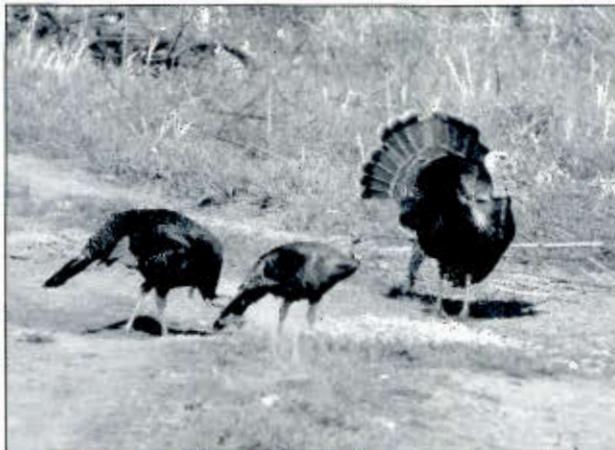


# The 2010 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count

by Michael P. Ward and Tara Beveroth

The 2010 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count held 8 May 2010 marks the 40th Spring Bird Count and the end of an era. In 1970, Vern Kleen had the foresight and ambition to initiate the Spring Bird Count, and for almost four decades he coordinated enlisting people to go out to census the 102 counties of Illinois. Kleen is passing the torch not to just one person, but to several of us, at the Illinois Natural History Survey at the University of Illinois. Tara Beveroth will be coordinating the compilers and Michael Ward will be producing the yearly reports. Kleen hands over a relatively smooth running operation and we do not expect many fundamental changes in the future. One change



**Wild Turkey numbers have increased regularly since Illinois's first Spring Bird Count.**

*Ari Shavit took this photo of Wild Turkeys at Nachusa Grasslands, Lee and Ogle Counties. 15 April 2010.*

will be that forms and data can be sent electronically, and although it will not be ready in 2011 we are in discussions to team up with other agencies and have a web-based data entry site and database.

We thank the 93 county compilers and counters who contributed to the 2010 Spring Bird Count and remind everyone that the 2011 Spring Bird Count is Saturday 7 May 2011.

While every county in Illinois has good habitat, certain counties have a bit more. While you may think that the counties with fewer good habitat choices are the ones that are not being monitored, that is not the case. Anyone interested in censusing an unmonitored county should let us know.

## Overall Results

A total of 1,225 observers documented a total of 283 species in 93 counties (Figure 3, Tables 1, 2) during the 2010 Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count. Eleven counties had 20 or more observers (Table 5). Twenty-four counties reported 140 or more species (Table 6).

## Goals of the Spring Bird Count

Vern Kleen has stated in several Spring Bird Count reports the "unofficial" goals of the count are to have at least one team with five or more observers in all 102 counties and to have a confirmed list of at least 100 species in every county, obtain information on spring migration and the abundance of birds in Illinois and to have fun.

We think these are still great goals. The most important goal may be to simply encourage people to get into the field. Participating in the Spring Bird Count is one of the most obvious vehicles in which to interest people in birds and nature. The Christmas Bird Count may be a continent-wide survey that is more than 100 years old,

but convincing a youngster to count birds in winter conditions can be challenging. While the weather on Spring Bird Count day may not always be ideal, it's still a great day to be outdoors, plus the diversity of species in early May in Illinois is often very impressive to the general public. We hope to continue to promote the Spring Bird Count for the education component it presents.

Another goal of the Spring Bird Count is to gather data which can be used to investigate changes in the diversity, density, and distribution of birds in Illinois. The value of bird surveys grows each year the survey is conducted. The Illinois Spring Bird Count is a valuable source of data to investigate many questions associated with both migratory and resident bird populations.

The other interesting aspect of long-term bird surveys is that one never knows what data could be important. While birders can be excited to find and count a rare species, the data point for a common species can be just as important. For example, no one could have imagined in 1970 that West Nile virus would arrive and decimate the American Crow population. Without long-term bird