

# State of NSO on Private Lands in California

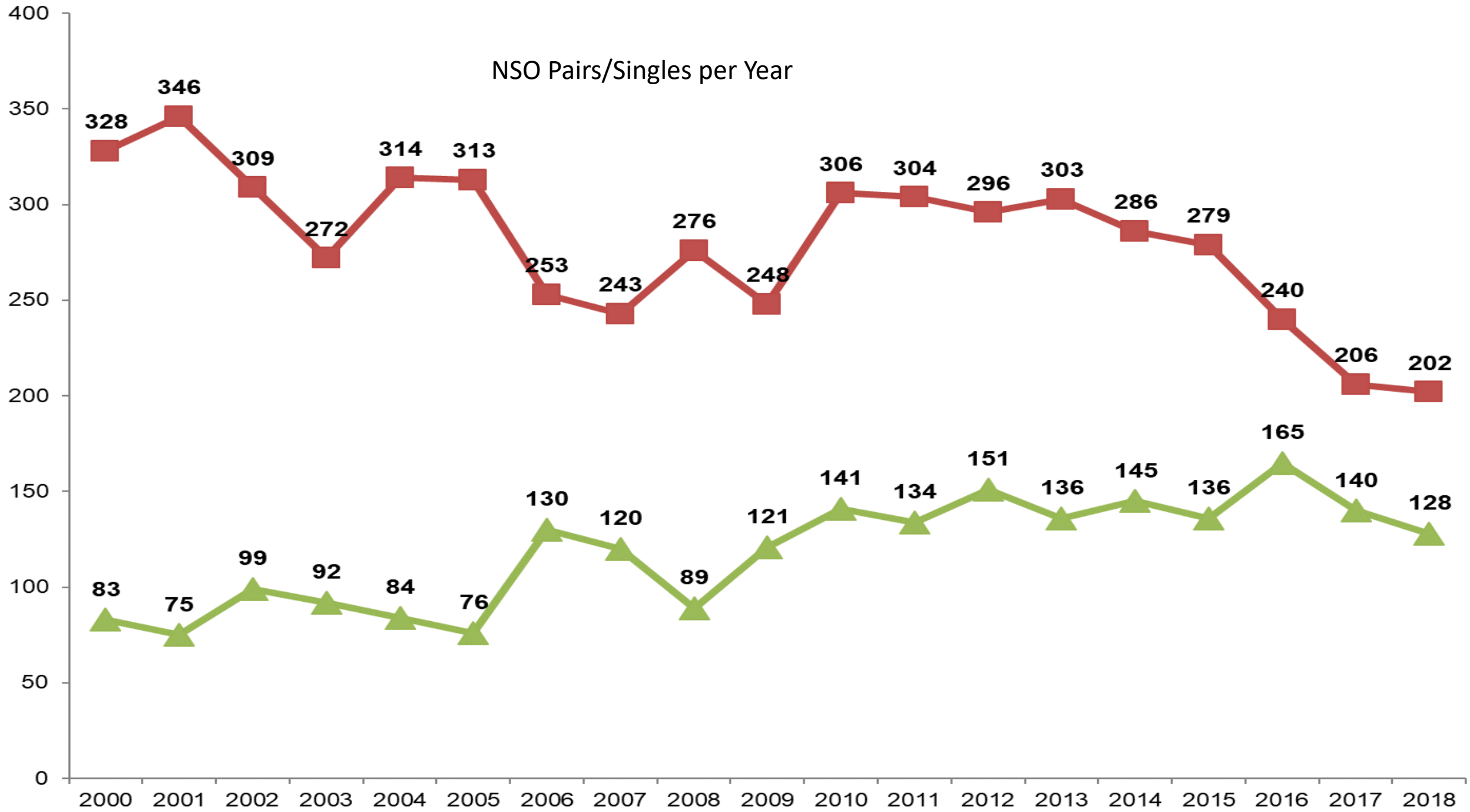


Mike Stephens

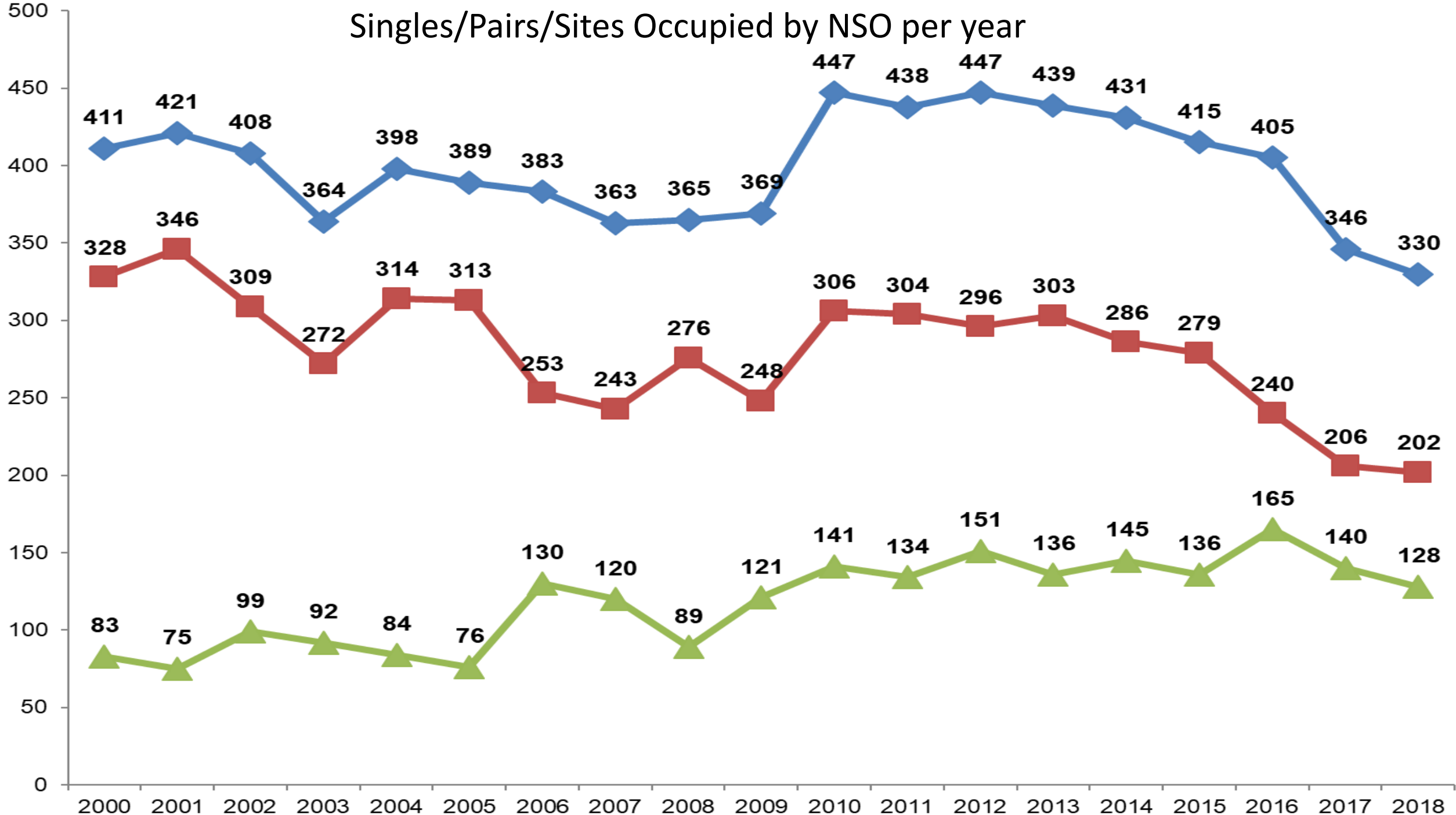
Strix Wildlife Consulting

Fort Bragg, CA

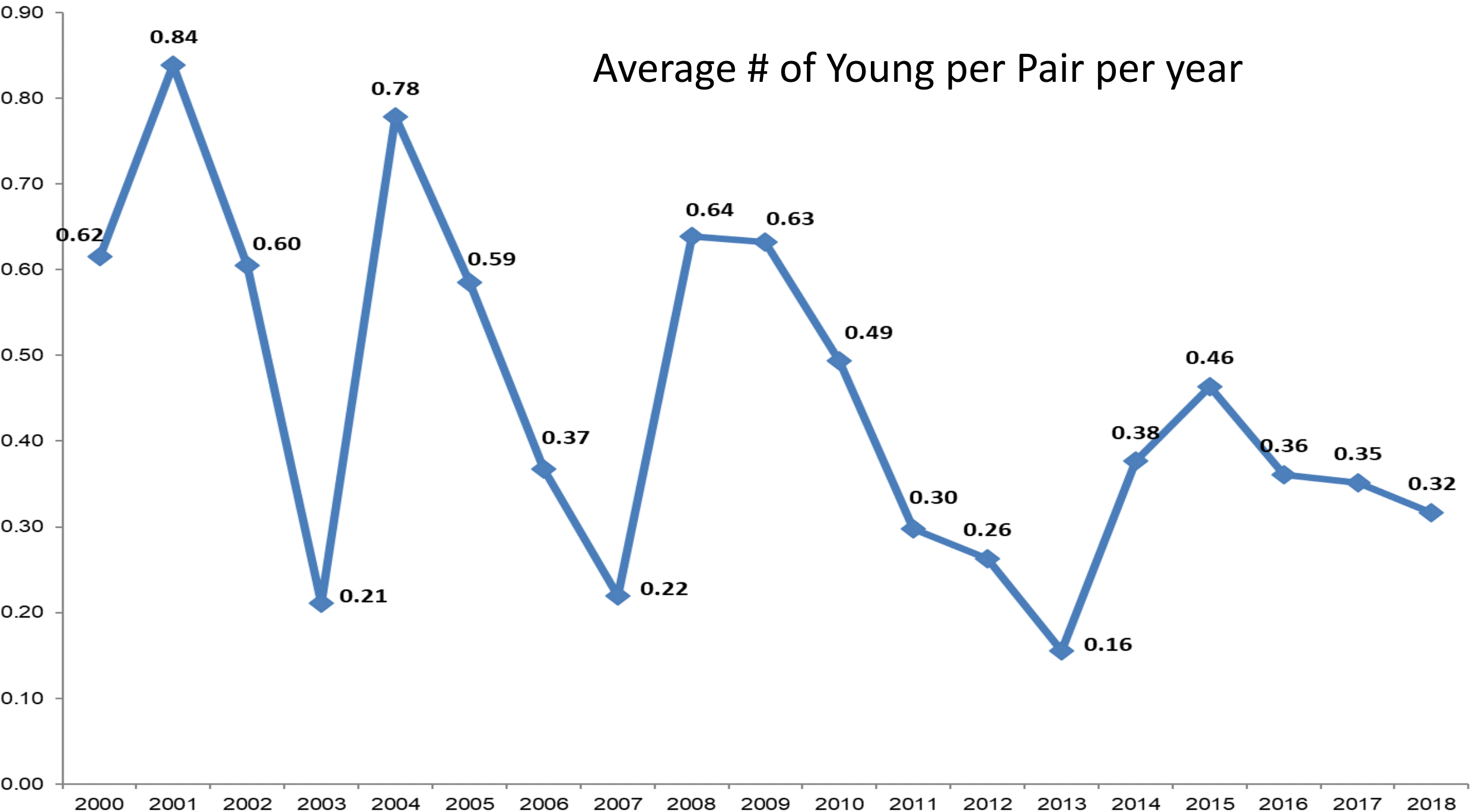
NSO Pairs/Singles per Year



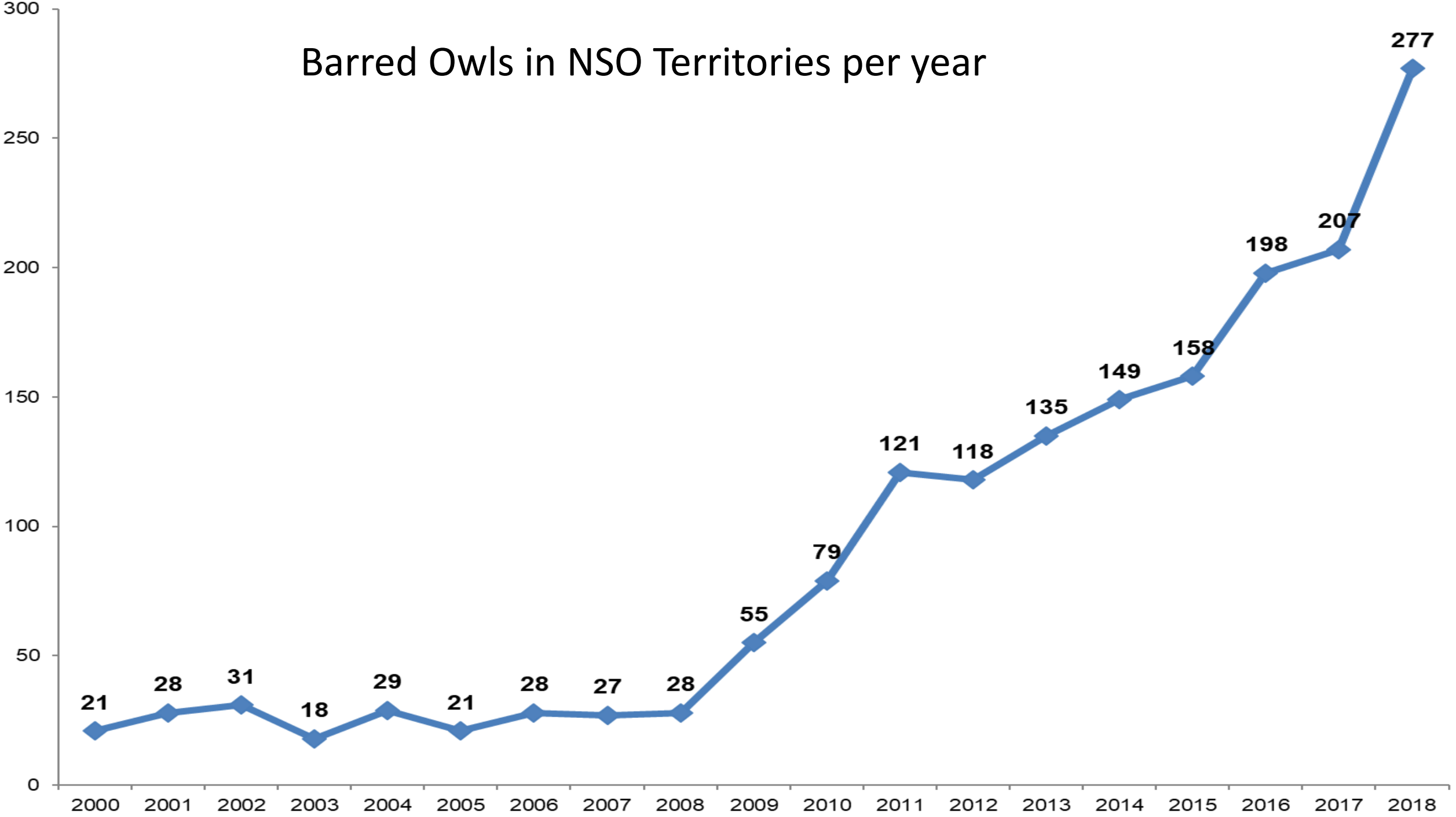
# Singles/Pairs/Sites Occupied by NSO per year



Average # of Young per Pair per year



# Barred Owls in NSO Territories per year



# History Of NSO Regulation in California

1990 - NSO Federally Listed as Threatened – CA Dept. of Fish and Game provides technical assistance for private timberland owners

1999 – USFWS – Arcata Field Office takes over technical assistance process from CA Dept. of Fish and Game

2007 – USFWS announces it will be phasing out NSO technical assistance process for private landowners in California

2008 – Transition process and training begins with Cal-Fire which becomes the trustee agency for NSO and timber harvesting

2008 – USFWS offers “Habitat Retention Agreements” for NTMP's, expands option of “Spotted Owl Management Plans” to larger timberland owners.

2010 – USFWS no longer provides technical assistance for new THP's, continues providing technical assistance for “open” THP's and NTMP's with prior USFWS technical assistance

2010 – USFWS releases draft of new NSO survey protocol addressing affects of BADO presence in range of NSO, Increasing survey efforts and habitat retention requirements

2012 – USFWS releases final version of new NSO survey protocol

2016 – NSO listed under California ESA, California Department of Fish and Wildlife becomes second state trustee agency

2017 – USFWS announces it will no longer be providing any NSO technical assistance to private landowners, abandons Habitat Retention Agreements and Spotted Owl Management Plans, trains trustee agencies on NSO issues

## Major NSO Issues Concerning NSO Management on Private Lands

- No clear and easy process for abandoning unoccupied NSO activity centers.
- New interpretation of protocol by trustee agencies requiring protection of all historic activity centers within each NSO territory even when territory has been taken over by Barred Owls, creating a network of reserves for Barred Owls. Need clear definition of what constitutes an activity center.
- New/novel interpretations of NSO regulations by trustee agencies
- Trustee agencies are moving away from take avoidance to recovery with regards to regulating private land.
- Programmatic agreements with trustee agencies wanted by many private landowners – Safe Harbor Agreements – Will they be processed timely?
- Push-back from private landowners if they are required to continue protecting unoccupied NSO territories and Barred Owl “preserves”
- Reduction of survey efforts to minimum by private landowners if random nocturnal detection(s) require protection measures.



# NSO Endgame?

- Barred Owls are driving NSO decline
- Barred Owl removal only method of NSO recovery?
- How will private landowners be able to participate? How long? 10+ years?
- Private landowners are willing to participate in research
- Private landowners are vested in NSO recovery
- What will regulations be when no more NSO responses on landscape?

# NSO Research Needs

- Develop a Barred Owl survey protocol – there is a draft version from 2009 – needs to be updated! How do we know Barred Owl numbers when we don't have a method for surveying for them.
- Alternative methods of surveying for non-responsive NSO
- Barred Owl surveys?
- Pellet Scent Dogs?
- Drones with IR Cameras
- Automated Recording Units (ARU's)
- North coast becoming “high density area” of barred owls, soon precluding it from removal experiments and possibility of effective removal