

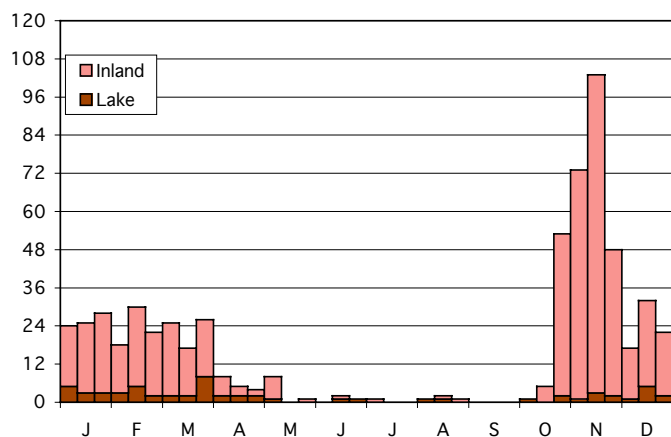
Northern Saw-whet Owl

Aegolius acadicus

Historical Information

First Published Record: An “Acadian Owl” specimen collected in Franklin County 29 April 1883 (Mumford files), provided Indiana’s earliest dated record.

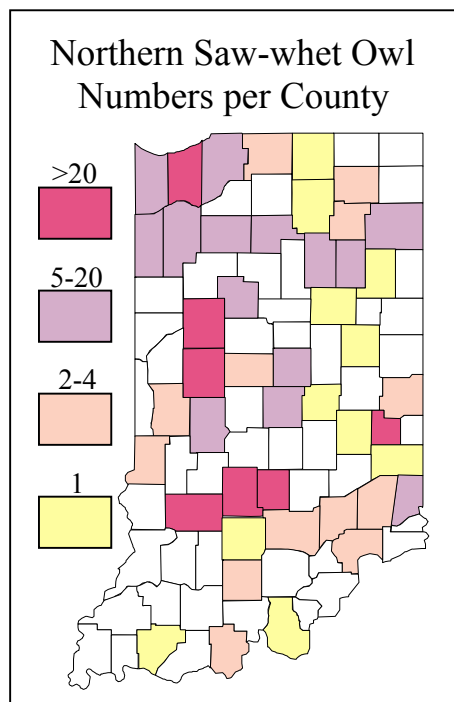
Butler (1898) considered it a “not uncommon” resident northward and irregular winter resident southward. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it casual statewide in winter and casual in summer in the north. Mumford and Keller (1984) characterized this tiny owl as uncommon to rare in winter throughout the state. They also noted that the summer status was poorly understood.



Status

Physical Evidence: At least ten specimens are housed in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Academy of Sciences				2
Chicago Field Museum				1
National Museum of Natural History				5
Indiana State Museum				1
Univ. of Michigan Museum				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	7	7	n	8
Central Tier	7	8	n	8
Southern Tier	7	9	n	6
Entire State	7	7	n	6



Current Status

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is a migrant and winter resident, which is Uncommon (6) during the fall flight. There are no recent summer reports.

Occurrence

This secretive little owl, which has been reported in some 45 counties, is most frequently encountered in small conifers, where it is invariably challenging to locate. The advent of fall banding reports, provided by Ross Brittain and Jess Gwinn, have dramatically changed its status. These banding results dominate the maximum count data. Over the past two decades some 19.4 birds per year have been reported in the state. Prior to the availability of the banding data the largest annual total was 29 recorded in 1987. Recent annual totals of 81 in 2002 and 135 in 2003 include banding data.

Migration

Although Saw-whets clearly migrate, there is precious little information about their flight, especially in spring. Obvious fall migrants have been observed along the lakefront during the interval from 4 October through 14 November and 20 March to 23 April in spring.

Summer Records

Two June and one July record exist, but there have been no summer records in the last 20 years. The first summer report involved a juvenile taken in Sheffield (Hammond) 14 June 1889 (Butler 1898). Another record involved a brood (six birds in all) found by R. Fleming (but later seen by many) 3 July 1959 along the St. Joseph River in Mishawaka (Mumford files). The most recent summer report involved a dead immature male found in Richmond, Wayne County, on 20 June 1972 (Mumford files).

Breeding

Mumford and Keller (1984) report the absence of published accounts of nests, stating that most breeding records involved the observation of young birds. Castrale et al. (1998) reported no confirmed breeding, but probable nesting in Brown County.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Data				
Maximum Single Party Counts				
Entire Year				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
15	7-Nov-2004	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
11	11-Nov-2002	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
10	16-Dec-1989	So. Central Ind.	L.W. Sterrenburg	IAQ
10	01-Nov-2002	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
10	19-Nov-2003	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
9	17-Nov-2002	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
9	13-Nov-2003	Brown Co	Ross Brittain	USB
Except for the 16 December 1989 record, all of the above represent banding reports.				

References Cited

Butler, A. W. (1898) *The Birds of Indiana*, Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources Annual Report, 22:575-1187.

Castrale, J.S., E.M. Hopkins, and C.E. Keller (1998) *Atlas of breeding Birds of Indiana*, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 388 pp.

Keller, C.E., S.A. Keller, and T.C. Keller (1979) *Indiana Birds and Their Haunts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 214 pp.

Mumford files: An extensive accumulation of Indiana bird data on 5x7 file cards compiled by Professor R.E. Mumford of Purdue University, West Lafayette.

Mumford, R.E. and C.E. Keller (1984) *The Birds of Indiana*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 376 pp.

Richards, R.L. (1987) The Vertebrate Collection of the Indiana State Museum: "Old" Specimens and Records, *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* 97:547-570.