the Barn Owl is listed as threatened, a nest box program has increased the number of known nests in the state from <20/year before 1990 to >55/year since 2004 with 77 occupied nest boxes in 2009 (Ohio Department of Natural Resources 2009).

With the support of a State Wildlife Grant (T-35-P-1) from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board formed a team in 2009 to develop and implement a recovery program so that Barn Owls no longer need to be listed as threatened or endangered in Illinois. We solicited reports of Barn Owls; searched databases and other reports, revisited sites with past Barn Owl nesting activity; and checked nest boxes that had been in place for years during 2010. Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff and cooperators had erected >100 nest boxes on public and private lands in Illinois since the 1980s, and at least 9 of 47 Element Occurrence Records of nesting Barn Owls have been in boxes or trays placed in barns and silos (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Biotics 4 database).

The results of our 2010 efforts were pleasantly surprising; at least 19 Barn Owl nests were reported from 16 counties (see Figure 1), nearly as many nests as reported through all of the past decade. Many of the nest boxes which had been put into place years earlier were still in good condition. Other damaged nest boxes were replaced, and we installed 45 new nest boxes.

The Illinois Barn Owl recovery plan, approved by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Endangered Species

Mark Alessi prepares to release a juvenile Barn Owl in Washington County after it was rehabilitated.

Photo by Mary Kemper, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Protection Board in November 2010 (available on the "Publications" link at http://dnr.state.il.us/espb/index/htm), set a goal of 40 active nest sites, distributed among at least 15 counties within a 5-year period, to consider an upgrade in status from endangered to threatened. Doubling those marks (80 nests in 30 counties) would mean Barn Owls probably are recovered in the state. With the encouraging results from the 2010 field season, we are well on our way toward those objectives, but reaching them will take a sustained effort.

Acknowledgements

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