

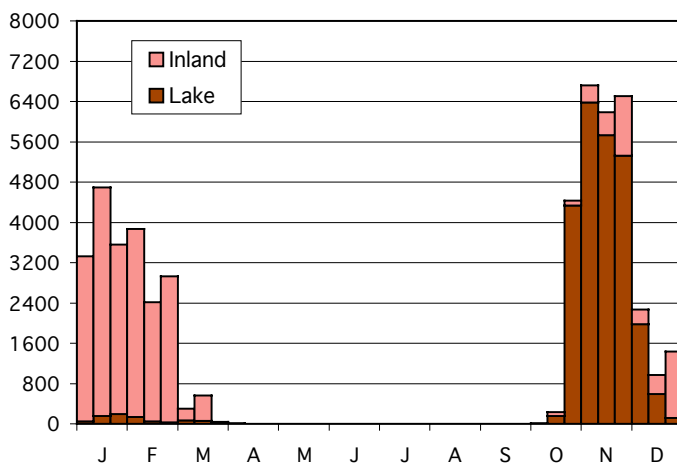
Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Historical Information

First Published Record: A mounted bird in the C.A. Stockbridge collection was taken in 1878 (Mumford files), but the earliest fully dated records occurred 15 January 1884. On that date Snow Buntings were reported at both Michigan City Harbor and in Carroll County (Butler 1898).

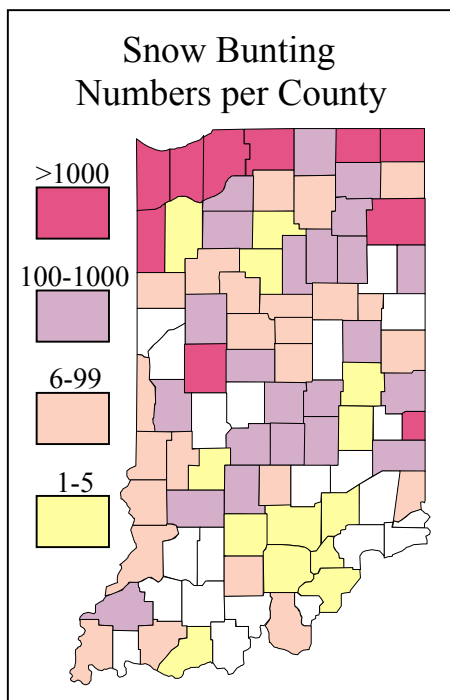
Butler (1898) referred to "Snowflake" as, "irregular in their coming and variable in their numbers." Keller et al. (1979) characterized it as an irregular rare to abundant (north) migrant and winter visitor; less common southward. Mumford and Keller (1984) deemed the Snow Bunting an irregular winter visitor.



Status

Physical Evidence: At least nine specimens are known to be archived in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				4
National Museum of Natural History				2
Indiana State Museum				2
Univ. of Michigan Museum				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	3	6	n	3
Central Tier	3	9	n	7
Southern Tier	4	6	n	6
Entire State	3	6	n	3



Current Status

The Snow Bunting is a Very Common (3) fall migrant along Lake Michigan's shores. It is Very Common (3) in winter and an Uncommon (6) spring migrant.

Occurrence

Earlier authors characterized the Snow Bunting as irregular. Although this remains true for the southern two-thirds of the state, it has been reported regularly along the lakefront where an average of 882 birds has been recorded each autumn over the last two decades. Snow Buntings have occurred in at least 70 Indiana counties, but the preponderance of records come from the northern tier (see map). It is most easily seen as migrating flocks move southward along the lakefront beaches in November. During winter most records come from inland sites (see migration histogram) where this species frequently associates with Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks.

Migration

The migration histogram shows little evidence of a distinct spring flight, but the fall movement along Lake Michigan's shores is quite apparent. The peak of the autumn migration along the lakefront occurs in mid-November.

Extreme Record

Most of the state's larger counts come from the northern tier; however, on 17 January 1999, Jay Stenger and his son conservatively estimated that a large Snow Bunting flock they discovered in Union County contained 1200 birds (IN-BIRD). This is an exceptional count for a southern county.

Snow Bunting Data						
Maximum Single Party Counts						
Entire Year						
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.		
2000	28-Feb-1988	St Joseph Co	Riemenschneiders	IAQ		
1200	17-Jan-1999	Union Co	Jay Stenger	INB		
1000	24-Nov-1979	Mich. City Harbor	???	M&K		
1000	11-Feb-1978	Pigeon River FWA	L.A. Casebere	REM		
978	27-Oct-2001	Lakefront	J.K. Cassady	KJB		
925	01-Jan-1984	Willow Slough FWA	K.J. Brock	KJB		

Migration Envelopes						
Winter						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	7-Oct-1977	27-Oct	Win. Res.	6-Mar	10-Apr-1982	860
Central	12-Oct-1977	15-Nov	Win. Res.	15-Feb	12-Mar-1960	124
South	17-Oct-1976	31-Oct	Win. Res.	13-Mar	28-Mar-1979	86

References Cited

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

IN-BIRD, a Listserv dealing with Indiana birds developed and maintained by P.W. Kelly. The records are archived at: <http://listserv.indiana.edu/archives/in-bird-l.html>

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.