

# Citizen Scientists empowering Conservation: The Ural owl re-introduction project in Austria

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## The Project

- Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*) inhabited the forests of Austria.
- Since then it is considered extinct in the country.
- To achieve the comeback of the Ural owl, a re-introduction project started in 2008. The goal is to connect the remaining central European populations.
- 298 birds have been released until 2017 and a total of 27 breeding pairs could be detected in the wild.



Distribution of Ural owl in Europe (green) and re-introduction area (red).

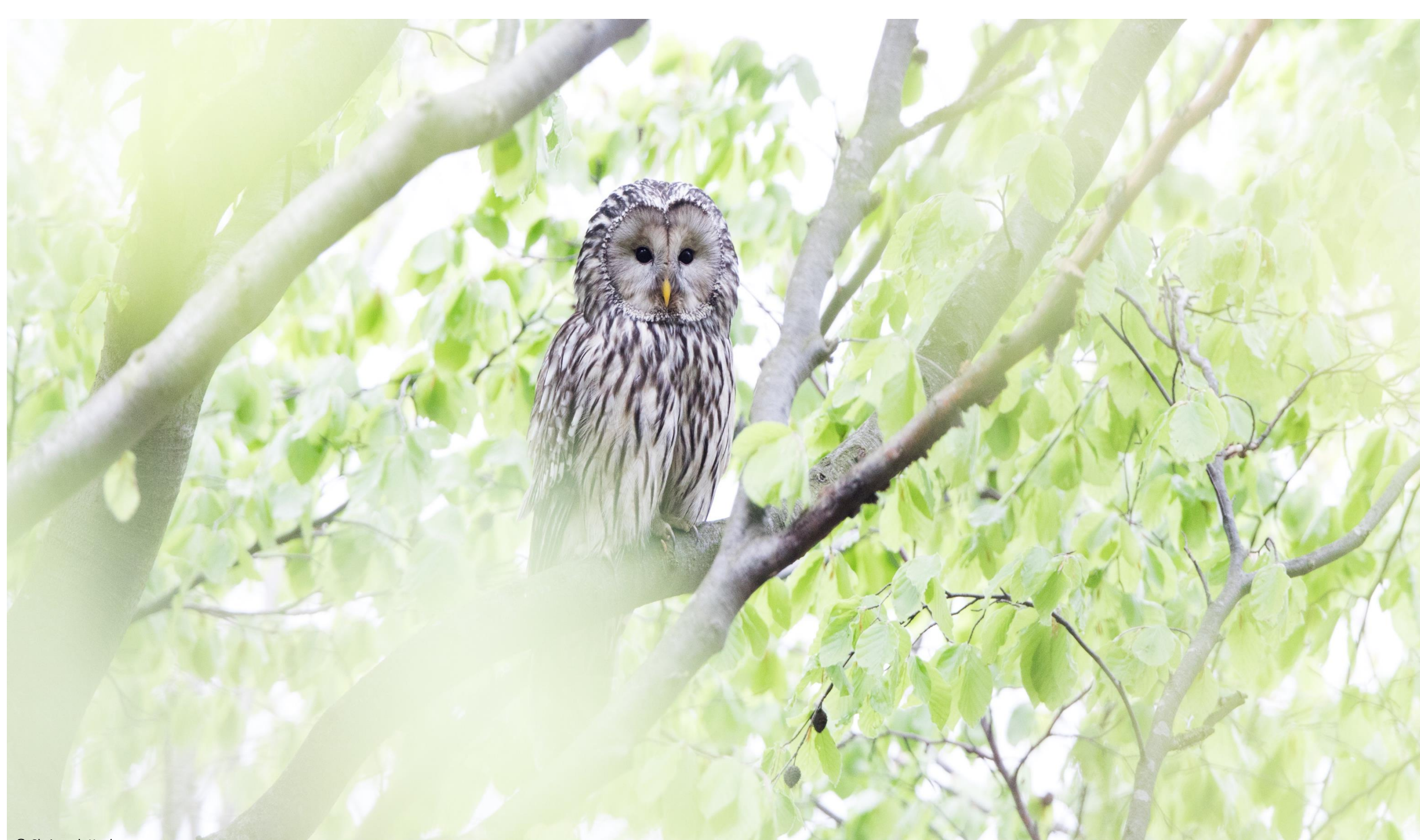
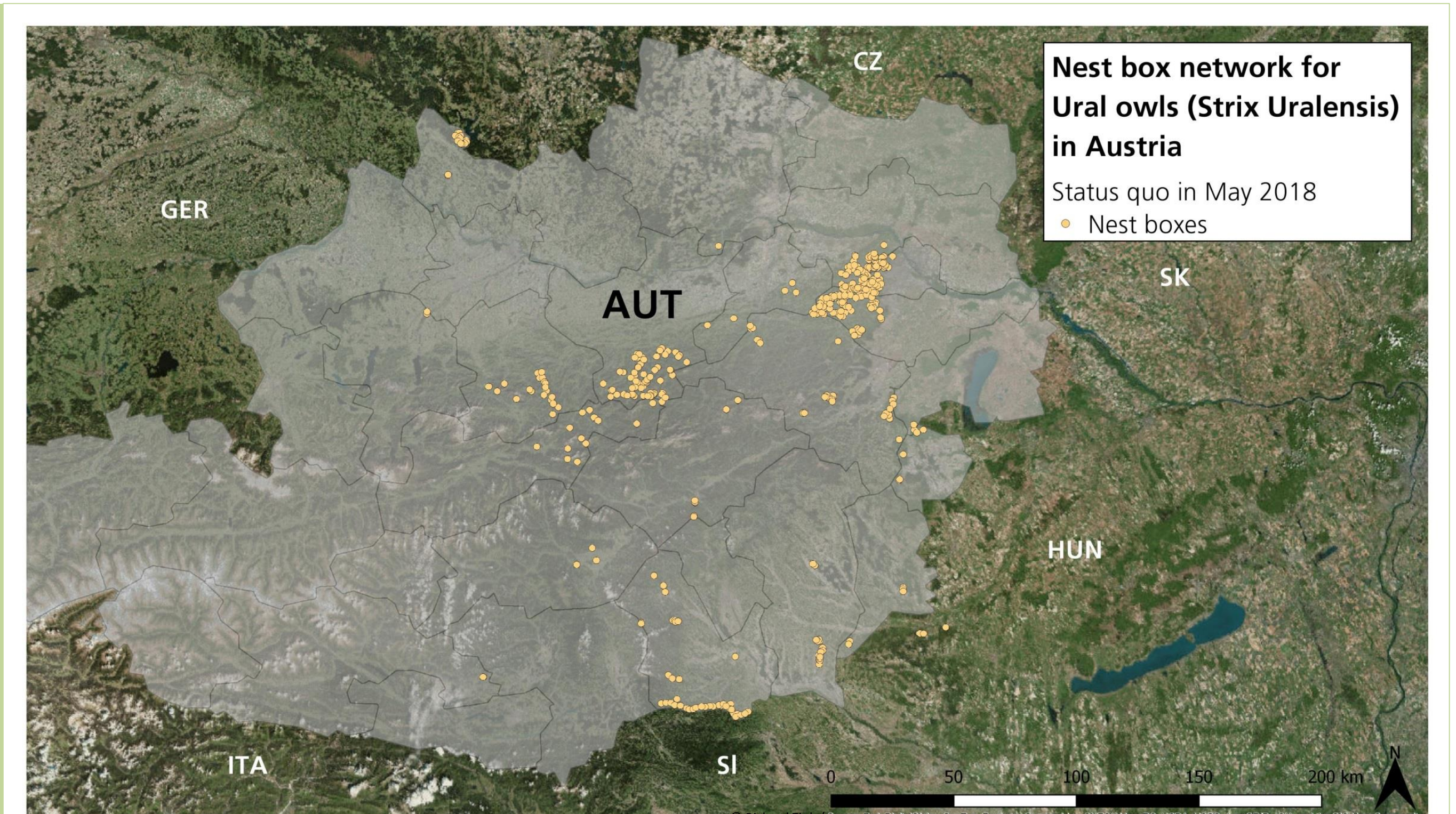


## The Task

- To control for breeding success of released owls up to 440 nest boxes are checked each year in spring.
- Controls are carried out by looking in a mirror installed in the nest box via binoculars.
- The data of each control is entered in a database.
- Citizen scientists new to the process are trained and guided throughout the season to assure proper monitoring.

## The Citizen Scientists

- Today 70 people control according to their abilities between 1 and 46 nest boxes each year.
- They have a diverse background from ornithologists to people who once encountered a Ural owl in their garden by chance.
- Together with the scientists from the project, every year over 85% of all nest boxes are checked.
- People are actively involved in a conservation project.



## Empowering Conservation together

- To secure the long-term survival of the species, involvement of citizen scientists is essential.
- Nest box monitoring controls for project success.
- Distribution of citizen scientists keeps travel distances short. Effort per person in terms of time and nest boxes controlled is kept low.
- Citizen scientists build a sustainable network and are vision multipliers for this conservation project.