

# Pollinator Planting Effect on Nesting Performance of *Megachile rotundata*



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Question: Do urban prairie restorations realistically benefit pollinators?

## Background

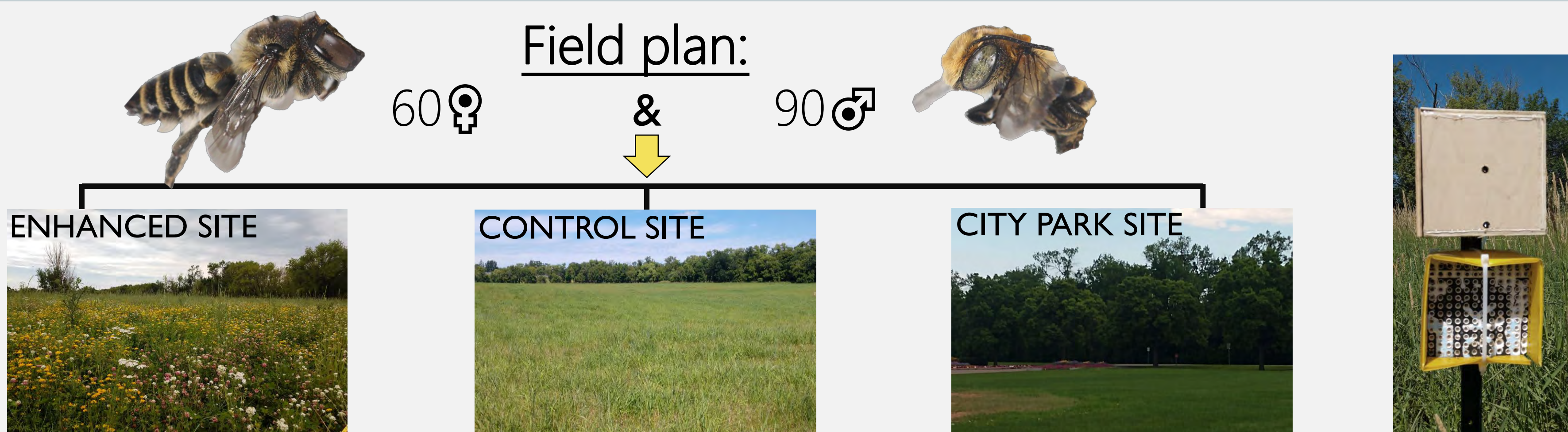
### Why care:

- o Bees play a huge role in plant pollination
- o ↑ global decline in wild & commercial pollinators
  - Lack of adequate nutrition exacerbates the myriad of other stressors<sup>(1)</sup>
- o To help pollinators, a nationwide movement is establishing millions of acres of pollinator plantings
  - providing a diverse/abundant forbs to sustain pollinators
- o By stabilizing floral resource availability, planting should directly support bee fitness and offspring health

### Fixing it:

- o Several studies<sup>(1,2,3)</sup> support urban areas as appropriate habitat for different bees
- o Our study assesses whether floral enhancements in urban areas increase reproductive success of *Megachile rotundata* (ALCB: alfalfa leaf cutting bee)
  - *M. rotundata* world's most intensely managed solitary bee<sup>(4)</sup>
  - *M. rotundata* is a sentinel bee, meaning it is alert to the surrounding and will alert us<sup>(4)</sup>
  - ALCB naturally emerge/nest during hot summer days
  - Females mate once, soon after emergence → consume nectar/pollen as their first eggs mature
  - Within a week females begin constructing/provisioning cells sequentially

Hypothesis: Greater availability of floral resources will increase nesting success of the sentinel *Megachile rotundata*



## Methods

### Field plan:

- o 5 triads: enhanced refuge, natural refuge, city park (Fig. 1)
- o Released 60 females & 90 males
  - Via emergence boxes at night (10-12pm)
- o Nest box placed at center of each site
- o Surveyed flowers within a 100m radius

### Nesting success:

- o Check nesting activity weekly
- o Pull completely nests weekly
- o Store nests at 29°C (1 week)
- o X-ray straws for establishment & offspring

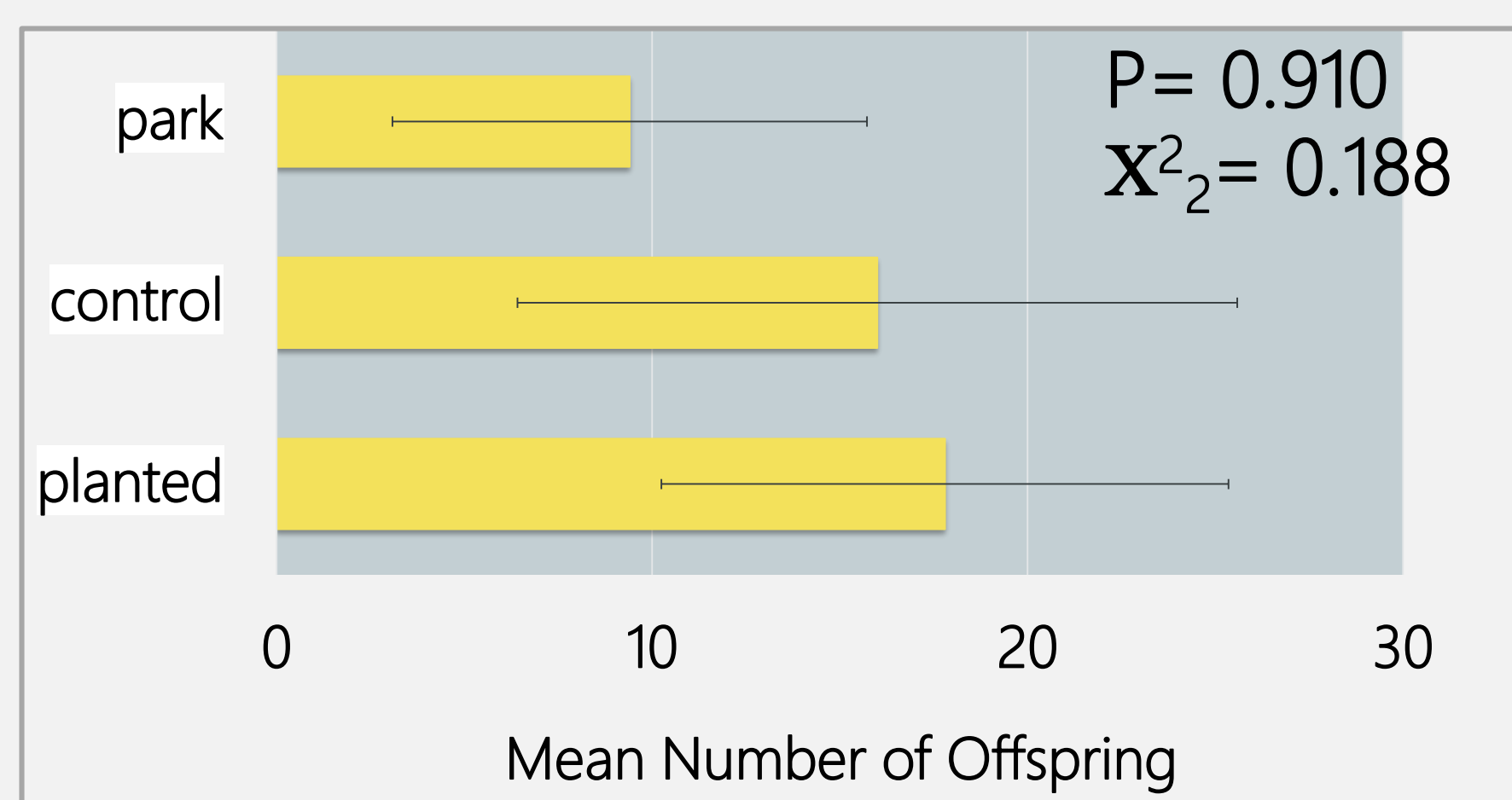


Figure 2: Reproductive success at different site treatments

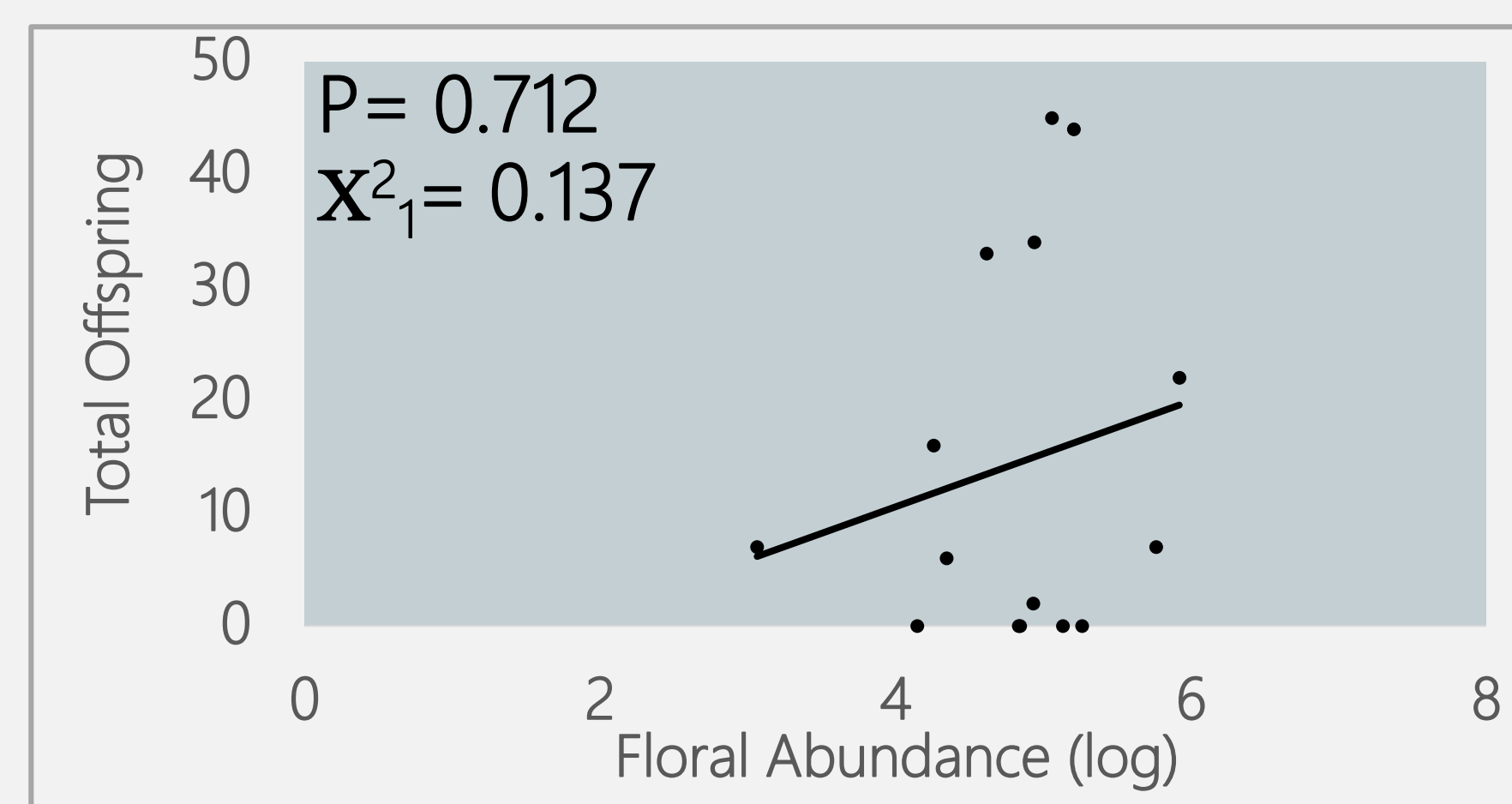


Figure 4: Floral abundance affects on total offspring counts

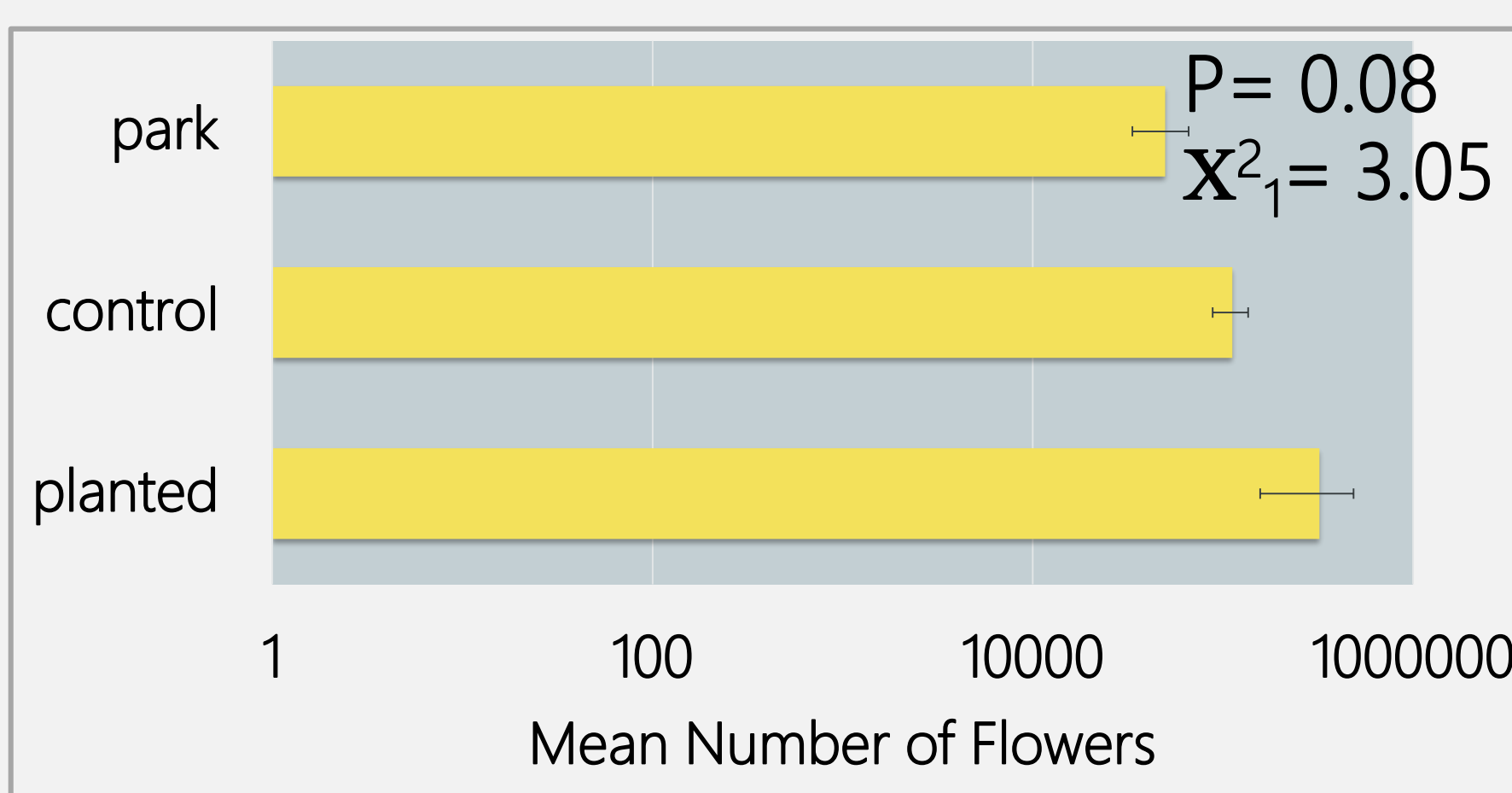


Figure 3: Floral resources at different site treatments

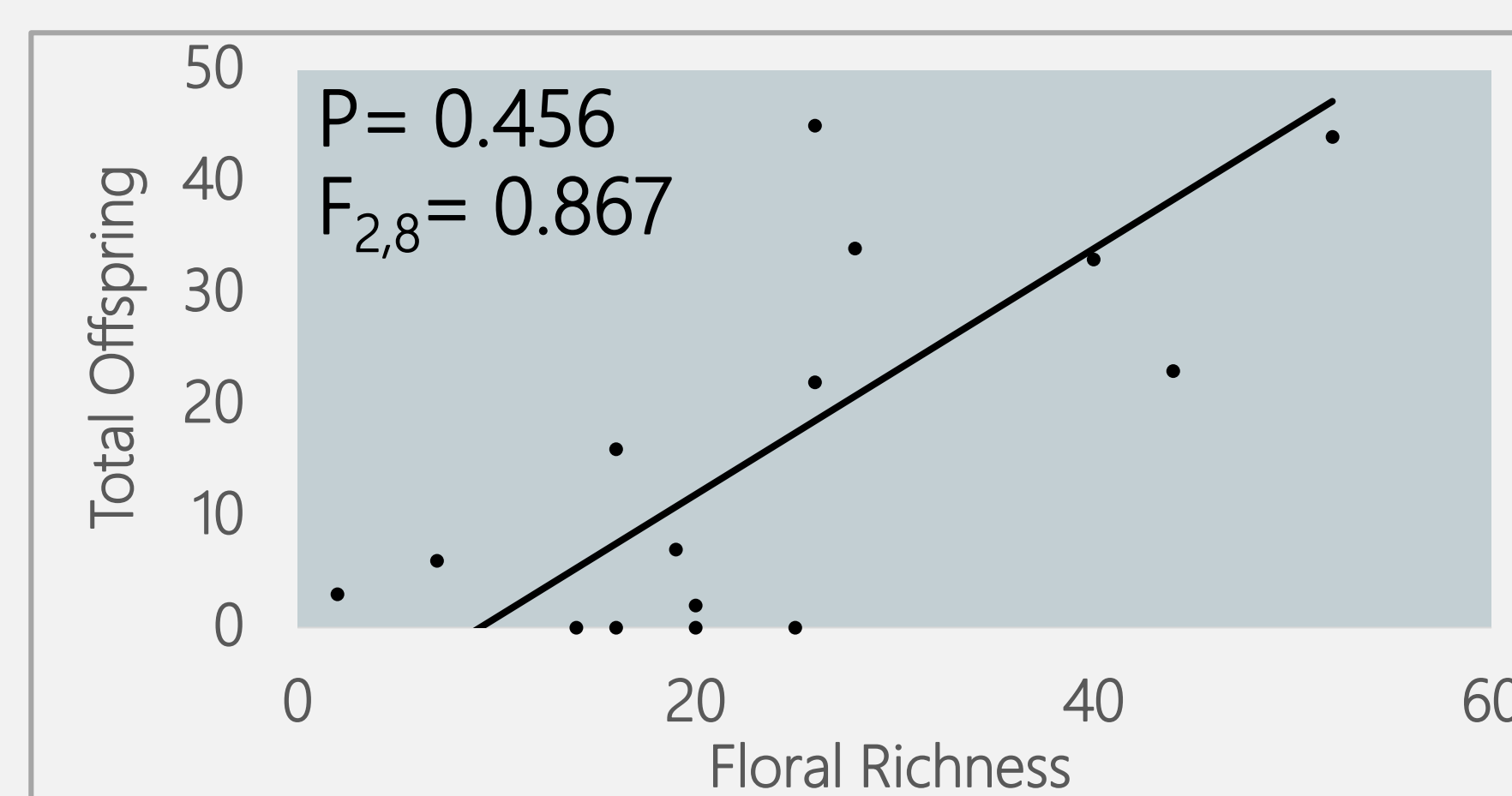


Figure 5: Floral richness affects on total offspring counts

## Results

- o Reproduction did not vary with different site treatments (Fig. 2).
- o Pollinator plantings did not have an obvious benefit for pollinators due to similar floral abundance (Fig. 3).
- o With greater floral abundance, total offspring increased, but not significantly (Fig. 4)
- o With greater floral richness, total offspring increased, but not significantly (Fig. 5)
- o This study shows that floral abundance does not influence reproduction success of the *M. rotundata*.

Figure 1: Map of the Red River with all sites labeled with a specific symbol for a triad

## Conclusion

- o Given these results, we are left to wonder if other variables, such as seasonal flooding of the Red River, or management of the sites could have had a negative affect on the study.
- o Poor female nest establishment was also noted, and releasing more bees may have a positive impact on gaining more nests.
- o Floral richness had a noteworthy impact on the total offspring count and causes questions for further research

Acknowledgements: Thank you to my partner Zeta Powell, my Advisors Kendra Greenlee, Mia Park, and Joe Rineharts along with AE and NJ for field work assistance. Thank you to the USDA for the providing resources and NDSU for this research opportunity.

References: <sup>1</sup>Anderson, E. C. & Minor, E. S. Vacant lots: An underexplored resource for ecological and social benefits in cities. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 21, 146–152 (2017). <sup>2</sup>Anderson, E. C. & Minor, E. S. Vacant lots: An underexplored resource for ecological and social benefits in cities. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 21, 146–152 (2017). <sup>3</sup>Banaszak-Cibicka, W., Ratyńska, H. & Dylewski, L. Features of urban green space favourable for large and diverse bee populations (Hymenoptera: Apoidea: Apiformes). *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 20, 448–452 (2016). <sup>4</sup>Pitts-Singer, T. L. & Cane, J. H. The Alfalfa Leafcutting Bee, *Megachile rotundata*: The World's Most Intensively Managed Solitary Bee. *Annual Review of Entomology* 56, 221–237 (2011).