

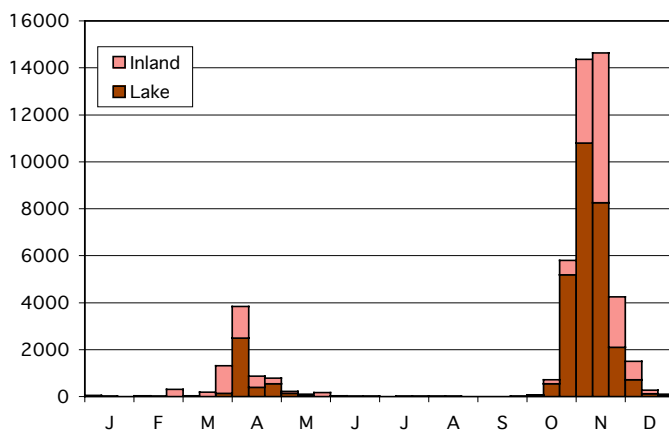
## Common Loon

## *Gavia immer*

### Historical Information

**First Published Record:** The earliest report of this species provides one of the oldest bits of ornithological data for Indiana. On 3 November 1820 J. J. Audubon reported “northern divers” at Diamond Island on the Ohio River (Mumford files).

Butler (1890) listed this loon as a migrant that sometimes winters. In his 1898 volume Butler noted that breeding might occur in the north. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it a fairly common migrant; rare to casual in summer and winter. Mumford and Keller (1984) believed that the Common Loon was a fairly common migrant.



### Current Status

Common Loons have been reported in every ten-day interval of the year, suggesting that it is a permanent resident. However, it is far more common during migration periods, especially in fall. During November it is not unusual for Lake Michigan observers to count several hundred birds per day.

### Occurrence

This species is especially plentiful on Lake Michigan during the fall flight, which peaks during the first week of November. Over the past two decades an average of 1500 loons per autumn have been reported on the lakefront. Most inland Common Loons occur on reservoirs and large impoundments, where an average of more than 650 have been recorded annually during migration. Common Loons have been reported in 69 Indiana counties with the peak inland numbers in Monroe and Marion Counties. Winter records, occurring primarily in December, exist for every year since 1979, and over the past 30 years Common Loons have been reported every summer except four (see Breeding discussion below).

### Status

**Physical Evidence:** At least eleven specimens are housed in museums (Jackson, S.F. unpublished list, J.B. Dunning, unpublished computer listing, and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Academy of Sciences				1
Chicago Field Museum				3
Indiana State Museum				4
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				3
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	4	3	7	2
Central Tier	6	5	7	3
Southern Tier	5	4	7	3
Entire State	4	3	7	2

### Spring Migration

The number of spring birds is roughly one-fifth that of the autumn numbers. Accordingly, the 1030 birds counted on Lake Michigan by J.J. McCoy 2 April 1999 (Brock 2000), which is currently the state's maximum spring count, is truly remarkable.

### Fall Migration

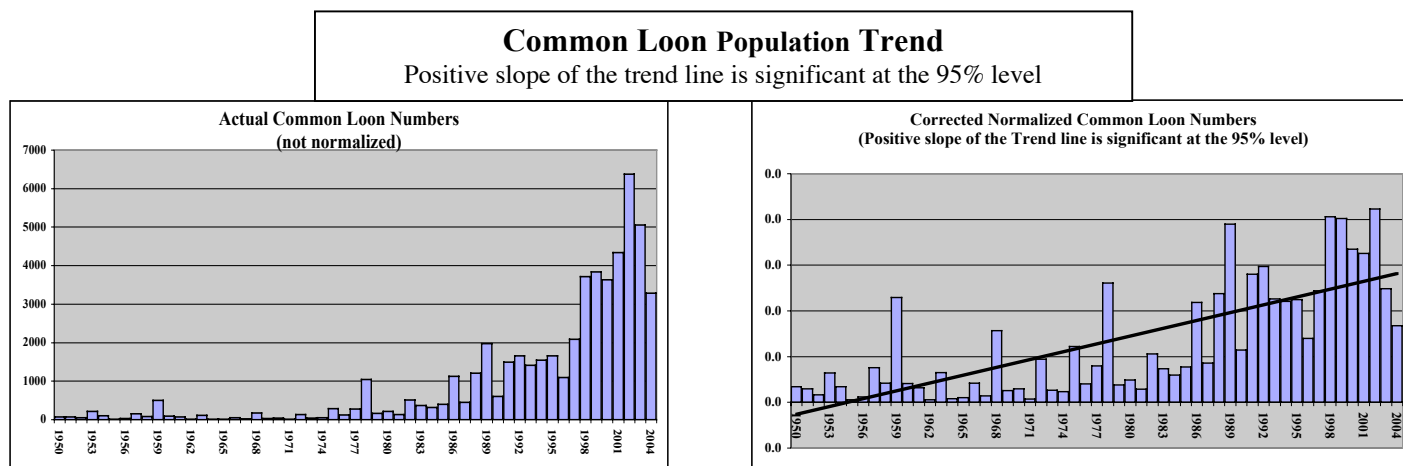
During the first half of November, Common Loon numbers begin to build up on the lakefront. During this period it is not unusual to see large feeding rafts offshore and heavy flights of southbound birds are frequently noted departing the lake. Perhaps the most impressive statewide movement occurred in mid-November 2002. In Chesterton, on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> K.J. Brock counted 110 southbound loons streaming past his living room window in one-half hour. The following day central Indiana was awash in loons with 498 at Lake Lemon, 165 at Summit Lake, 477 at Prairie Creek Reservoir, and 545 at Eagle Creek Park. On 17 November L. Peavler counted 840 at Eagle Creek Park (Brock 2003).

### Extreme Records

The state's two largest tallies were set on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2005. On the former date a mile-long raft containing 1315 feeding birds was visible off Dunes State Park. The following morning J.J. McCoy and B.J. Grube counted an incredible 2270 off Beverly Shores. Interestingly, few birds were visible off either Dunes State Park or Beverly Shores on the afternoon of 19 November (IN-BIRD).

### Population Trend

Positive slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



### Breeding

Butler (1898) noted that eggs were taken from nests at Lake James and Crooked Lake in Steuben County. Nesting has also been reported in Noble County in 1890 and 1893 (Mumford and Keller 1984), at Ball Lake, Steuben County in 1955, and two adults and one chick were reportedly seen at Webster Lake, Kosciusko County (Bruner 2001). There are many other reports of birds present during the breeding period. It is difficult to assess the validity of most of these records as

summer period birds now occur regularly. However, virtually all contemporary summer birds are in basic plumage and certainly are not nesting.

### Common Loon Data

Maximum Single Party Counts						
Spring						
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.		
1030	2-Apr-1999	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	KJB		
793	18-Apr-2005	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	INB		
743	5-Apr-1997	Lakefront	K.J. Brock	KJB		
Fall						
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.		
2270	20-Nov-2005	Beverly Shores	J.J. McCoy	INB		
1315	19-Nov-2005	Dunes S.P.	J.J. McCoy	KJB		
952	19-Nov-1988	Bev. Shores	D.R. Whitehead	KJB		
Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	27-Mar	11-Apr	9-May	10-Jun-1983	609
Central	Win. Res.	26-Mar	11-Apr	11-May	14-Jun-2003	179
South	Win. Res.	24-Mar	10-Apr	10-May	8-Jun-1999	195
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	14-Jul-1984	20-Oct	5-Nov	22-Nov	Win. Res.	921
Central	15-Jul-1956	22-Oct	12-Nov	26-Nov	Win. Res.	150
South	27-Jul-1999	27-Oct	12-Nov	25-Nov	Win. Res.	232

### References Cited

Brock, K.J. (2000) Middlewestern Prairie Region, Spring Migration 1999, *N. Am. Birds* 54:287-290.

Brock, K.J. (2003) Illinois and Indiana Region, Fall Migration 2002, *N. Am. Birds* 57:56-59.

Bruner, A. W. (2001) Status of Bird Reports in Indiana Bird Report Archives, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 79:114-133.

Butler, A. W. (1890) The Birds of Indiana, Appendix to *Transactions of the Indiana Horticultural Society for 1890* (available on the web).

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.

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