumke/Pils 1973)

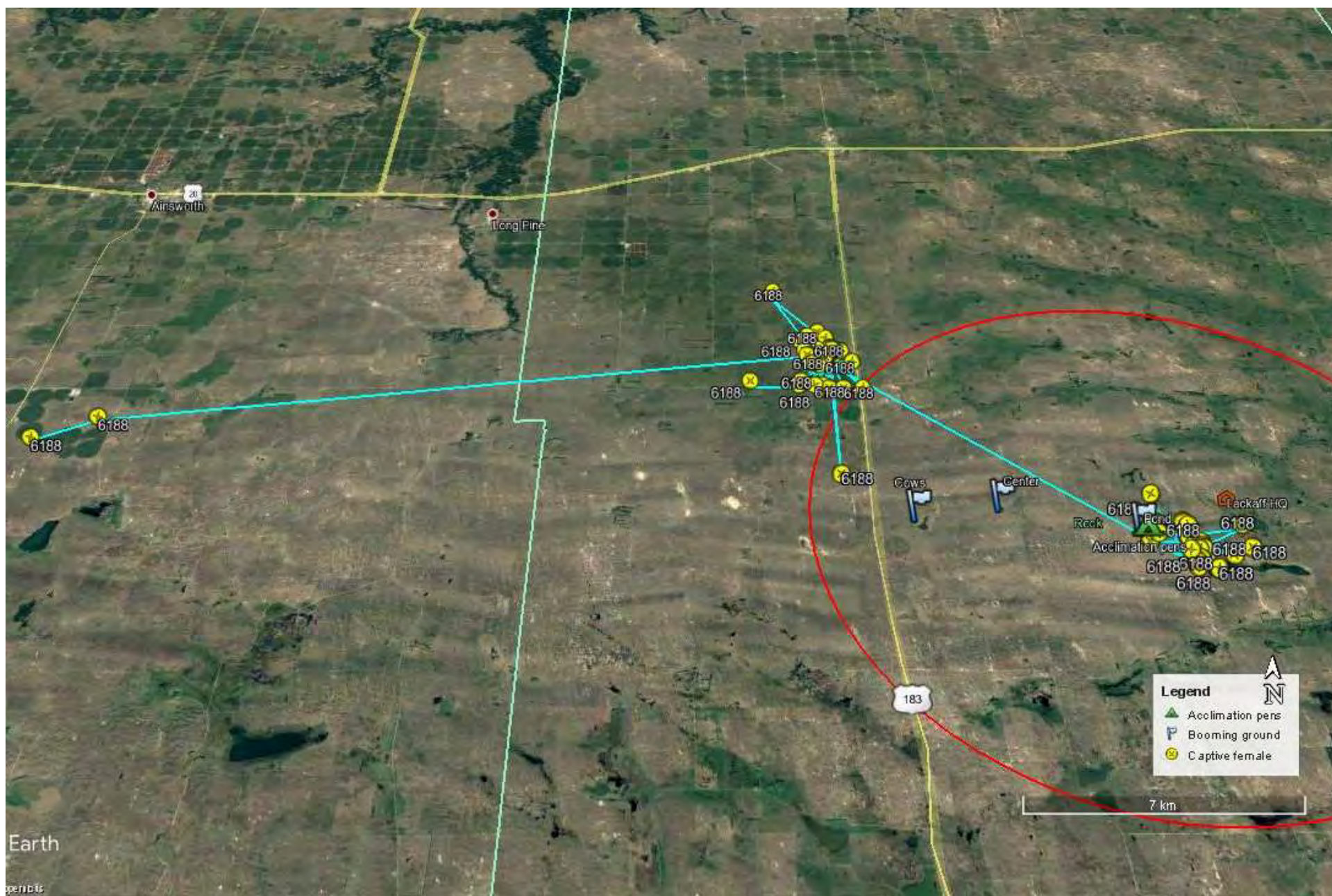




April 22, 2018









# RESULTS FOR RELEASED BIRDS

**Males active on booming grounds, but did not survive past breeding season. Five females nested. Confirmed one with 8 fledged offspring.**



*Nest by captive released hen*



*Photo: Steve Oehlenschlager*



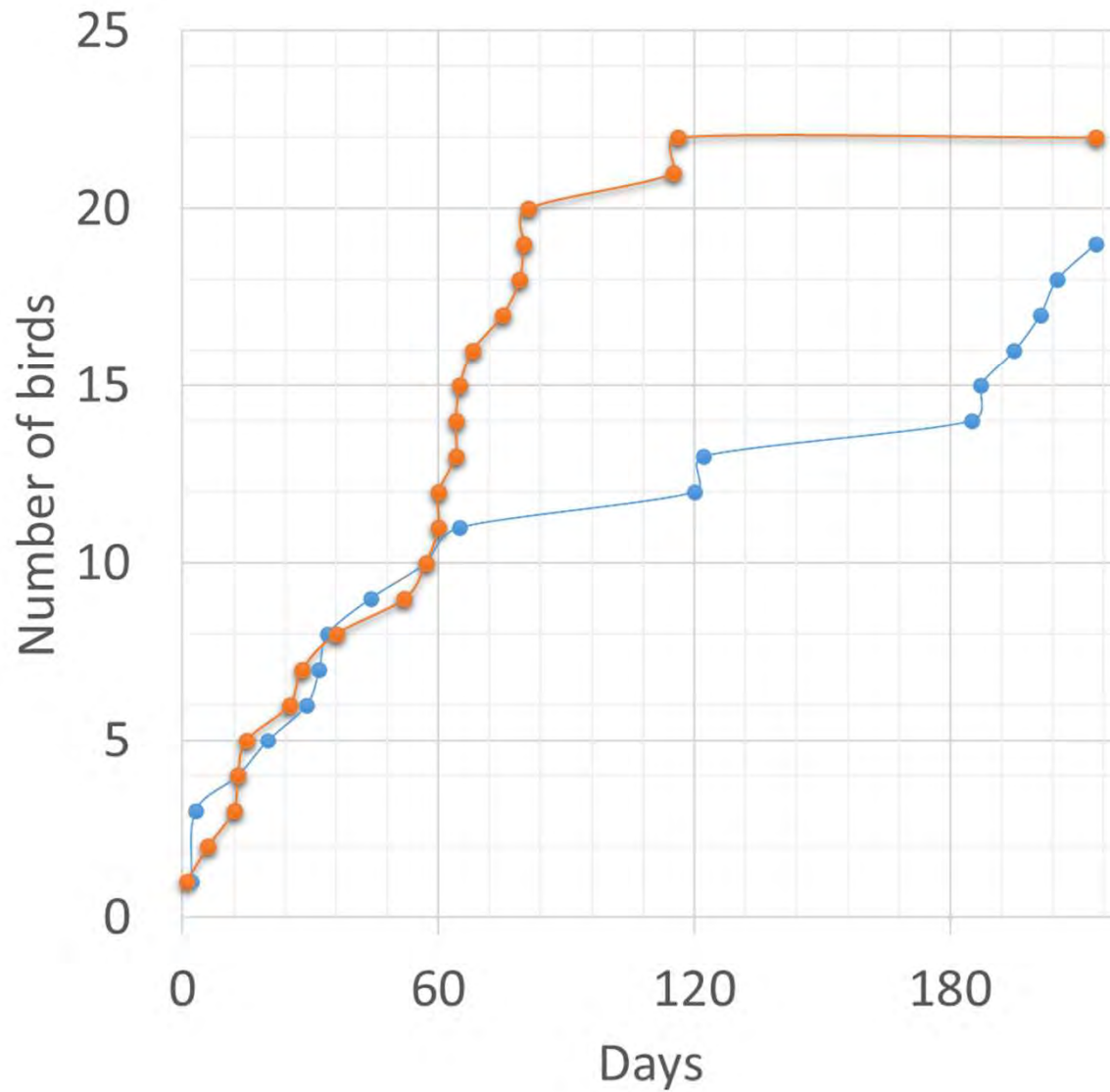


***Fall 2018: compare survival of earlier release***

*Photo: Steve Oehlenschlager*



# CUMULATIVE MORTALITY 2018 RELEASE



- 1st Release (9/16/18)
- 2nd Release (11/11/18)



***“We get by with help from our friends.”  
Thank you to so many!***



**MBZ Species Conservation Fund  
National Fish and Wildlife  
Foundation  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Emirates Center for Wildlife  
Propagation  
Attwater Prairie-chicken National  
Wildlife Refuge  
Attwater's Prairie-chicken  
Recovery Team  
Friends of the Attwater PC Refuge  
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center  
Houston Zoo  
Caldwell Zoo  
Nebraska Game and Parks  
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Sutton board and staff  
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