

BARN OWL NESTING BOX REPORT

ILLINOIS NONGAME WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FUND PROJECT

conducted by

LEE COUNTY NATURAL AREA GUARDIANS
319 S. Mason
Amboy, Illinois 61310
Phone: 815/857-3623

LEE COUNTY, ILLINOIS
1986-87

INDEX

Abstract, Introduction, Methodology.....	1
Results, Acknowledgements.....	2
Bibliography.....	3
Site Map.....	4
Site Owners' Addresses.....	5
Nest Box Plan.....	6
Brochure.....	7
Media Information.....	8
Pictures.....	11

ABSTRACT

A Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) nesting enhancement project was conducted by the Lee County Natural Area Guardians (NAG) in Lee County, Illinois. The project was funded by the Illinois Nongame Wildlife Conservation Checkoff Program. Nest box sites were selected in areas considered to be best habitat found in Lee County for the species. A total of 18 nesting boxes were built and placed in the selected sites. To date no Barn Owls have been sighted.

INTRODUCTION

Although only four sightings have been reported in Lee County in the past four years, the County does have areas with suitable habitat to support the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Presettlement Lee County was the site of two large swamps, totaling 50,000 acres. Most of the wetlands were destroyed in the late 1800's and early 1900's. True wetlands and marshes are limited today.

The Barn Owl is listed as endangered in Illinois. This owl species although, short-lived, does have the ability to quickly increase if adequate foraging habitat and food sources are available. Nesting boxes have been found to aid in the Barn Owl come-back in other areas. It has proved successful as a nesting site as well as providing a warmer winter roost site.

METHODOLOGY

The Lee County Natural Area Guardians (NAG) received confirmation in October, 1986 that they had been successful in their application for an Illinois Nongame Wildlife Conservation Checkoff Program grant. The project purposed was for Barn Owl Nesting Enhancement in Lee County.

To prepare for the project information was gathered concerning this owl species habitat requirement and preferred food sources. Different types of nesting boxes were also investigated.

Sites evidencing Barn Owl habitat were chosen. Areas of lightly disturbed grassland with nearby streams or wet areas were located. Nearby woods, old barns, and silos were considered of primary importance. These areas were found by information gathered in the NAG aerial survey and the site selection connected with the Illinois Mud Turtle survey. One NAG member is a delivery person for a farm service organization and has a good knowledge of a large area of the County where adequate habitat remains. The same individual is well acquainted with those landowners. These facts proved to be a good stepping-stone in the project.

Several news releases to area media, both newspaper and radio, helped educate our citizens about the project and the endangered Barn Owl. Displays were used in the Lee County Soil & Water Conservation District office and at their Annual Meeting. The soil and water district newsletter kept the County informed of the progress of the project. As a result of this informational effort many inquiries were received at the Soil & Water Conservation District office for Barn Owl box plans, landowners wanted to erect their own box. One student requested information for a science project on this endangered species. Ecological information was given out at the same time.

After selection of sites the boxes were built and put in place in late December and January. The Colvin style box was used. Eighteen boxes were installed. Landowner cooperation was excellent.

Some landowners wanted to participate but were reluctant to have the box in their barn. Therefore, we developed a Lee County version of the Colvin box. This box was hung on the outside of two silos.

Boxes will continue to be monitored. Information about the Barn Owl was formulated and printed in brochure form for distribution throughout Lee County. A photographic record has been compiled and will be used to educate Lee Countians about the beautiful, endangered, Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and his plight in our area.

RESULTS

Although there are no Barn Owls nesting in the boxes erected, owl pellets were found in one box. They were Screech Owl pellets, however, other results have been seen. There is an increased awareness on the part of NAG members of the species. Identification, habitat needs, and ways to help this endangered animal have been learned. The group has also noted increased awareness and concern in others with not only the Barn Owl but other endangered species, both plant and animal. The NAG members are looking forward to maintaining the nesting sites and are hopeful of a successful nesting at some future date.

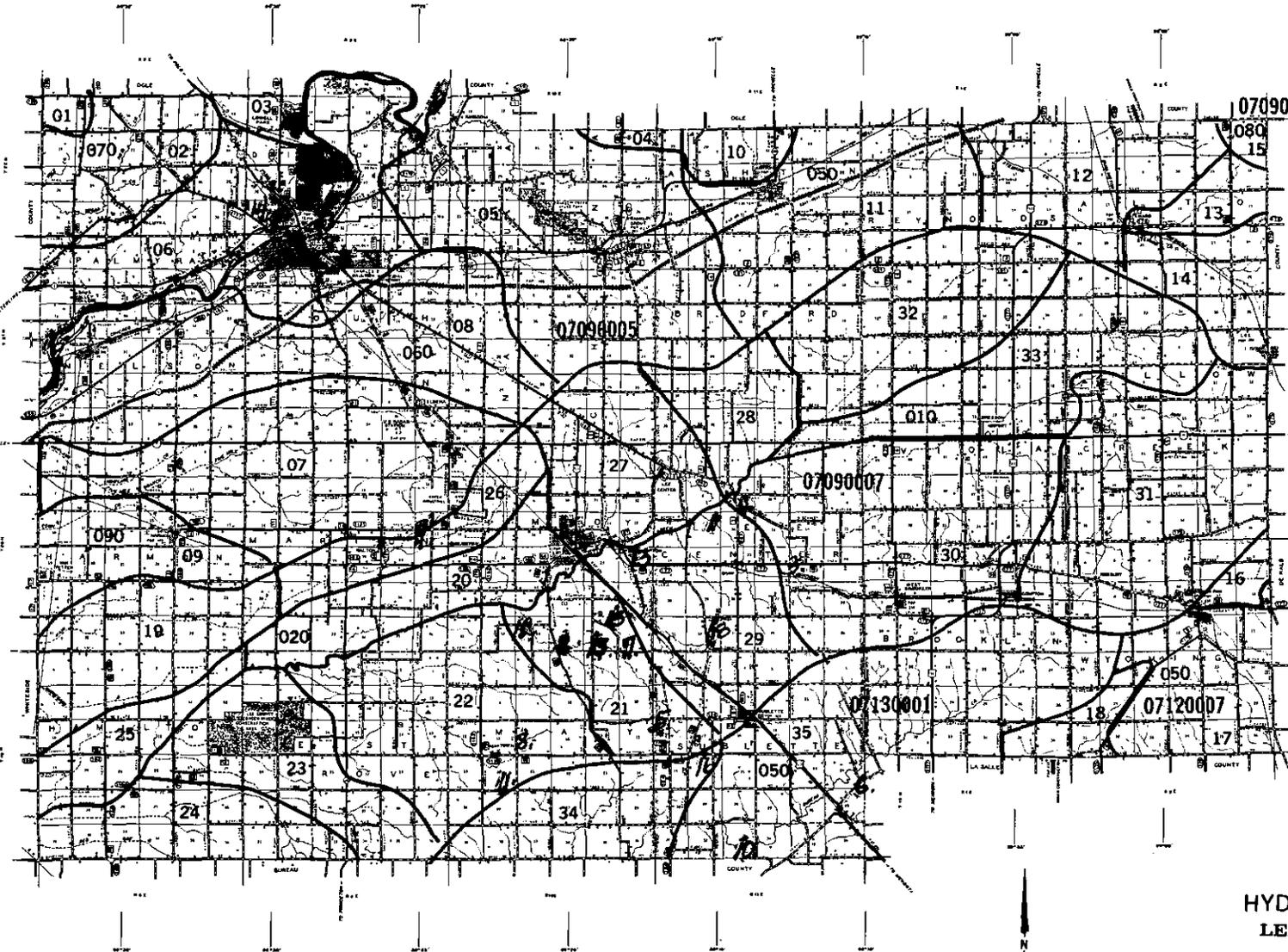
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere gratitude is expressed to the Department of Conservation for funding this interesting and important project. We appreciate their guidance and assistance. Randy Nyboer, Natural Heritage Biologist, is commended for his invaluable aid in checking all the technical aspects of the project. Special thanks must be extended to Kevin Kellen for his interest and hard work in this project. Through his knowledge of the area and good relationship with landowners the project met few difficulties with landowner permission. He worked tirelessly erecting and monitoring.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

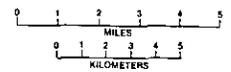
- Resource Inventory, Lee County, Illinois - 1972
Prepared by: Lee County Soil & Water Conservation District

Reference: Environmental Study
Lee County Planning Commission - Oct. 1972
- Barn Owls: Their Secrets and Habits - Bruce A. Colvin, Ph.D.
Spring, 1986 - Illinois Audubon
- The Barn Owl - Illinois Department of Conservation
- The (not-so) Common Barn-Owl - Iowa Conservation Commission
by David A. Newhouse, Bruce L. Ehresman
- The Common Barn Owl - ICI Americas Inc.



- LEGEND
- Hydrologic River Basin Boundary
 - 07120007** Hydrologic River Basin Number
 - Watershed Boundary
 - 070** Watershed Number
 - Subwatershed Boundary
 - 07** Subwatershed Number

**HYDROLOGIC UNIT MAP
LEE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**



SOURCE: 1982 Illinois General Highway Map
And Information From SCS Field
Personnel. Polyconic Projection.

SITE MAP

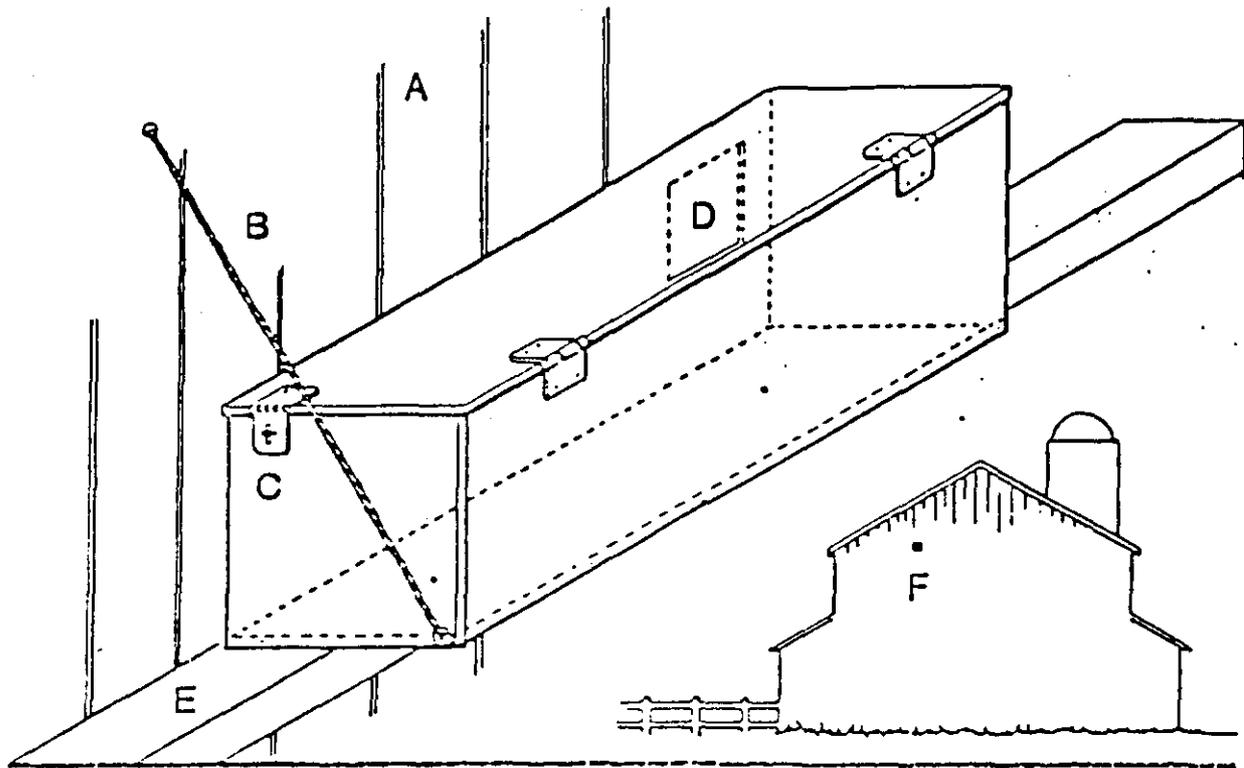
SITE OWNERS' ADDRESSES
Lee County, Illinois

1986-1987

Site Number

- 1.....Atkins, Norma - 2598 Hunt Road, Reading Ohio 45236
- 2.....Bulfer, Tom - 606 Rockyford Road, Amboy, IL 61310
- 3.....Burkardt, Daniel - 721 Burkardt Road, West Brooklyn, IL 61378
- 4.....Dallam, Ray - 1168 Inlet Road, Amboy, IL 61310
- 5.....Dinges, Delmar - P.O. Box 14, Sublette, IL 61367-0014
- 6.....Dinges, Robert - 209 Henkel Road, Mendota, IL 61342
- 7.....Fredenhagen, W. S., Jr. - 324 S. Washington, Naperville, IL 60640
- 8.....Gugerty, William - 342 Van Orin Road, Sublette, IL 61367-9727
- 9.....Hecker, Otto - 112 N. Jefferson, Amboy, IL 61310
- 10.....Jackson, Randy - 2082 Baseline Road, Sublette, IL 61367
- 11.....Leffelman, Myron - 1546 St. Mary's Road, Sublette, IL 61367
- 12.....McLaughlin, Douglas - 657 Mazy Road, Amboy, IL 61310
- 13.....Morrisey, John - 1712 Shaw Road, Amboy, IL 61310
- 14.....Rodgers, George - 552 Palmyra Road, Dixon, IL 61021
- 15.....Spears, Marvin - 1668 Winding Road, Amboy, IL 61310
- 16&17..Vaessen, Louis - 1925 Maytown Road, Sublette, IL 61367
- 18.....Zimmerman, Kenneth - 658 Green Wing Road, Amboy, IL 61310

BARN OWL NEST BOX PLANS



- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| A. Interior of barn wall | D. Entrance |
| B. Wire (or wood) support
if beam is narrow | E. Crossbeam |
| C. Latch | F. Entrance (6" by 6") |

Materials and general dimensions can vary somewhat depending upon materials available. Using 1/2" plywood: bottom, 12" x 40"; two ends, 12" x 16"; back, 16" x 41"; top, 12 1/2" x 41". (For 3/4" plywood, back length should be 41 1/2" and top 12 3/4" x 41 1/2".) The barn wall acts as the front of the box. The top is hinged but kept securely latched. A 6-inch square hole in the barn (cut 6 inches above the floor of the box) provides access directly into the box from outside. Ideally, the entranceway is positioned high on the barn wall such as 20-25 feet above the ground. Mount the box against the interior barn wall and nail it securely in place. Use wire or additional boards to help support the box if the cross beam, on which it rests, is narrow. The same box design can be constructed with a front and hung (with heavy rope or metal brackets) from the climbing-well inside the top of a covered (inactive) silo.