

A Purple Gallinule was documented on the Illinois Statewide Spring Bird Count in Woodford County.

8 May 2010. Photo by Matthew Winks.



surveys it is impossible to determine the extent to which events such as the arrival of a disease impacts a bird species.

Species as common as House Sparrow have been showing declines in Illinois (Figure 1). While censusing House Sparrows may be an afterthought, the decline of one of the most common species in Illinois is of concern. Conversely, Wild Turkeys have recolonized in Illinois and are exhibiting an impressive increase (Figure 2). However in other states Wild Turkey populations have begun to decline, so it will be important to continue to monitor this species.

The statistical analyses we will conduct are geared to be conservative and identify statistically significant changes. Essentially, we are investigating how the numbers of species X per party hour change over time. Scientifically speaking, it would be great if the same people went to the same sites every year and spent the same amount of time “spishing” and walking trails. We understand that this is not practical and this is why our analyses are geared to find the long-term significant trends. The most important data are how many of which species you observed and how much time you spent looking for these birds.

One of the more difficult duties of conducting and analyzing the Spring Bird Count data is reviewing rare species. Luckily, nearly all species requiring documentation were documented in 2010. Though some birders dislike documentation, it is useful in many ways. For example, there is some evidence that certain species are arriving earlier in spring. In Illinois an interesting research project may be to investigate the arrival and migration dates of flycatchers, a species whose main food supply is likely affected by warmer spring temperatures. Flycatchers also arrive at a variety of times

Figure 1. The population of House Sparrows over the last 35 years in Illinois based on Spring Bird Count data.

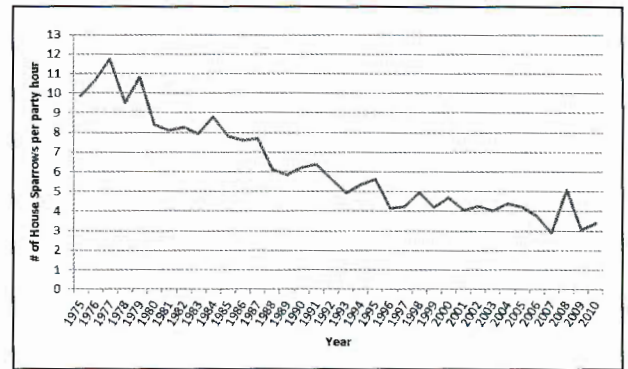
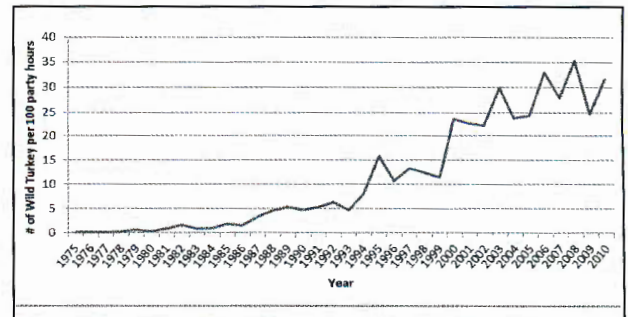


Figure 2. The population of Wild Turkeys over the last 35 years in Illinois based on Spring Bird Count data.



and can be challenging to identify. Therefore, it is important to document the later-arriving Alder, Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, so researchers will have some confidence in the data they are using to address this issue.