

Update on American Oystercatcher Breeding Distribution and Population Estimate in North Carolina

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Methods

- Conducted in conjunction with this year's colonial waterbird surveys and piping plover surveys (from late April – mid June)
- Covered barrier island beaches and estuarine islands
- Counted all pairs and individual birds
- Large effort by biologists from several agencies and organizations (NCWRC, NC Audubon, NPS, USFWS)

General Description of Coast

- NC's coastline extends approximately 311 miles from VA to SC
- NC has distinct northern and southern regions
 - North of Cape Lookout characterized by large back barrier sounds and long barrier islands with few inlets
 - South of Cape Lookout characterized by small back barrier sounds and short barrier islands with numerous inlets
- From Morehead City south is a chain of dredge islands created during the construction on the AIWW in the 1930s
- Groups of dredge islands also clustered around inlets and in the Cape Fear River
- Shell rakes present along estuaries south of Morehead City

2007 Survey Results

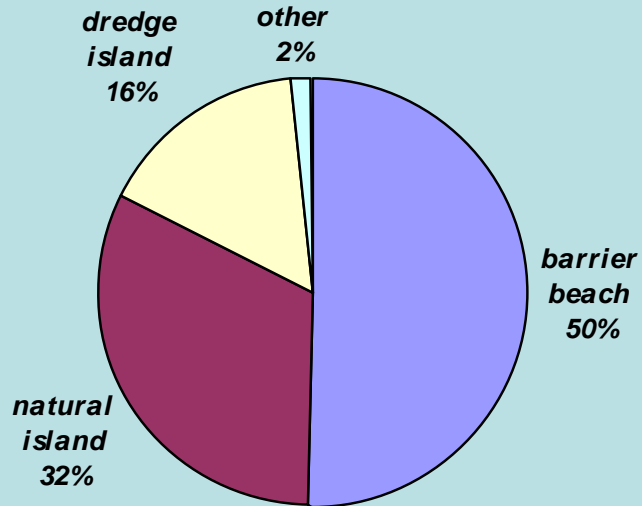
- A total of 717 birds counted
 - 339 pairs (318 territorial pairs, 21 non-territorial pairs)
 - 39 individuals (including flock of sub-adults at mouth of Shallotte River)

American Oystercatcher Population Estimates, 2004 and 2007

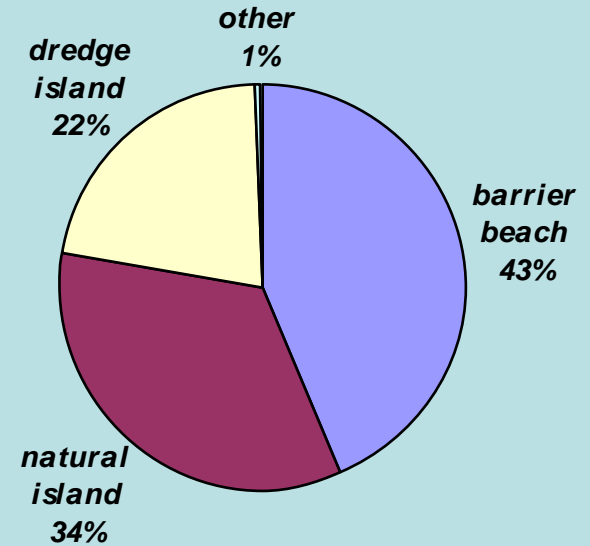
Year	# Pairs	# Singles	Total Birds
2004	337	27	701
2007	339	39	717

American Oystercatcher Distribution by Habitat

2004

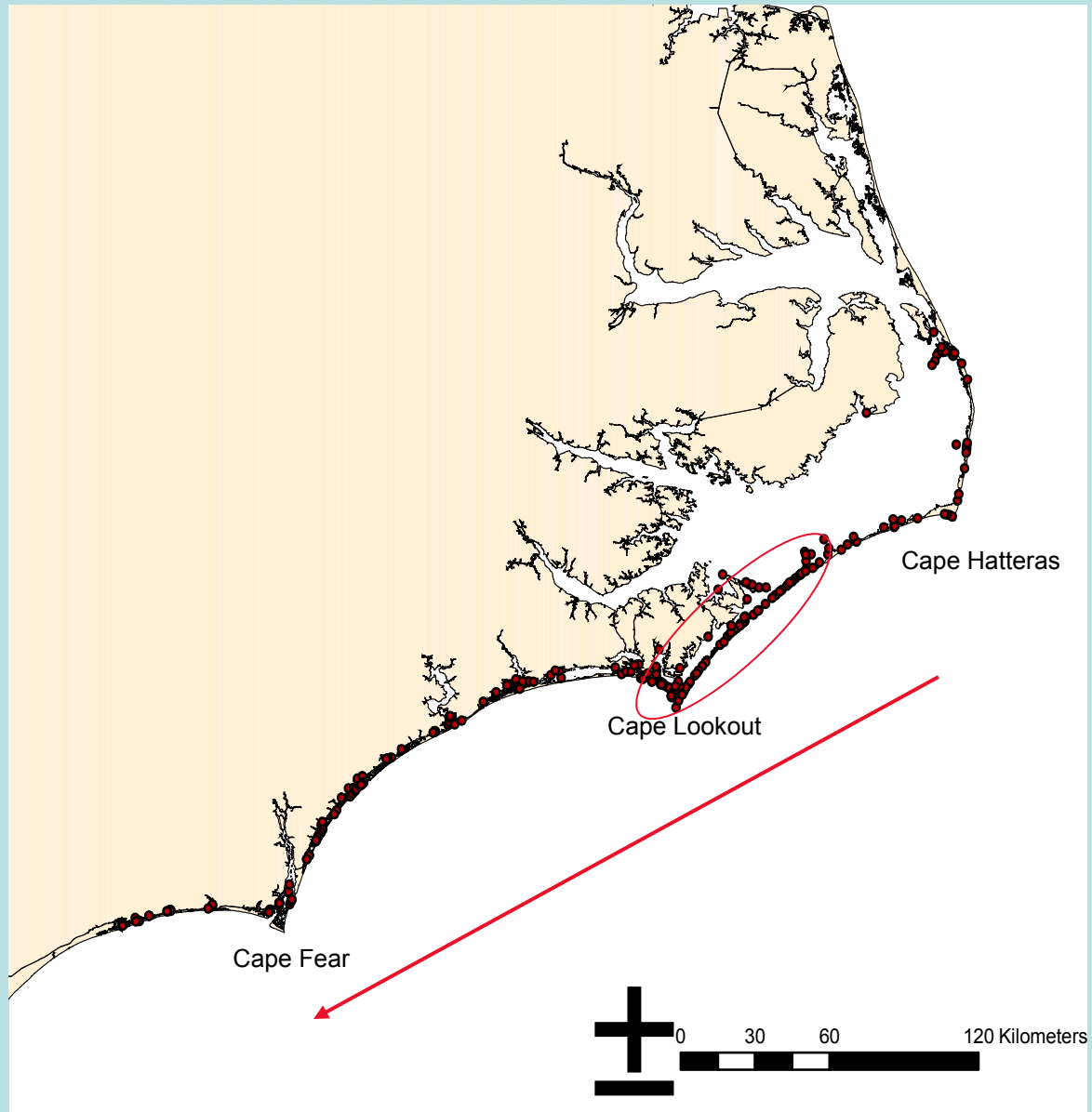


2007

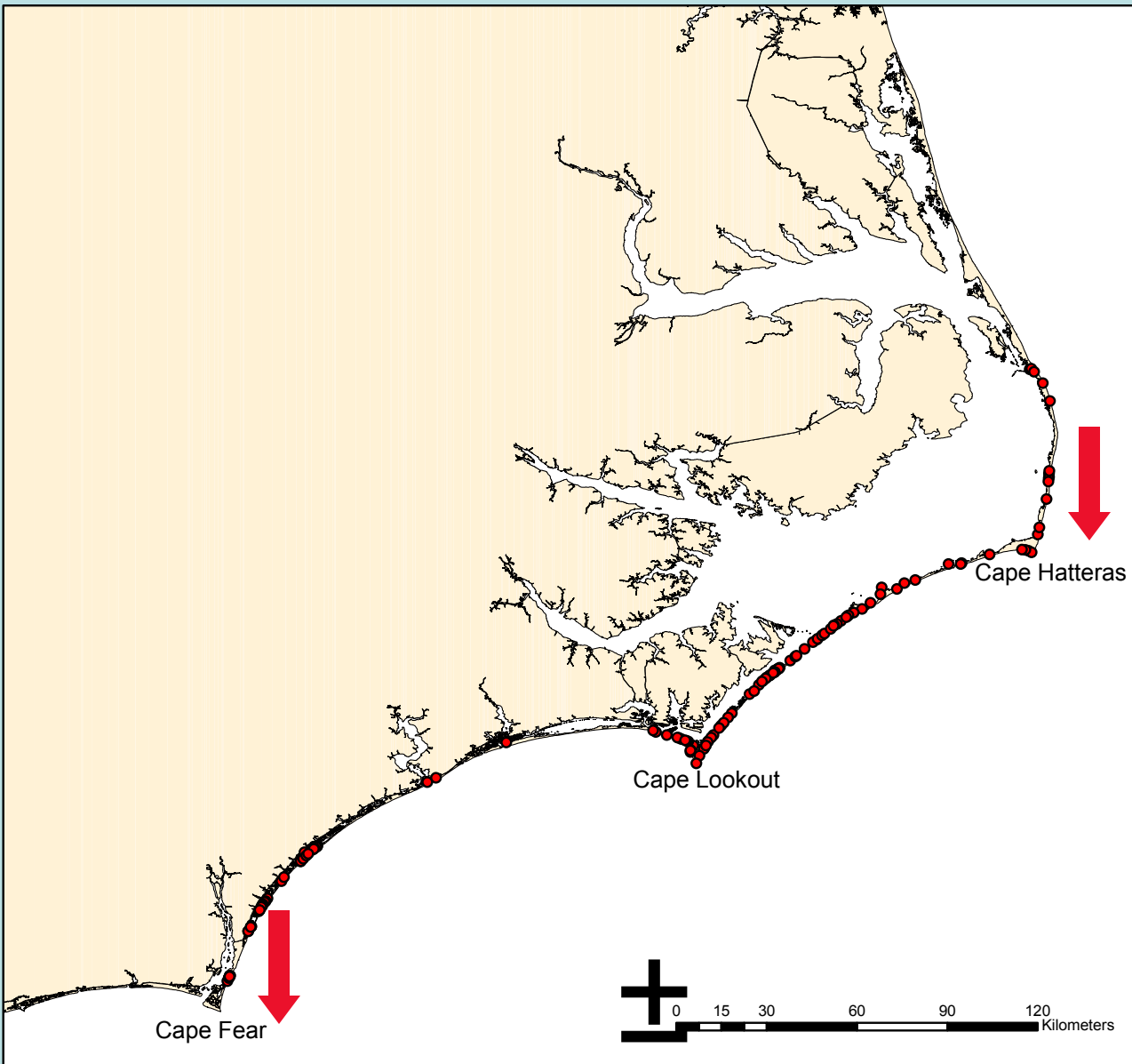


Distribution

- Majority found from Carteret Co. South
- 40% on remaining undeveloped barrier islands with nearly 20% on Cape Lookout National Seashore
- Concentrated near inlets



Distribution on Barrier Islands



Bodie Island		2
Hatteras Island	CHNS	20
Ocracoke Island		7
North Core Banks		19
Middle Core Banks	CLNS	13
South Core Banks		22
Shackleford Banks		10
Bogue Banks		1
Bear Island		0
Onslow Beach		2
Topsail Island		0
Lea/Hutaff Island		12
Figure 8 Island		3
Wrightsville Beach		4
Masonboro Island		15
Ft. Fisher/Bald Head Island		8
Oak Island		0
Holden Beach		0
Ocean Isle		0
Sunset Beach		0
<i>Total</i>		<i>138</i>

Masonboro Is.



Ft. Fisher SRA



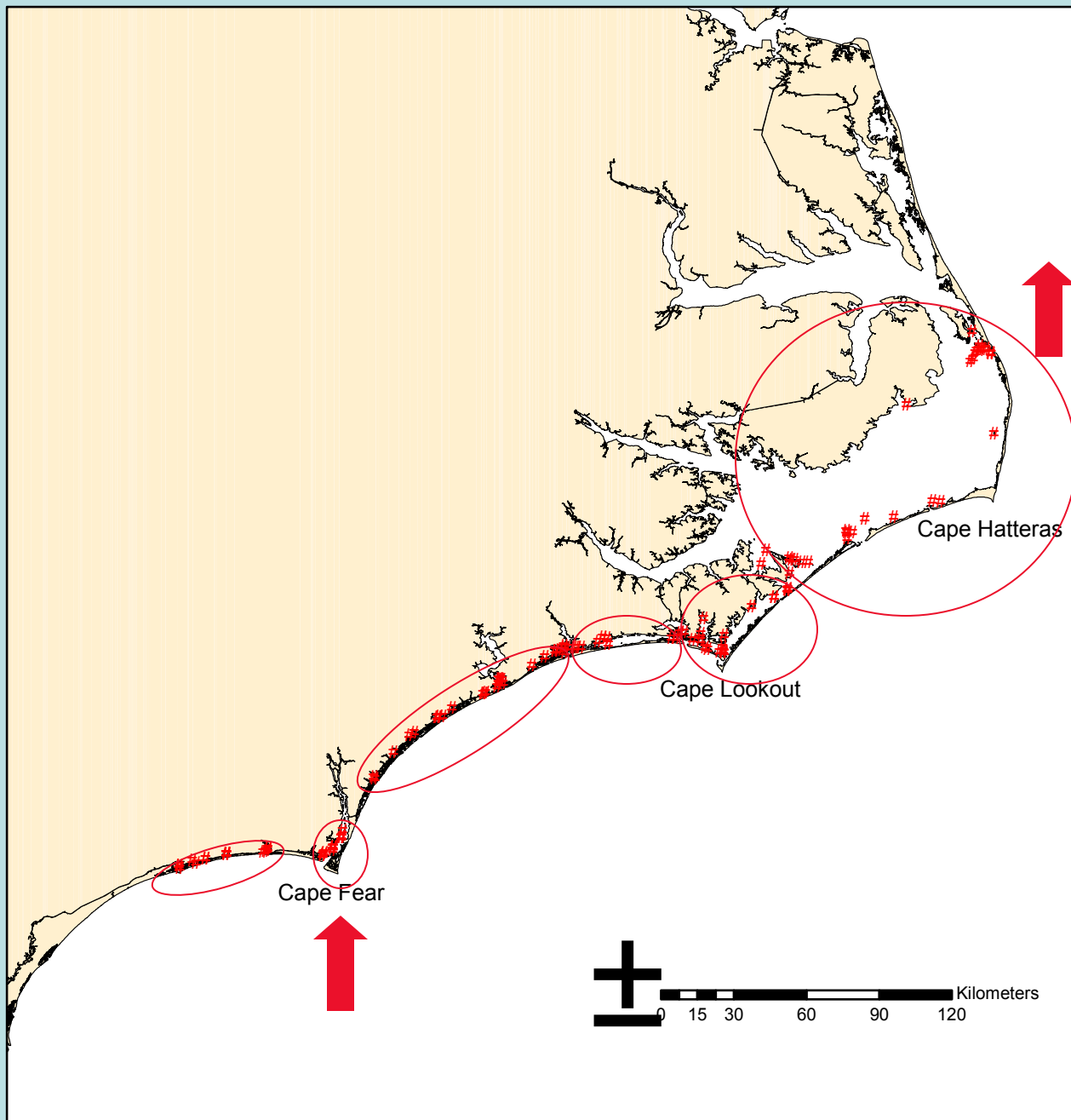
Declines as Masonboro Is. and Ft. Fisher State Recreation Area

- human disturbance, mammalian predators
- birds done nesting by 1st week in June

Predator Control at State Parks/NERRs Sites

- Camera monitoring @ Ft. Fisher
- Possible management next year

Distribution on Estuarine Islands



Pamlico/Croatan Sound	41
Core/Back Sound	32
Bogue Sound	21
AIWW Onslow - Pender Co.	31
Cape Fear River	37
AIWW Brunswick County	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>177</i>

Future Work

- Repeat coast-wide surveys every three years so can begin assessing state-wide trends in abundance and distribution
- Continue habitat management
 - Barrier islands
 - Improve quality of habitat
 - Work with towns to minimize/mitigate impacts of beach stabilization projects

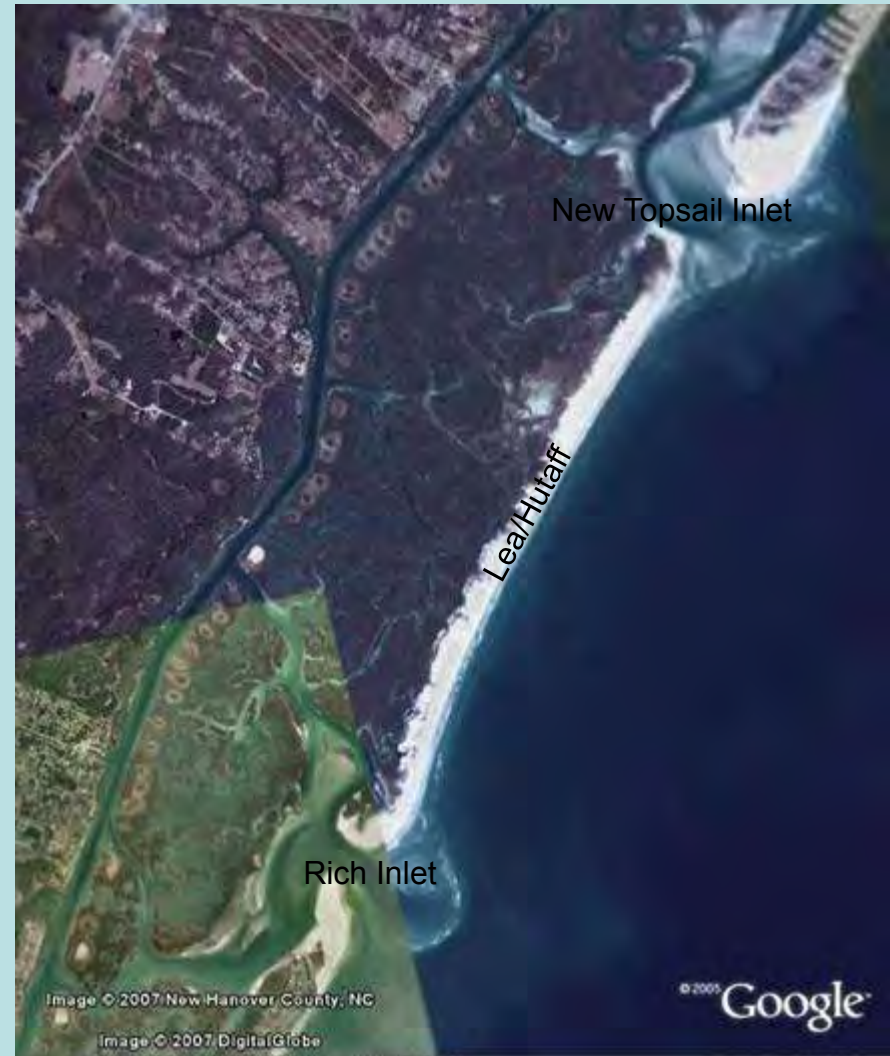
Beach Stabilization Projects

- Seeing an increase in projects that will impact inlets
- Past channel relocation projects at Bogue Inlet and Mason Inlet
 - Potential benefits – mitigation for both of these projects
 - N. end Wrightsville Beach managed by NC Audubon – 4 prs. AMOYs



Beach Stabilization Projects

- In the works – channel relocation projects at New River Inlet and Rich Inlet
- Towns also looking at inlets as sand sources – New Topsail Inlet, mouth of Cape Fear, etc.
- Concerned about impacts to adjacent areas (e.g. Lea/Hutaff bounded by Rich and New Topsail Inlets)



Future Work

- Repeat coast-wide surveys every three years so can begin assessing state-wide trends in abundance and distribution
- Continue habitat management
 - Barrier islands
 - Improve quality of habitat on barrier beaches
 - Work with towns to minimize/mitigate impacts of beach stabilization projects
 - Dredged-material islands
 - Work with US Army Corps of Engineers to direct timing and placement of material

Management of dredged-material islands



