

search effort. Similarly, Barn Owls were located on Spring Bird Counts in 17 of 34 years from 1975-2008, at the rate of about 1 bird per 2,400 hours of search effort.

The Illinois Ornithological Records Committee requests documentation for all Barn Owl reports, but has reviewed just 12 records since 1989. Self-reported observations from birders, published in the quarterly "Field Notes" of the Meadowlark: A Journal of Illinois Birds, includes 113 observations from 1991 to 2008 (Volume 1, Issue 1 through Volume 18, Issue 2), some of which are redundant reports of birds counted from Spring Bird Counts, Christmas Bird Counts, and Element Occurrence Records.

Over the past 20 years (1990-2009), Barn Owls have been reported from 46 Illinois counties, with

nesting records from 31 counties (Figure 1). Most of these records come from counties in the southern half of the state. Although it is not possible to adjust all sources for search effort, there is a trend for the number of reports to increase over time, with nearly twice as many reports in the 2000s decade compared with the 1990s (Figure 2), suggesting a modest rebound in Barn Owl abundance may be occurring. Specifically, the establishment of about 324,000 ha (800,000 acres) of grassland conservation practices in the Conservation Reserve Program beginning in the late 1980s presumably created improved foraging habitat for Barn Owls. Counties in

south-central Illinois, where many of the recent Barn Owl nest records are located, have large areas enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (Figure 3).

Elsewhere in the Midwest, the Barn Owl is listed as an endangered species in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and "of special concern" in Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Winter weather likely limits the Barn Owl's northern range in the Great Plains and Great Lakes regions, while the species is relatively common in states south of Illinois. The Barn Owl was delisted as an endangered species in Missouri in 2008, when the Missouri Natural Heritage database had 90 total records from 34 of 114 counties, from the 1980s though 2008 (Missouri Department of Conservation 2008). In Ohio, where

**Barn Owl chicks  
in Illinois. Summer 2010.**  
Photo by Bob Shelby.

