

# Pat and Doris Leary



# **Origin and Distribution of American Oystercatchers**

## **Wintering in Dixie, Levy and Citrus Counties**



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AMOY Working Group**

# **Known & Unknown Aspects of Regional AMOY Population**

**2002 - 03 Manomet aerial survey found a significant winter population along Florida's upper Gulf coast**

**Aerial survey identified the primary roost sites**

**Origin and composition of flocks remained unknown**

## **Research Objectives**

**Conduct systematic ground surveys at all roost sites**

**Collect population data for roost sites and region**

**Determine origin and composition of flocks by:**

**Collecting and documenting banding data**



# Survey Strategy vs. Gulf Field Conditions

Visit all roost sites systematically & sequentially

**Winter weather & adverse winds control access**

Access roost sites via small vessel

**Open gulf waters require safe boating conditions**

Schedule surveys for high tides and calm conditions

**Opportunities limited by weather and lunar / tide cycle**

Locate all birds in the vicinity of primary roost sites

**Highly variable tides adversely impact roost behavior**

Locate, identify and record all banding data

**Banding scheme presents field challenges**

Collect digiscope images of flocks and banded birds

**Problematic from a vessel but effective from substrate**

## Survey Method

Time surveys for the flood tide roosting period

Visit roosts one hour prior to highest predicted tide

Make observations through the roosting period

Search adjoining areas for satellite roost sites

Approach and inspect all birds for banding data

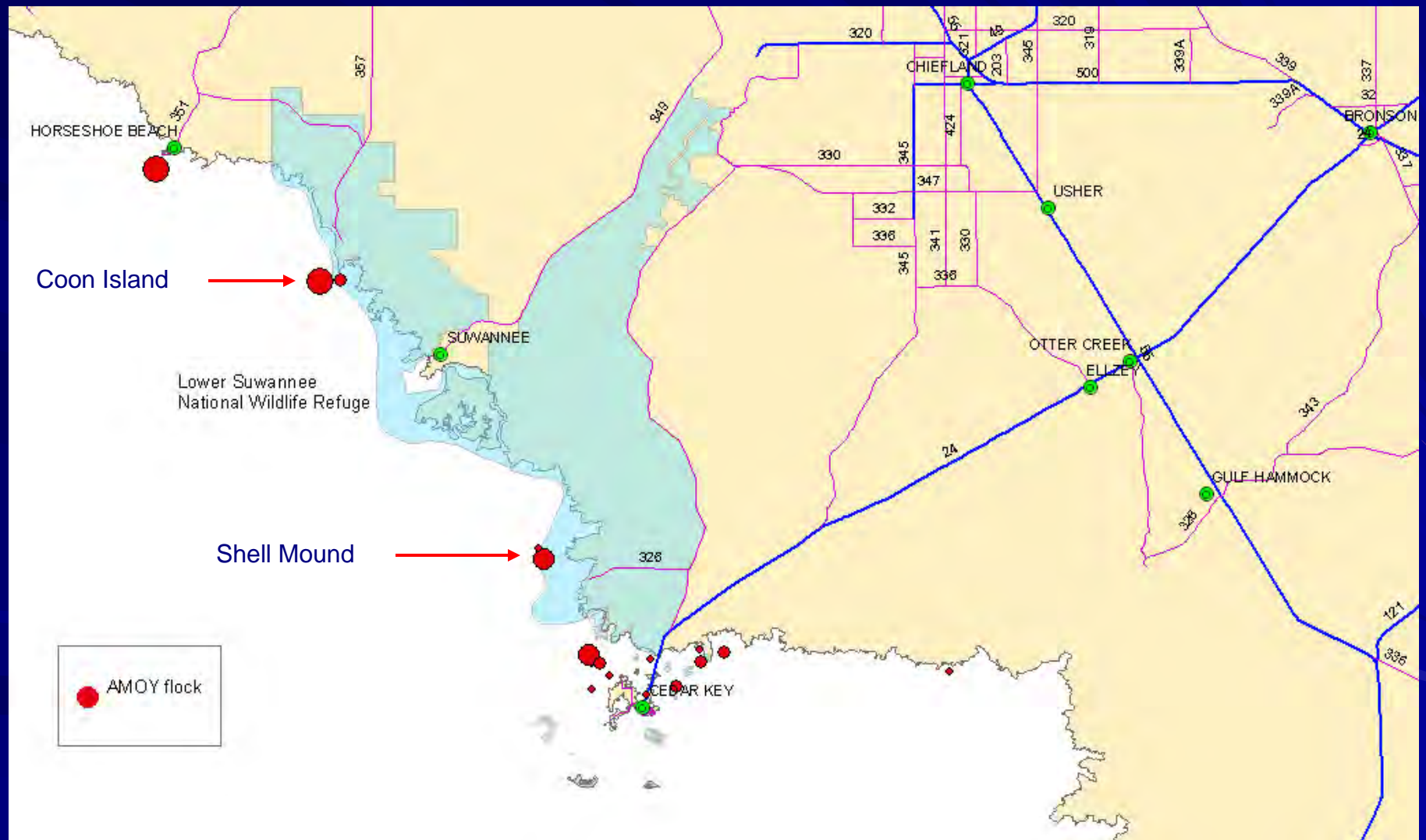
Document sightings via digital photography & GPS

Collect and document incidental sightings

Enter all data into Excel spreadsheet

Disseminate data to AMOY WG, FWC, FWS, FNAI

## Winter Roost sites recorded on 2002-03 Manomet aerial survey (Dixie and Levy Counties)



**Leary Survey  
Region**

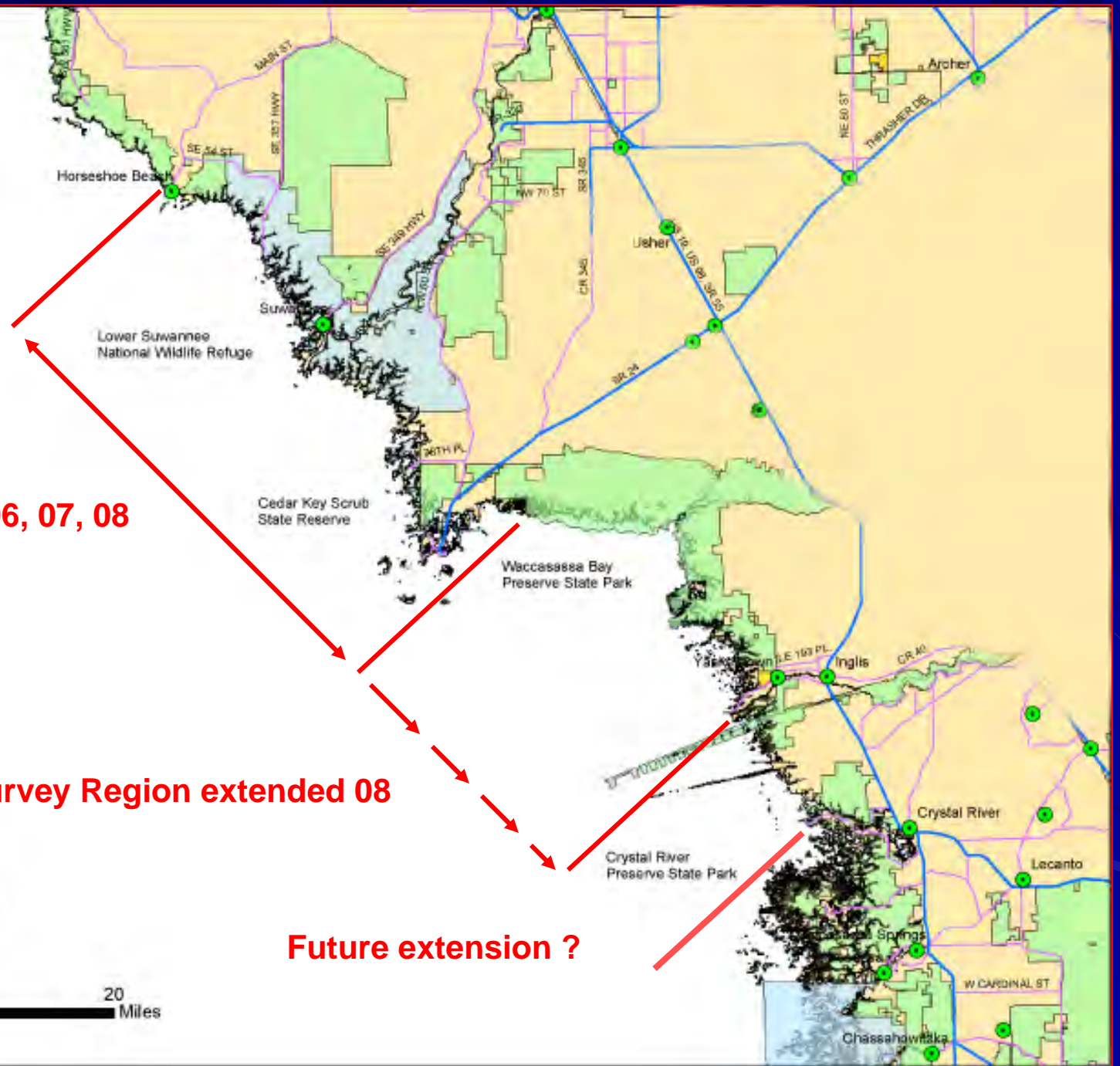
**Survey Region 06, 07, 08**

**Survey Region extended 08**

**Future extension ?**



0 5 10 20  
Miles





Horseshoe Beach

Coon Island

Shell Mound

Cedar Key (north)

Cedar Key (Corrigan's Reef)

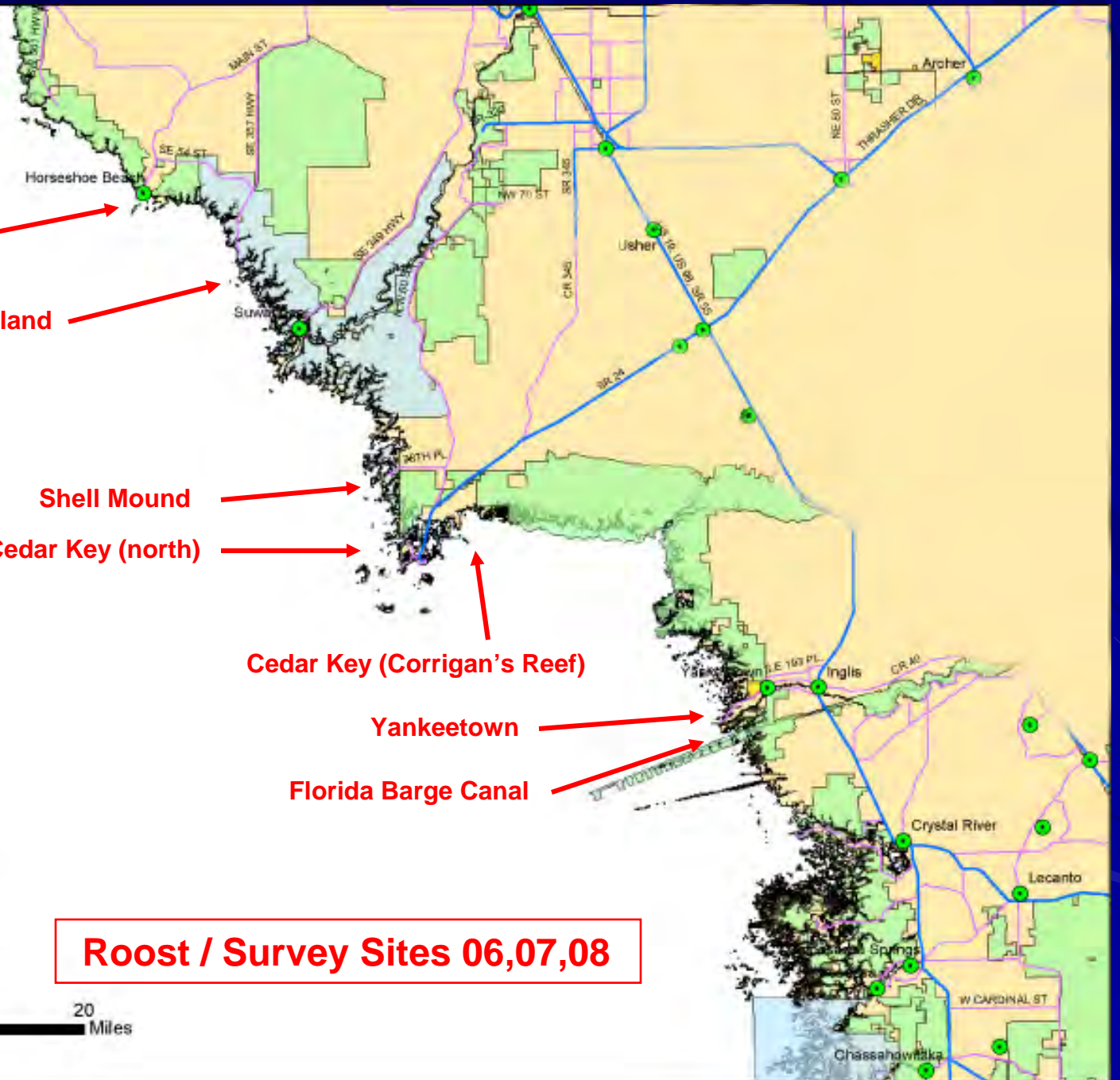
Yankeetown

Florida Barge Canal

Roost / Survey Sites 06,07,08



0 5 10 20 Miles







Observation point on jetty

© 2008 Europa Technologies

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Pointer 29°25'55.11" N 83°17'31.38" W elev 0 ft Streaming ||||| 100%

Eye alt 10838 ft

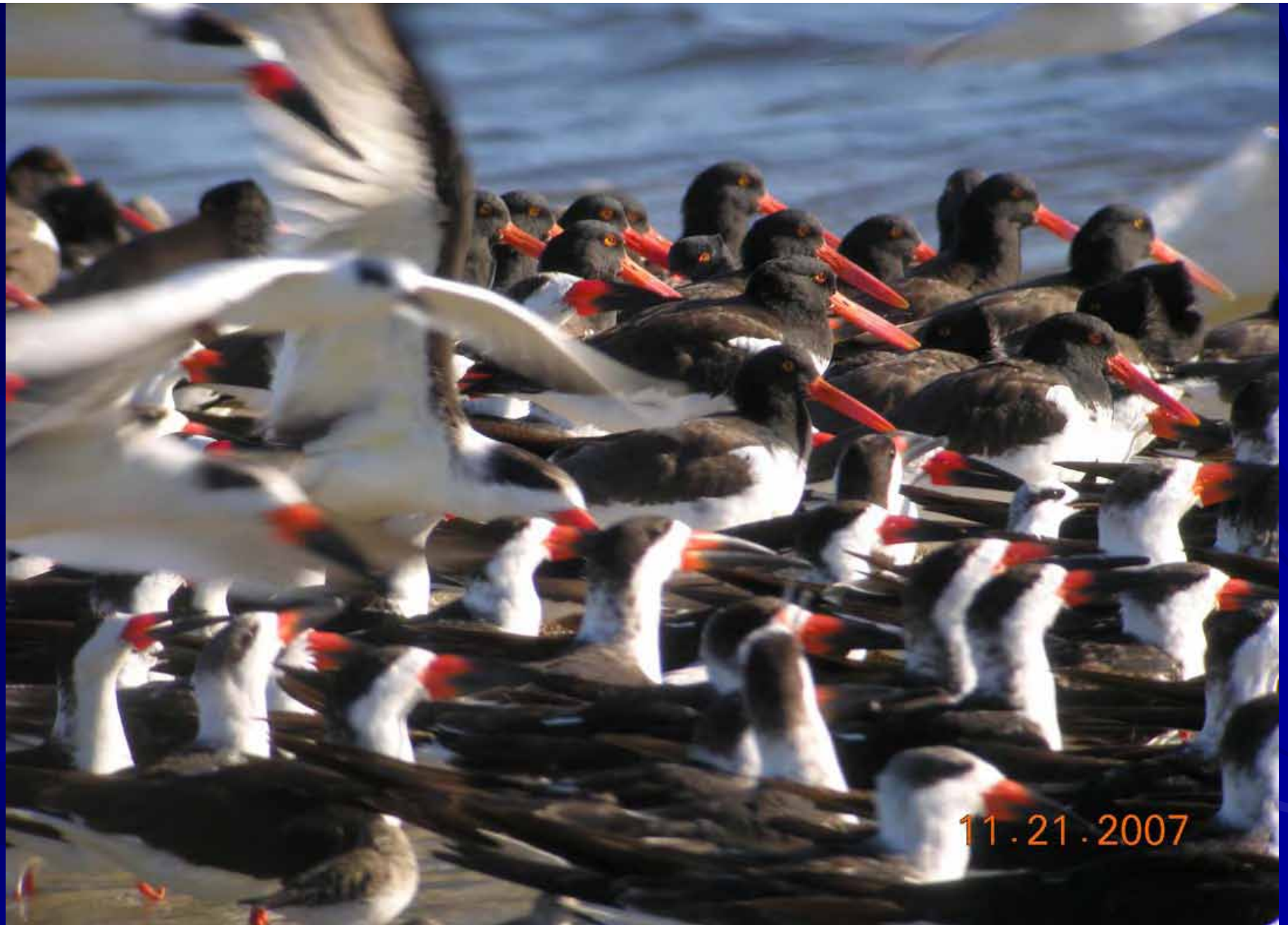
## Horseshoe Beach north jetty AMOY roost 11/21/2007











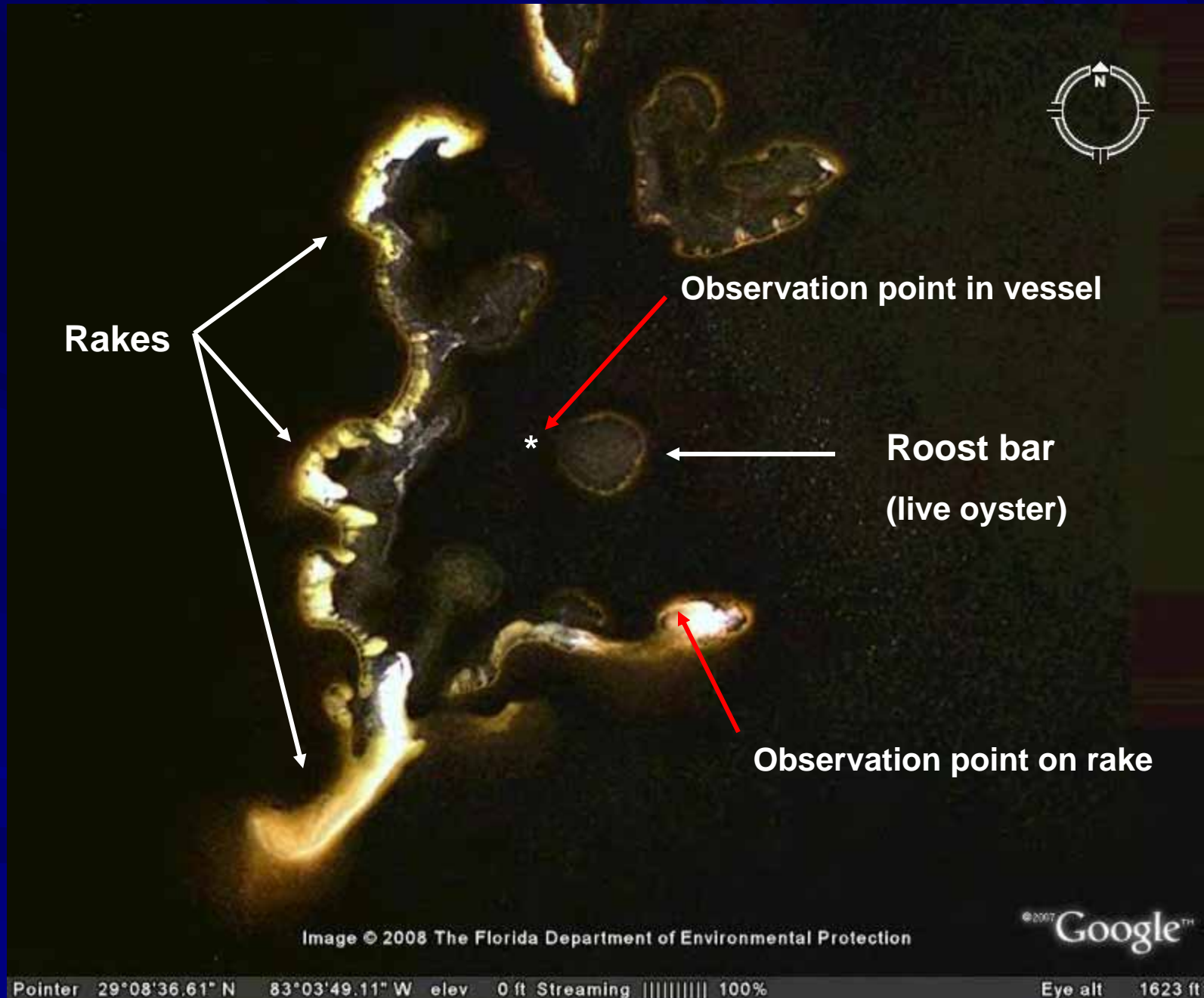
**Coon Island roost 11/21/07**













**Cedar Key (north) AMOY roost ca 500 birds 2/19/08**





2 of 39 birds with one leg exposed – 1 of 39 with both legs exposed







Corrigan's Reef AMOY flock on flooded rake with observation point on same rake



OR[AY], YE[AO], BK[40] Lt. Pine Island, Dixie County 3/03/07 (Coon Island satellite roost)





DG[35] Banded as chick 2004 at Cape Lookout, NC recorded Horseshoe Beach 07 & 08



BK[4Y] banded as chick in VI Summer 07

recorded FL Barge Canal 1/20/08





YE[CI] banded Tuckernuck Island, MA 05 recorded Cedar Key Airport roost 06,07,08





OR[T2] banded Island Beach State Park, NJ 9/07 as adult recorded Cedar Key Airport Roost 07,08



RD[P2] banded Lt. St. Simons Island, GA 9/05 recorded Cedar Key Airport Roost 06 & 08



**RD[P4]** Coon Island to Corrigan's Reef to Cedar Key Airport roost

**BK[16]** Coon Island to Cedar Key Airport roost

**YE[AO]** Cedar Key Airport roost to Coon Island and back to CK Airport roost

**DG[57]** Corrigan's Reef to FL Barge Canal 06-08

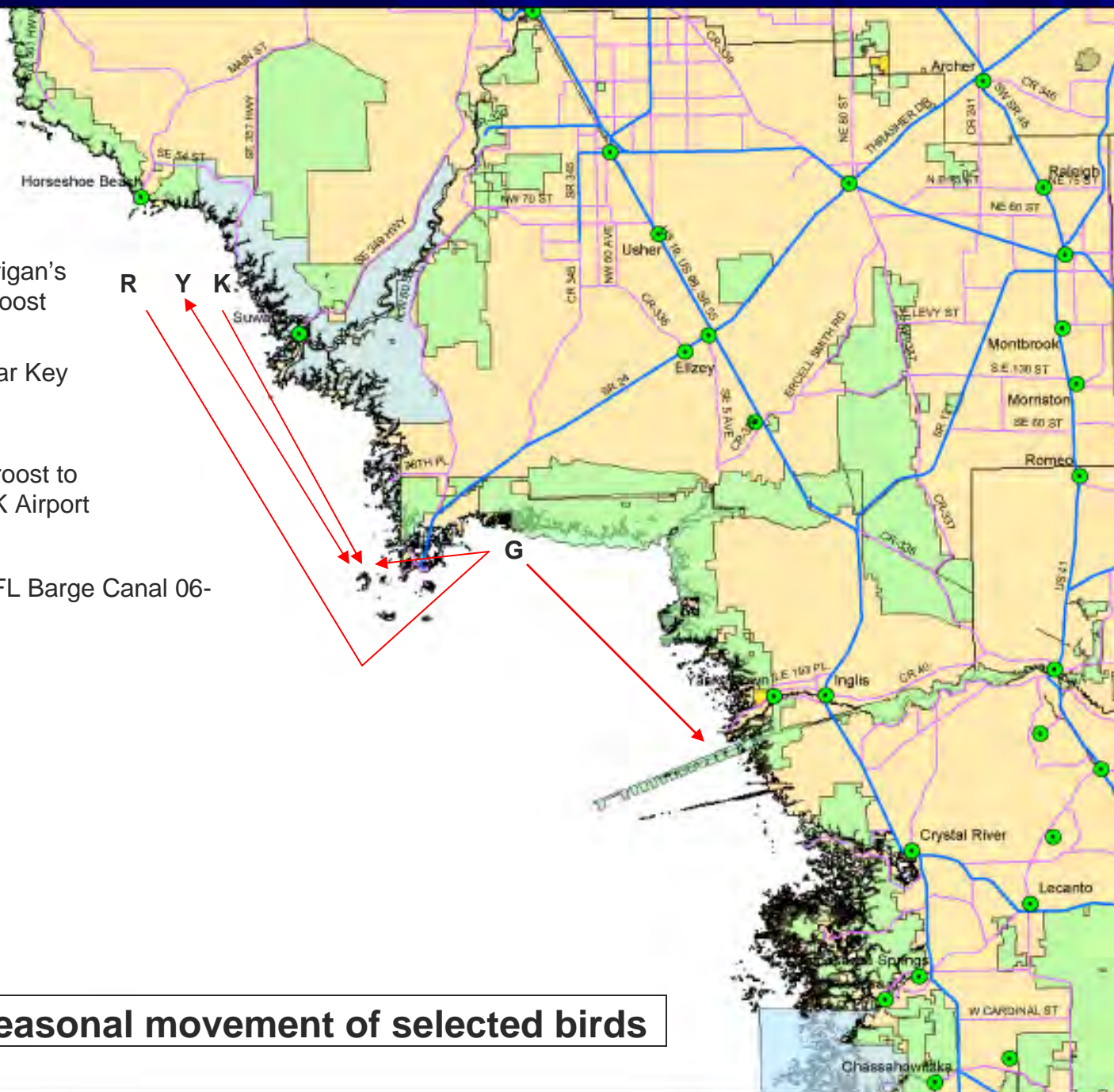
**R**

**Y**

**K**

**G**

**Annual and/or seasonal movement of selected birds**





## **Survey Summary for the Wintering Period: 2006, 07,08**

**10 Gulf surveys were conducted between Dec. 2006 and Feb. 2008**

**7 primary roost sites were visited in Dixie, Levy and Citrus Counties**

**6 sites in Dixie and Levy County were visited 22 times \***

**1 new site in Citrus County was surveyed three times in 07 / 08**

**A total of 50 hours of observation were conducted**

**1199 AMOY were counted in 06 / 07 and 1272 in 07 / 08**

**115 uniquely banded AMOY were sighted and documented**

**111 bands have been confirmed, identified and traced to origin**

**Many sightings were the first recorded away from the original banding site**

**While some birds show site fidelity, others shift sites (annual & seasonal)**

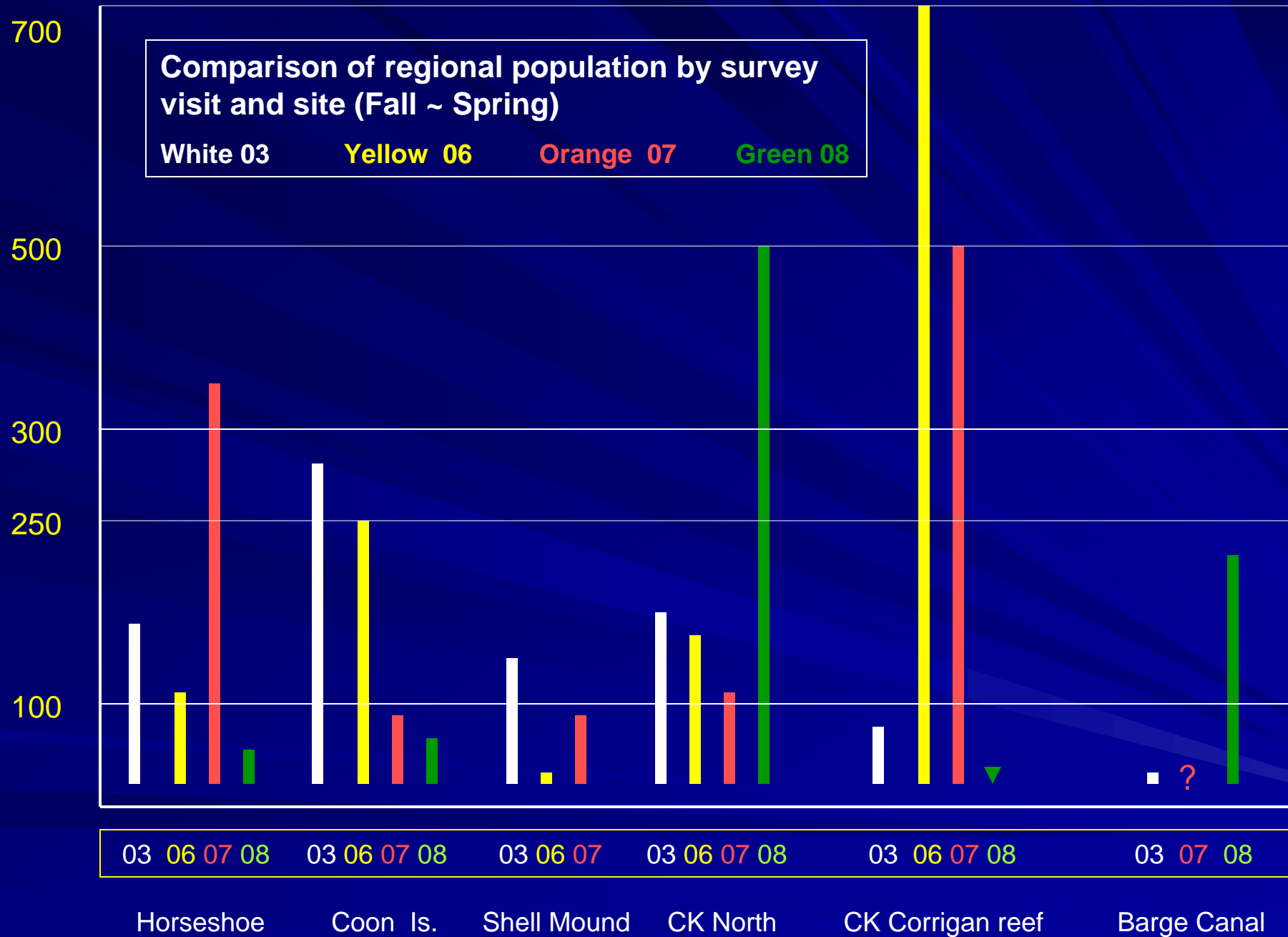
**PIPL and SNPL were recorded and reported for sites not previously known**

**\* Multiple sites surveyed on some dates thus the no. of visits exceeds no. of surveys**

## Survey Findings

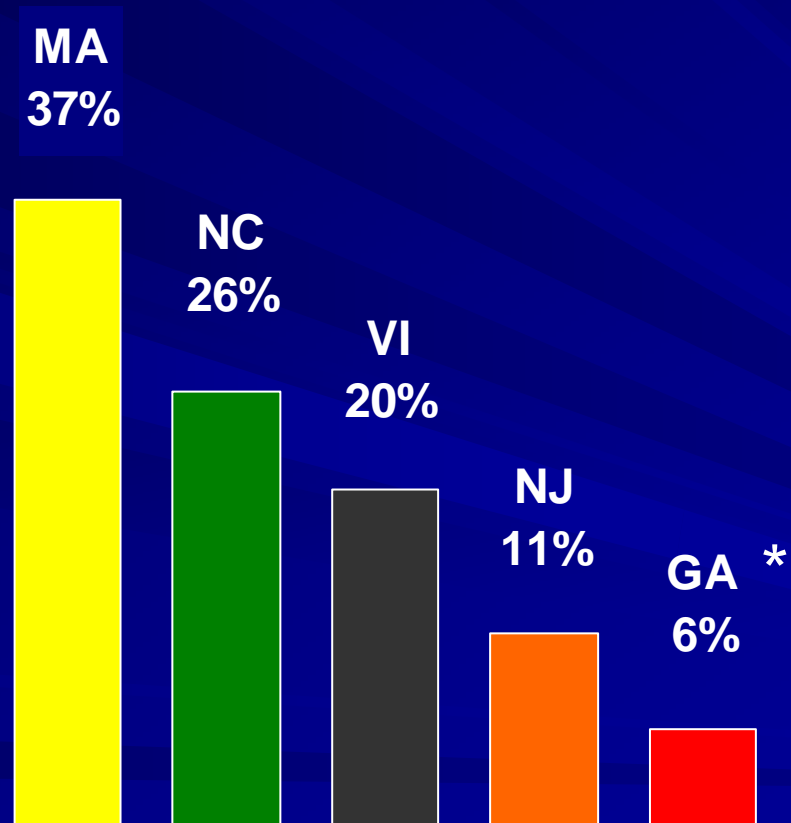
- Dixie, Levy and Citrus Counties annually support ca 1200 AMOY
- Wintering population was stable from 02,03 - 08
- Population shifts between sites through the wintering period
- Roost sites support varying numbers annually & seasonally
- Population is composed of Atlantic coast adults and juveniles \*
- Banded birds originate from MA, NJ, VI, NC and GA (migrants)
- No SC-banded birds have been documented in region
- High percentage of banded birds from northernmost breeding sites
- 08 expansion of survey region found more birds in Citrus Co. then 02-03 Manomet aerial surveys
- 06-08 findings justify continued surveys, monitoring and expansion
- Some boating activities adversely impact roost sites

\* Currently no banding effort along Gulf coast and 08 surveys found no banded birds in FL panhandle





State origin of banded AMOY as percent of total band cohort  
wintering in Dixie, Levy and Citrus Cos. for survey period 2006 - 08



\* GA birds banded as migrants from more northern states

# DISTURBANCE





**Coon Island roost including ca 350 AMOY immediately prior to  
airboat disturbance event 3/03/07**





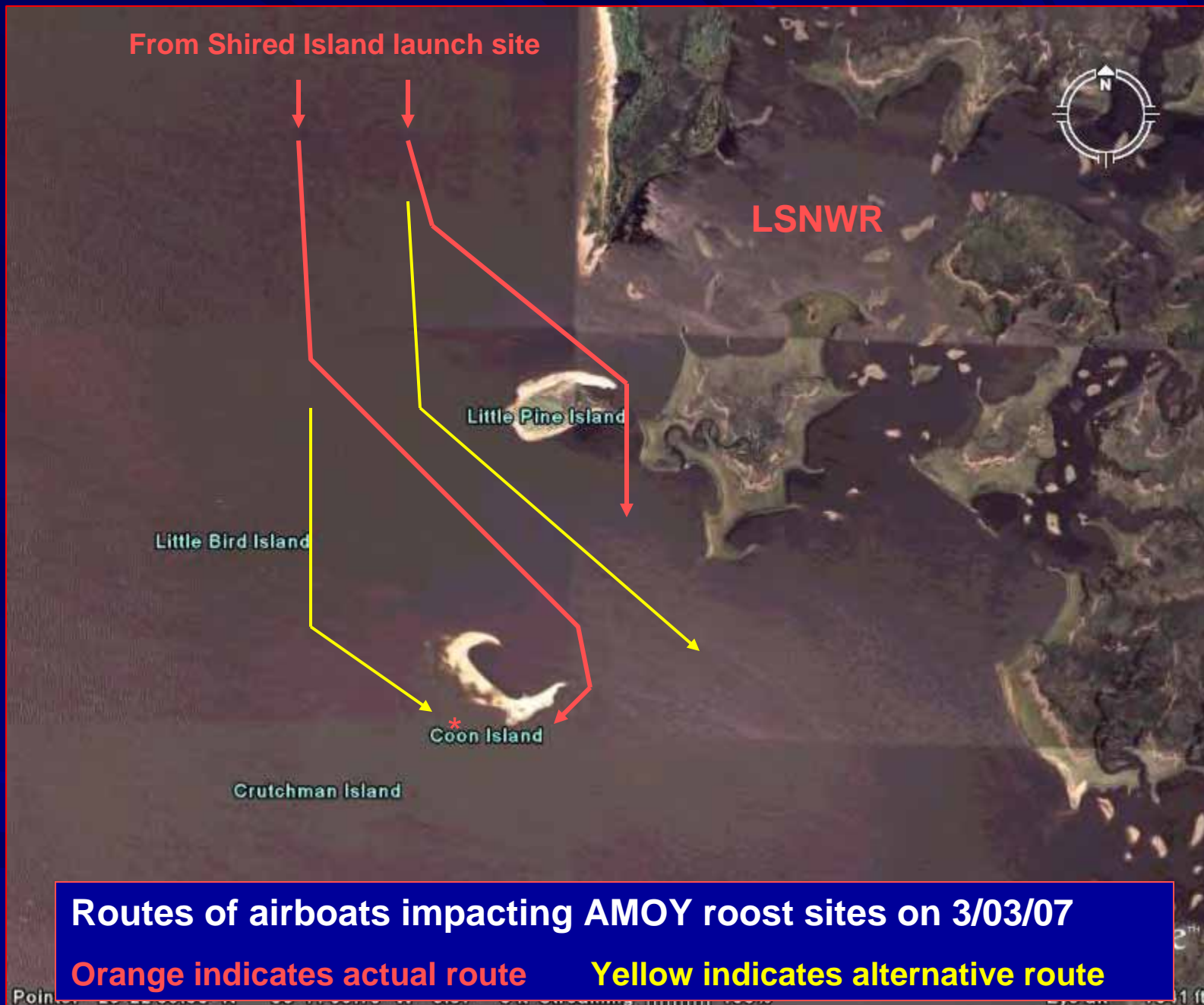
**Approaching airboat flushing massed birds roosting on Coon Island 3/03/07**





**Close-proximity pass of airboat flushing all birds off Coon Island, Dixie County 3/03/07**







**Airboat passing Lt. Pine Island roost spit LSNWR, Dixie County 3/03/07**





**Airboat passing and flushing AMOY flock off Lt. Pine Island roost spit (initial flush)**





**Outboard powered vessel passing Cedar Key Airport roost site without adverse disturbance 2/19/08**





# Florida Nesting Birds?







07.12.2008

