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# 1 Birds as status symbols in northern France: Boves Castle during the 2 High Middle Ages, in its regional context.

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20 Abstract. Boves Castle, located in northern France, was occupied between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries  
21 AD. Under excavation since 1996, this high-status site has yielded more than six tons of faunal  
22 remains. Until now, archaeozoological studies have focused on the early occupation of the site (10<sup>th</sup>  
23 and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD), revealing specific supply and consumption strategies, widely based around  
24 birds. Aside from the very large amount of domestic fowl, Boves Castle is distinguished by the  
25 number and diversity of wild birds from various environments, including wetland, coastal, forested  
26 and anthropized areas. However, the special feature of this site is the importance of freshwater  
27 birds, especially large waders, which remained a status symbol until modern times in this region. On  
28 the basis of this outstanding example, and other high-status sites from the same region, we aim to  
29 discuss the importance and status of various domestic and game bird categories in northern France  
30 during the High Middle Ages. We will also address the subject of controlled hunting areas around  
31 castles and other high-status consumer sites, for a better understanding of the link between power  
32 and consumption during the medieval period.

33

34 Keywords. Archaeozoology / Poultry / Game birds / Northern France / Status

35

## 36 1. INTRODUCTION

37

38 In France, due to the lack of a strong central authority, regional lords began to assert their power  
39 from the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, texts reflect this theoretical  
40 organisation of the landscape, structuring the rural settlement at the initiative of the powerful.  
41 Society is therefore divided into three distinct groups: the monks, who prayed for everyone's  
42 salvation, the knights who gave their service to the Church and defended the weak, and the latter  
43 (the peasants) worked the land to feed the first two orders (Duby, 1978; Derville, 2000). By the  
44 beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, bishops, such as Adalberon of Laon (Carozzi, 1978), were reinforcing  
45 this conceptual framework to promote harmony in a Christian medieval world dominated by the  
46 king. There were therefore marked social differences during this period, particularly visible through  
47 food (Audoin-Rouzeau, 1995, 1997; Eryvnyck, 2004). Consequently, archaeozoology can help to clearly  
48 define the status of consumers. In northern France, for example, animal bones appear to be a highly  
49 discriminating social factor (Clavel and Yvinec, 2010): in contrast to the rural sites, elite environments  
50 evidence a higher proportion of pigs (slaughtered at a very young age), wild mammals, poultry and  
51 game birds.

52

53 These domestic and wild birds took on a new dietary importance during the Middle Ages in Europe,  
54 and their number and diversity are higher than in previous periods (see, [Ervynck, 1993](#); [Lepetz, 1996](#);  
55 [Clavel, 2001](#); [Serjeantson, 2009](#); [Yalden and Albarella, 2009](#); [Goffette et al. 2017](#); [Lepetz and Morand,](#)  
56 [2017](#); [Jouanin and Yvinec, 2020](#)). This evolution reflects the transformation of the agricultural  
57 landscape and the advent, as previously explained, of more marked social and cultural disparities  
58 during the medieval period. In particular, poultry and game birds were symbols of affluence and  
59 power within cities, religious institutions and castles ([Clavel, 2001](#); [Albarella and Thomas, 2002](#);  
60 [Serjeantson, 2006](#); [Stone, 2006](#)). In France, there are several examples of medieval elite  
61 archaeological sites that have yielded large quantities of bird remains, e.g. Montsoreau Castle in  
62 Maine-et-Loire ([Borvon, 2012](#)), Andone Castrum in Charente ([Rodet-Belarbi, 2009](#)), La Charité-sur-  
63 Loire monastery in the Nièvre ([Audoin-Rouzeau, 1986](#)), Mehun-sur-Yèvre Castle in Cher ([Jouanin,](#)  
64 [2011](#)) and Caen Castle in Calvados ([Clavel, 2015](#)). At each of these sites, more than 20 species of birds  
65 were identified. However, their representation is far from homogeneous, showing differences in the  
66 hierarchy and choice of individual species, and reflecting the diversity of production capacities,  
67 eating habits, cultural identities, and exploited environments. The combined influence of all these  
68 factors, and additional environmental constraints, widens the differences between these  
69 settlements.

70

71 The study of archaeological faunal remains from the castle mound at Boves reveals an impressive  
72 diversity of bird species (more than 40 taxa). This 10<sup>th</sup> century example, along with other high-status  
73 sites from the same period and the same region, raise questions about the use of birds as symbols of  
74 power, the control of hunting grounds, the plurality of food and agricultural behaviours, and the  
75 diversity of status signals between different high-status sites, during the High Middle Ages, in a  
76 restricted territory.

77

## 78 2. BOVES CASTLE AND THE SURROUNDING HIGH-STATUS SITES

79

80 Boves Castle is located in northern France, Somme department ([Fig. 1](#)), and was occupied between  
81 the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this article we present the initial results from a major archaeozoological  
82 study, which primarily focused on the 10<sup>th</sup> century bone remains from the upper part of the castle.  
83 Here, a dense aristocratic occupation was attested by two clearly distinct phases of timber-framed  
84 buildings; the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century evidences the establishment of an aristocratic residence,  
85 while the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century sees it become more defensive. The development of motte-and-  
86 bailey castles is often linked with the political contexts associated with Viking aggression, and the  
87 inherent struggles during the formation of territorial principalities. Indeed, this hypothesis may well  
88 be appropriate for the case of Boves, located in an affluent region which was marked by the absence  
89 of political unity and subsequent power struggles ([Racinet, 2002, 2008](#); [Leblanc, 2003](#)). Artefacts  
90 from the site were particularly rich and abundant (weapons, crucibles, gold leaf, numerous coins),  
91 denoting its aristocratic nature, and animal bones were no exception. Almost 52,000 bone fragments  
92 were analyzed, including 7,263 bird remains ([Table 1](#)). Zooarchaeological material was discovered  
93 across the entire upper part of the castle (mainly from rubbish and grain storage pits), representing  
94 homogeneous taphonomical characteristics and a wide range of waste management episodes. The  
95 data revealed a very specific supply of animals for high-status consumption. It shows a large majority  
96 of pigs (*Sus scrofa domesticus* – 13,327 bones and 59% of identified mammals), essentially  
97 slaughtered before their first year (84%). Domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) was the second  
98 most represented species with 5,323 bones (84% of identified birds). Many hare (*Lepus europaeus*)  
99 bones (535) were also identified. However, the number of large wild mammals, which were a symbol  
100 of power during this period, is low. Only three species and 47 bones were identified from this part of  
101 the site. The main reason seems to be the greater importance placed on birds as an expression of  
102 status. In addition to chickens, ducks, geese (*Anatidae*) and pigeons (*Columbidae*), there was a large  
103 number and wide diversity of wild birds (more than 460 bones and 40 taxa) from various

104 environments. Partridge (*Perdix perdix*) and corvids (*Corvidae*) were most frequently represented.  
105 Birds typically associated with high status, such as falcons (*Falconidae*), peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) and  
106 capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), along with a wide diversity of water birds, especially large waders  
107 (more than 100 bones), were also represented. Finally, it should be mentioned that more than 8,500  
108 bone remains, from the lower part of the castle (of a lesser status than the upper part) were studied  
109 (Duval and Clavel 2017), providing valuable data for social comparisons. Although these data will not  
110 be specifically discussed within this study, mention will be made in order to highlight the importance  
111 of birds as status markers on the site.

112

113 **Fig. 1.** Location of sites dated to the High Middle Ages (9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> c. AD) in northern France. Black  
114 circles = high-status sites mentioned in the text (with a large amount of game remains). Grey circles =  
115 sites without or with very few game bird remains (map: © Graphi-Ogre 2000 - France - Tous droits  
116 réservés / GEOATLAS®).

117

118 **Table 1.** Number of studied bone fragments from Boves Castle.

119

120 From among the 30 archaeozoological studies carried out for the High Middle Ages in the Hauts-de-  
121 France region (Fig. 1), three other high-status sites yielded abundance of game, most notably birds.  
122 These sites were chosen for comparison because of their geographic and chronological proximity, as  
123 well as their economic, social and taphonomic similarities. The site of Douai "Fonderie de canons"  
124 (Demolon and Barbieux, 1979), in the Nord department, enabled us to observe the very origins of the  
125 city, whose first houses in wattle and daub replaced the former rural hamlet at the beginning of the  
126 10<sup>th</sup> century. Dated to around 940 AD, the count's first wooden residence yielded military objects  
127 and a gold fibula. The construction of a new residence – a large, multi-storey wooden building with a  
128 stone rampart – can almost certainly be attributed to the Carolingian King Lothair. In the middle of  
129 the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the site became a stone fortress. It has yielded 24,394 animal remains, dated to the  
130 second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which include almost 300 wild bird bones  
131 (Yvinec, 1993). All the studied bones came from negative features with homogeneous fills,  
132 corresponding to the establishment of a manorial building (Yvinec, 1996).

133

134 "Le Village" site at Démuin revealed an occupation extending from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the  
135 Renaissance. The fortified habitat was established in the 10<sup>th</sup> century on a small promontory  
136 overlooking the Luce Valley, in the centre of the Somme Valley. It was most probably an important  
137 exploitation and production centre attached to Corbie Abbey (Jonvel, 2013). About 5,000 bone  
138 remains from 209 contexts were collected, including 709 identified bird bones (Clavel and Barne,  
139 2014). These bones were found in storage features which had been converted into dumps. The  
140 studied samples, therefore, mainly indicated meat preparation and consumption episodes, mixing  
141 butchery, kitchen and table waste.

142

143 Located in the Oise department, the Compiègne site of "Les Hallettes" (Petitjean, 1997) includes the  
144 remains of the palatial residence of the Carolingian and first Capetian kings. From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup>  
145 centuries the buildings associated with the palace were located on a promontory overlooking the  
146 Oise (Petitjean, 1997). The occupation was extremely dense, with the zooarchaeological remains  
147 (more than 22,000 bones, including 864 identified to birds – Yvinec, 1997) recovered from  
148 embankments, pits, latrines and layers of redistributed waste, relating to the habitation and palatial  
149 areas. This assemblage, dating to the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, bears  
150 witness to the presence of a high-ranking community. Bone remains included species such as crane  
151 (*Grus grus*), swan (*Cygnus olor*), peafowl, sturgeon (*Acipenseridae*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and  
152 aurochs (*Bos primigenius*).

153

154 Finally it is worth mentioning a fourth site: the castle of Château-Thierry. Even if not yet studied, a  
155 first look at the material allows some cautious but relevant comparisons with assemblages discussed

156 in this article. Château-Thierry is located in the Aisne department and was erected during the 9<sup>th</sup>  
157 century by the Counts of Vermandois (Blary, 2013). It was occupied until the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>  
158 century. Bone remains come from negative features, including rubbish and grain storage pits, from  
159 the upper courtyard of the Old Castle. These features are dated from the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the  
160 11<sup>th</sup> century. As the zooarchaeological study is still at an early stage no data can be given, only  
161 general trends.

### 162 163 3. METHODS

164  
165 The site at Boves has been the subject of large-scale sieving campaigns. However, in order to ensure  
166 that comparison of sites is based on equivalent sampling methods, the assemblages considered here  
167 came exclusively from manual collection. Moreover, comparison sites have been chosen according to  
168 the similarity of their status, taphonomic and archaeological characteristics. The animal remains from  
169 each site were identified using the CRAVO (Compiègne, France) and Muséum national d'Histoire  
170 naturelle (Paris) reference collections, which include the majority of past and present bird species  
171 from northern France. The results presented in this article mainly depend on the correct  
172 determination of the different species present. Some closely related taxa posed problems of  
173 identification. In particular, it is difficult to separate *Anatidae* into domestic and wild individuals,  
174 which can blur our reading of animal selection strategies (see Serjeantson, 2002; Albarella, 2005). To  
175 try to overcome this problem, the geese from Boves and Compiègne were subjected to specific  
176 morphometric analysis, using the Log Size Index method and reference specimens from the Muséum  
177 national d'Histoire naturelle de Paris (for more details, see Duval and Clavel, 2018). It has been  
178 estimated that wild geese made up about 20 to 25% of the total at each site, including pink-footed  
179 geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) or greylag geese (*Anser anser*) on the first site, and smaller individuals  
180 on the second: greater white-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons*) or barnacle geese (*Branta leucopsis*). As  
181 far as ducks are concerned, only the site at Boves, given the diversity of forms present, has been  
182 subjected to specific identification attempts. A sizeable majority of the large bones found on the  
183 castle mound can be attributed to the domestic duck, but other species were also noted. The  
184 identification of teal/garganey or pochard, given their size and morphology (Woelfle 1967), was  
185 relatively easy. But it was much more complicated for other forms of surface-feeding ducks (e.g.  
186 pintail, shoveler and wigeon), which we have chosen to gather in one category: "medium-sized wild  
187 ducks" (Table 1). In the absence of further clarification, all the ducks and geese from the comparison  
188 sites were allocated to domestic fauna. *Turdidae* species were identified following osteometric  
189 criteria, as defined by J. Cuisin (1989) and G. Jouanin (2004). All the others species, within a same  
190 taxonomic group (e.g. columbiformes, galliformes, ciconiiformes, passeriformes) have been  
191 distinguished, with the help of reference collections, according to morphological and morphometrical  
192 criteria, and the support of some identification manuals (Fick, 1974; Kellner, 1986; Cohen and  
193 Serjeantson, 1996; Tomek and Bocheński, 2000, 2009; Bocheński and Tomek, 2009).

### 194 195 4. BOVES: BIRDS IMPORTANCE AND DIVERSITY

196  
197 As in most medieval contexts, Boves includes a clear majority of poultry. Chickens, peafowl, rock  
198 doves (*Columba livia*), geese (*Anser anser domesticus*) and domestic ducks (*Anas platyrhynchos*  
199 *domesticus*) account for more than 92% of the identified birds. Chickens were the most numerous  
200 with 5,323 remains (more than 73% of all birds). They were also the second most frequently  
201 consumed species, ahead of sheep/goat (*Ovis aries/Capra hircus*), cattle (*Bos taurus*) and hare (Table  
202 1). This abundance is not uncommon in high-status sites. At Démuin Castle, for example, chickens  
203 were the most frequent species, ahead of the domestic triad (i.e. cattle, sheep/goat, pig – Clavel and  
204 Barme, 2014). It should be noted that there is a certain economic proximity between these two  
205 neighbouring sites (Fig. 1), as we will see later. Ducks and geese were also very popular at Boves,  
206 with more than 200 remains each (representing 4 and 3.3% of all identified birds). In comparison,



207 few pigeon bones (77) were found, whose domestic status remains difficult to establish. Finally,  
208 peafowl were present on the site: 11 bones, including two male individuals identified by their spurs.  
209

210 In the upper part of Boves Castle, chickens were not only numerous, they were subject to specific  
211 selection. The presence and shape of the spurs, coupled with metric analysis of the tarsometatarsi,  
212 showed a predominance of uncastrated and castrated males (Fig. 2). There were 147 suspected  
213 cockerels and capons to only 17 females (90/10%). These food choices show the ability of the motte-  
214 and-bailey inhabitants to draw freely from a large reservoir of poultry. The elites took advantage of a  
215 vast supply network and an intensive and specific production intended for the castle. As a  
216 comparison, we observe a more balanced proportion of males and females (63/37%) in the lower  
217 part of the castle.  
218

219 Fig. 2. Sex determination of the tarsometatarsi of chicken from Boves Castle: comparison of metric  
220 data (in mm) and description of the spurs.  
221

222 At Boves, game birds accounted for less than 8% of all bird remains and had little impact on diet.  
223 However, they represented 476 bones, belonging to at least 40 different taxa. This diversity  
224 undeniably reflects the power exercised by the inhabitants of the castle mound, their large supply  
225 capacity and the exploitation of all areas under their control. Despite the extensive breeding of geese  
226 and ducks, at least two species of wild geese (Duval and Clavel, 2018) (Fig. 3) and a wide variety of  
227 *Anatidae* of all sizes were found at the site, including teal and/or garganey (*Anas*  
228 *crecca/querquedula*) and pochard (*Aythya ferina*). Partridge was the most popular game bird.  
229 Corvids, as commensal species, are often present in bone assemblages and here they accounted for  
230 94 bones, mostly from rooks and/or carrion crows (*Corvus frugilegus/corone*). Even if no high status  
231 dimension seems to be attached to them, their abundance on all European sites from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the  
232 18<sup>th</sup> century makes them "wild birds familiar to the table" (Audoin-Rouzeau, 1994). Traces of cutting  
233 and gnaw marks, observed in the Gallo-Roman period (Lepetz, 1996) and the Early Middle Ages  
234 (Yvinec, 1993) in northern France, leave no room for doubt: these birds were consumed. Again, the  
235 Boves site confirms this. There were also some turdids, in low proportions, and a handful of  
236 indeterminate passerines. In addition, we noted the exceptional presence of the capercaillie (Fig. 3).  
237 Some species, usually living in the littoral zone, testify to the wide sampling radius of the castle: the  
238 common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) and the kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), for example. The absence of  
239 pheasants may reflect the difficulty of determining this taxon. It should also be mentioned that no  
240 swans (a particularly ostentatious bird) were found on the site, although its bones are easily  
241 recognizable and suffer little from differential collection. Among this bouquet of colourful feathers,  
242 fresh water birds dominated (Fig. 4). Moreover, the particularity of the Boves site is expressed  
243 through its waders, of which there are nearly 100 remains: the crane, the night heron (*Nycticorax*  
244 *nycticorax*), the grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and the bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) (Fig. 3). Similar to  
245 differences in domestic fowl sexual dimorphism (see previous paragraph), it should be mentioned  
246 that the lower part of the castle shows a different picture regarding the presence of wild birds. Only  
247 25 wild bird remains (from among 621 bird bone fragments) were identified, including a few large  
248 waders.  
249

250 Such birds seem to have held a special status in this region of northern France since the High Middle  
251 Ages, being offered as gifts to kings, nobles and religious elites; and even until five centuries later in  
252 the nearby city of Amiens (Cloquier and Clavel, 2015). Some of the birds of prey discovered at Boves  
253 could have been used to hunt these species; for example, the goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), which is a  
254 formidable bird hunter. Its presence at Boves evokes both the practice of hawking (*autourserie*) and  
255 the pastime of the nobility. As a low flying bird, it is especially suited to wooded areas and was  
256 probably the first hunting bird to be used in Europe, according to Germanic law on this subject  
257 (Lindner and Birkhan, 1976, quoted by Van den Abeele, 1994). This author evokes the terms of  
258 *canshapuh* and *anothapuh*, designating hawks trained to hunt wild geese and ducks, two types of

259 game identified at Boves. In addition, we find the goshawk regularly identified in sites contemporary  
260 to Boves Castle, as at Mehun-sur-Yèvre (Jouanin, 2011).

261

262 **Fig. 3.** Capercaillie coracoid (A), smew (B), grey heron (C) and crane (D) tarsometatarsi. Bones from a  
263 small wild goose (E), possibly a pink-footed goose (see Duval and Clavel, 2018).

264

265 This great diversity of wild birds revealed a hunt driven by cultural and symbolic choices, and reflects  
266 the control and intense exploitation of marshy areas at the foot of the mound. Nearly 41% of  
267 individuals relate to these humid zones (Fig. 4). Species from open habitats (such as partridge) and  
268 from anthropized areas (small passerines) were also represented. It is clear that the lords of Boves  
269 Castle had access to a wide range of species from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The castle, located on a  
270 promontory, dominated a plateau on one side and dry and wet valleys on the other, and the  
271 presence of these species represents predation in all of the environments (marshes, rivers, plains,  
272 plateaus) surrounding the site. It is true, however, that this inventory only provides a partial  
273 reflection of the natural world because the effects of human selection as well as the constraints  
274 related to hunting methods have probably biased our perception of the ecological reality. Finally, we  
275 cannot exclude that the pre-eminence of birds, especially from wetlands, and the scarcity of  
276 prestigious game mammals, might be partly led by environmental determinism.

277

## 278 5. REGIONAL COMPARISONS

279

280 Comparison between game proportions at Boves Castle and other high-status sites in northern  
281 France shows differences in the use of wild game as symbols of power (Fig. 4). We can see that the  
282 neighbouring settlements of Boves and Démuin (Clavel and Barme, 2014) show similar patterns, with  
283 a high proportion of small game (mammals and birds) represented (although with much less diversity  
284 and quantities for the latter). Moreover, as previously mentioned, poultry account for a large part of  
285 the diet at these two sites. In addition to the 585 chicken and 95 goose bones, a plover, two bird of  
286 prey and some corvid bones were found at Démuin. The hunting model at Douai (Yvinec, 1993, 1996)  
287 seems to rely more on birds, with less diversity than at Boves but with a much more targeted  
288 selection of prestigious species, including 21 swan, 49 crane and 48 falcon remains. Seven grey  
289 heron, 48 partridge and 40 charadriiformes bones were also identified from this site. Finally, the city  
290 of Compiègne (Yvinec, 1997) shows a very different trend, with priority given to large wild mammals.  
291 Apart from the most commonly identified wild mammals, one wolf (*Canis lupus*) bone, four brown  
292 bear bones, two beaver (*Castor fiber*) bones and three mustelid bones were found at this site. The  
293 wild birds identified at Compiègne include the remains of some prestigious species: three peafowl,  
294 four wild goose, five partridge, four woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), one bird of prey and three swan  
295 bones. From an initial examination of the fauna, this trend is also visible in the 10<sup>th</sup> century at the  
296 Château-Thierry Castle site (Fig. 1), with numerous wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and cervids, but only a few  
297 wild birds. Therefore, it is clear that there were significant regional differences in hunting  
298 preferences related to the environment and to cultural perceptions, but also, maybe, a certain social  
299 or functional hierarchy between high-status sites and studied contexts.

300

301 Taphonomy, for example, could be a reason for zooarchaeological differences between sites.  
302 However the similarities among samples in bone recovery methods, types and number of excavated  
303 features, bone preservation and social status, as well as the straightforward identification of the  
304 aforementioned species, suggest that this could only have a minimal influence on the observed  
305 trends. Another more relevant explanation of site particularities would be environmental  
306 characteristics, which presuppose differential access to prey. Boves, located along the River Somme  
307 and close to the coast, was surrounded by open habitats and wetlands (Racinet, 2002), making birds  
308 an abundant resource. The fact that waders remained a status symbol in this region from the 9<sup>th</sup> to  
309 the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as gifts to visiting elites (Cloquier and Clavel, 2015), seems to indicate a strong  
310 cultural trend, probably affected by the availability of game. Conversely, the city of Compiègne,

311 situated in the middle of the forest, had easy access to cervids, wild boar and other woodland game,  
312 explaining their abundance in studied samples up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Clavel, 1997). For both these  
313 sites (Compiègne and Boves), it seems that the physical environment determined game distribution  
314 more than social variations, underlining the possible influence of ecological conditions on food and  
315 cultural habits during the Middle Ages. A final hypothesis could be the existence of a hierarchy  
316 among game, reflecting the hierarchy among elites from different places. While the environment  
317 may have restricted access to some species, the control of trade routes, vast territories and displays  
318 of power would certainly have helped to overcome this problem, leading to a greater diversity in  
319 game proportions and representations. As previously mentioned, the abundance and taxonomic  
320 richness of wild species allow us to distinguish high-status sites from rural and urban contexts (see  
321 for example Audoin-Rouzeau, 1997; Clavel, 2001; Erynk, 2004; Serjeantson, 2006) and different  
322 parts of the same castle, such as between the upper and the lower part of Boves Castle (Duval and  
323 Clavel 2017), revealing the greater prerogative of elites over game acquisition during the entire  
324 Middle Ages (Clavel 2001). But it is unrealistic to think, given the diversity of consumption episodes,  
325 the complexity of cultural stimuli and the influence of power and environment (as well as our own  
326 ignorance regarding these parameters), that we can build a social map between high-status sites  
327 based purely on zooarchaeological markers. It seems more sensible to consider that it is a complex  
328 combination of all these factors, underlining the plurality of status expressions, and the massive but  
329 variable importance of birds, as already suggested by previous authors (e.g. Albarella and Thomas  
330 2002; Serjeantson 2006).

331

332 **Fig. 4.** Differences in game proportions in the castle mound of Boves and neighbouring high-status  
333 sites (% of wild birds, large and small wild mammals). Numbers in pie charts indicate the number of  
334 fragments. The histogram on the right indicates the relative importance of the different supply areas  
335 for game birds at Boves Castle.

336

## 337 6. CONCLUSION

338

339 This short article should be considered as another step toward a better understanding of food  
340 practices and supply choices in a medieval elite setting. First impressions regarding the animal  
341 remains from the castle mound at Boves show that hunting practices and status expression were  
342 essentially based on birds. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, elite and religious communities living in this  
343 settlement had access to a great diversity of species from many different environments. This  
344 indicates that they exercised close control on the forests and valleys around the castle, as well as on  
345 local and regional supply networks. The importance of water birds, especially waders, is particularly  
346 noticeable. These appear to have represented a high-status food, revealing the possible practice of a  
347 sport (maybe waders were caught using birds of prey) which was reserved purely for the elite. The  
348 abundance of highly selected poultry also appears to have been a strong status marker. The fact that  
349 the lower part of the castle revealed clearly different trends again underlines the importance of birds  
350 (wild and domestic) in the elite diet. Boves (among some other sites: e.g. Montsoreau – Borvon 2012)  
351 provides an early and outstanding example of status symbolism specifically targeted at birds (in  
352 terms of quantity and diversity). If large wild mammals are usually consigned this role, as symbols of  
353 courage, virility or power (e.g. Pastoureau 2007 about the bear), then Boves Castle leads us to  
354 consider cultural alternatives for status expression. The existence of long-standing regional patterns,  
355 such as the importance of waders in the Somme Valley, implies a certain diversity of codes for status  
356 expression.

357

358 Comparisons, made between elite populations from a restricted territory, assist us in understanding  
359 the complexity behind defining economic and social status. It also underlines the great social and  
360 cultural inequality and diversity of medieval society. Other striking examples of culturally and socially  
361 oriented food supply during Middle Ages, which must be considered in future studies, are religious  
362 contexts (see for example the monasteries of Saint-Georges-de Boscherville – Callou 1999 – and La



363 Charité-sur-Loire – [Audoin-Rouzeau 1986](#)). The fact that they followed more rigid and defined rules  
364 makes the criteria for food and game selection more easily readable, and comparison with other  
365 high-status sites more effective. All comparisons with other particular contexts, from the same  
366 region and other geographical areas, will help to enlarge and define our vision of the role played by  
367 animals, and especially birds, in the definition of power.

368

369 A final approach suggested by this study, for understanding the influence of the environment on  
370 supply choices, is to consider the relationship between birds and their biotopes. This will allow the  
371 past environments of elite sites and hopefully their hunting grounds to be reconstructed, in order to  
372 estimate the control of territories and the possibilities of a long-distance supply; in other words, the  
373 power and influence of the studied populations. Considering trends and discrepancies over time also  
374 entails assessing the diversity, stability and persistence of classes from the same social background in  
375 relation to major events of historical evolution.

376

## 377 7. FORMATTING OF FUNDING SOURCES

378

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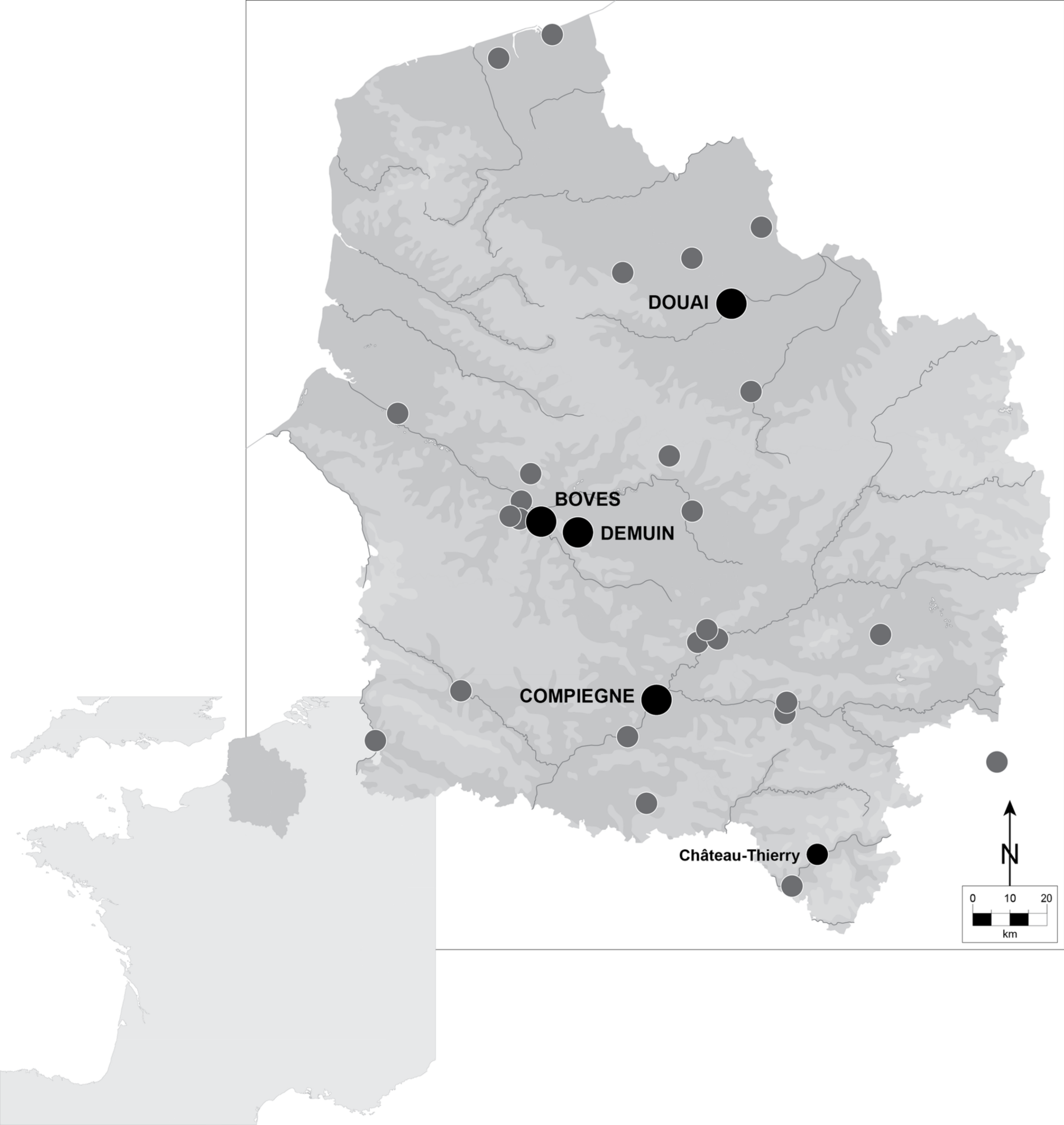
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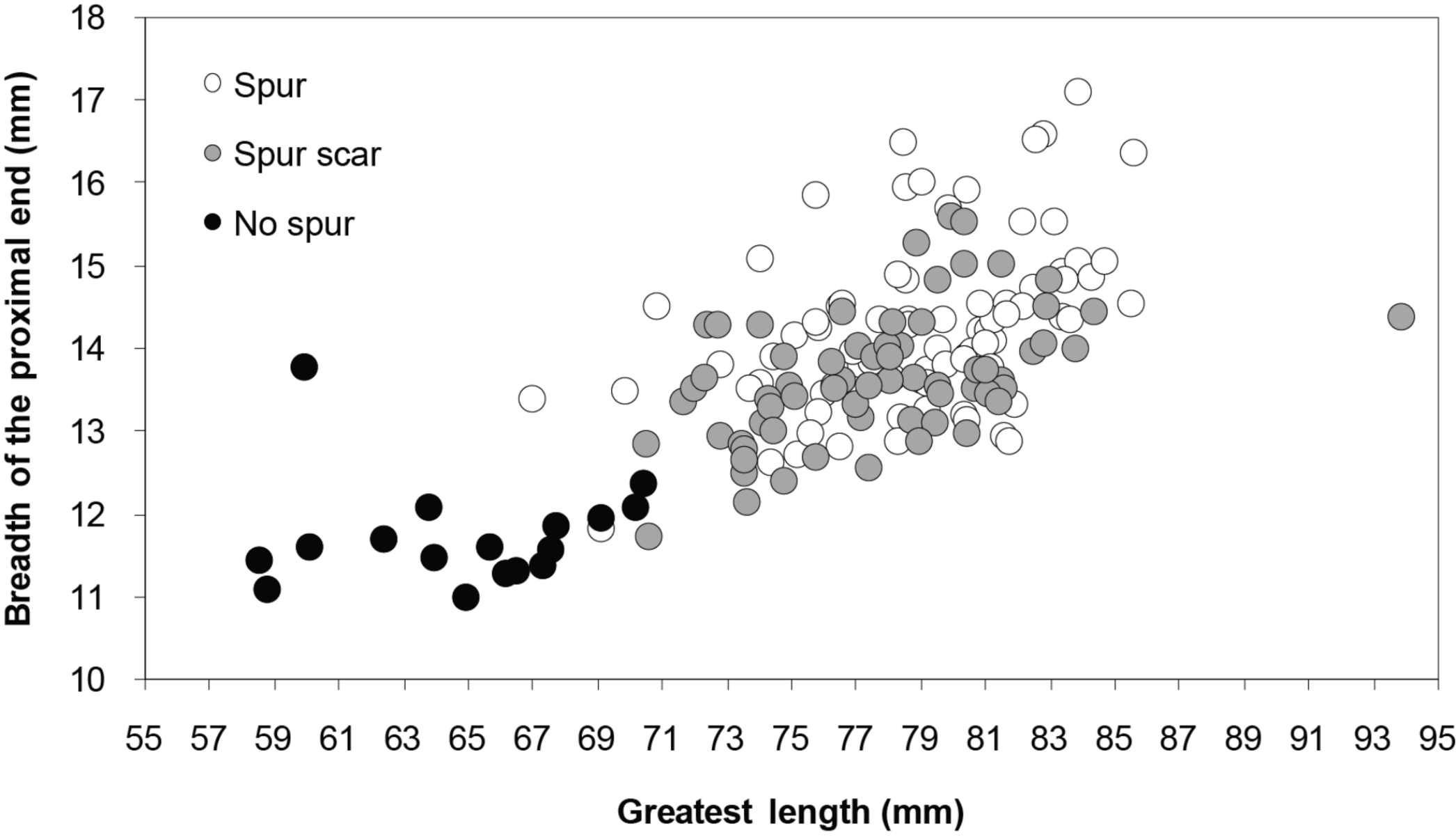
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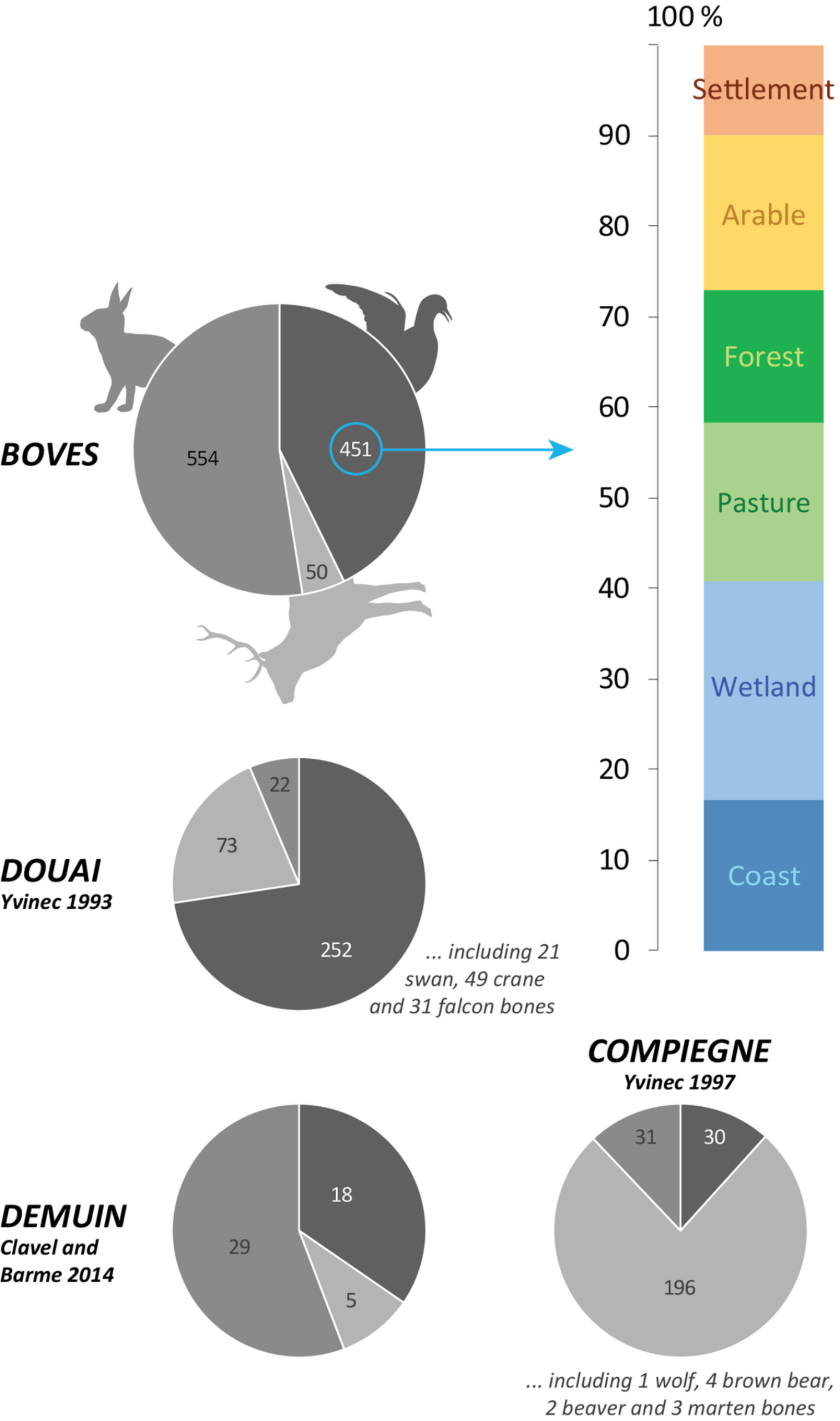
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Domestic mammals	21,755
Wild mammals	887
TOTAL Mammals - including unidentified mammals	43,534
TOTAL Fish	1,059
TOTAL Molluscs	5
TOTAL Amphibians	6

<b>Poultry</b>	
Domestic fowl - <i>Gallus Gallus</i> [var. <i>domesticus</i> ]	5323
Peafowl - <i>Pavo cristatus</i> [var. <i>domesticus</i> ]	11
Domestic duck - <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> [var. <i>domesticus</i> ]	254
Domestic Goose - <i>Anser anser</i> [var. <i>domesticus</i> ]	209
<b>Anseriformes</b>	
Wild Goose - <i>Anser</i> or <i>Branta</i> sp.	52
Medium-size wild ducks - cf. <i>Anas clypeata</i> / <i>acuta</i> / <i>penelope</i>	12
Teal / Garganey - <i>Anas crecca</i> / <i>Anas querquedula</i>	9
Pochard - <i>Aythya ferina</i>	3
Tufted duck - <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	5
Duck - <i>Anas</i> / <i>Aythya</i> sp.	14
Common scoter - <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	3
Smew - <i>Mergellus albellus</i>	2
<b>Galliformes</b>	
Capercaillie - <i>Tetrao urogallus</i>	1
Quail - <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	2
Grey partridge - <i>Perdix perdix</i>	68
<b>Podicipediformes</b>	
Little Grebe - <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	1
<b>Ciconiiformes</b>	
Bittern - <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	57
Night heron - <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	4
Grey heron - <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	30
<i>Ardeidae</i> sp.	4
<b>Accipitriformes</b>	
Goshawk - <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	1
Sparrowhawk - <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	6
Buzzard - <i>Buteo buteo</i>	1
<b>Gruiformes</b>	
Crane - <i>Grus grus</i>	8
<b>Charadriiformes</b>	
Golden plover - <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	11
Lapwing - <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1
<i>Tringa</i> sp.	2
Woodcock - <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	1
Snipe - <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1
<i>Charadriidae</i> / <i>Scolopacidae</i> sp.	4
Kittiwake - <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	1
<b>Columbiformes</b>	
Rock dove - <i>Columba livia</i>	23
Wood pigeon - <i>Columba palumbus</i>	38
Pigeon - <i>Columbidae</i> sp.	16
<b>Piciformes</b>	
Green woodpecker - <i>Picus viridis</i>	2
<b>Passeriformes</b>	
Magpie - <i>Pica pica</i>	10
Jackdaw - <i>Corvus monedula</i>	17
Rook / Carrion crow - <i>Corvus frugilegus</i> / <i>corone</i>	64
Raven - <i>Corvus corax</i>	3
Lark - <i>Alaudidae</i> sp.	4
Blackbird - <i>Turdus merula</i>	5
Song thrush - <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	5
Mistle thrush - <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	4
Finch - <i>Fringillidae</i> sp.	4
TOTAL Birds - including unidentified birds	7264

GRAND TOTAL	51868
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