

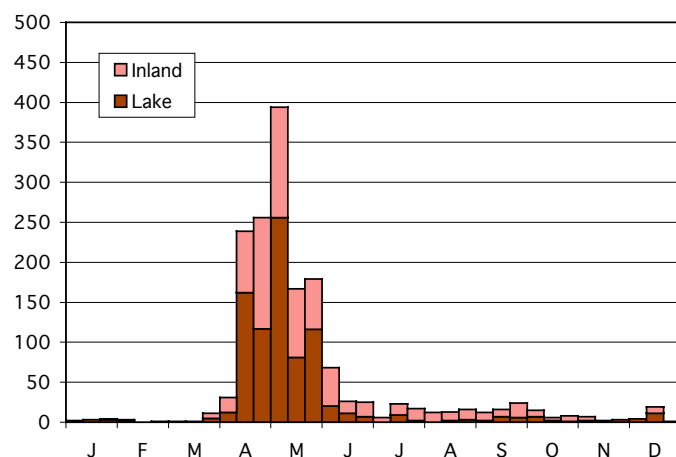
## Virginia Rail

## *Rallus limicola*

### Historical Information

First Published record: A specimen in the A.W. Butler collection, which was taken at Brookville 14 April 1879 (Mumford files), provided Indiana's first record.

Butler (1890) deemed this rail a rather common migrant and summer resident in the north. It was characterized as a rare migrant and summer resident by Keller et al. (1979) and Mumford and Keller (1984) referred to the Virginia Rail as an uncommon migrant (more common in spring), which may be locally common.



### Current Status

The Virginia Rail is a permanent resident in the northern tier. It is most prevalent, by far, during spring migration when it is Fairly Common (5).

### Occurrence

As Indiana's second most common rail (behind the Sora), the Virginia Rail has been reported in at least fifty-seven counties. It is encountered most frequently in the northern tier, especially in marshes near Lake Michigan. Most reports involve calling birds, which are most vocal in late April and early May. As illustrated in the migration histogram the fall migration is poorly defined.

### Winter Records

It is apparent that a modest number of birds spend the winter months in Indiana, even during bitter cold years. A majority of the winter reports occur in December, but more than a half-dozen January and four February records also exist. It has been reported in six of the past twenty years, yielding an average of 0.8 birds per year during that interval. More than sixty percent of the winter records have occurred in the Dunes area.

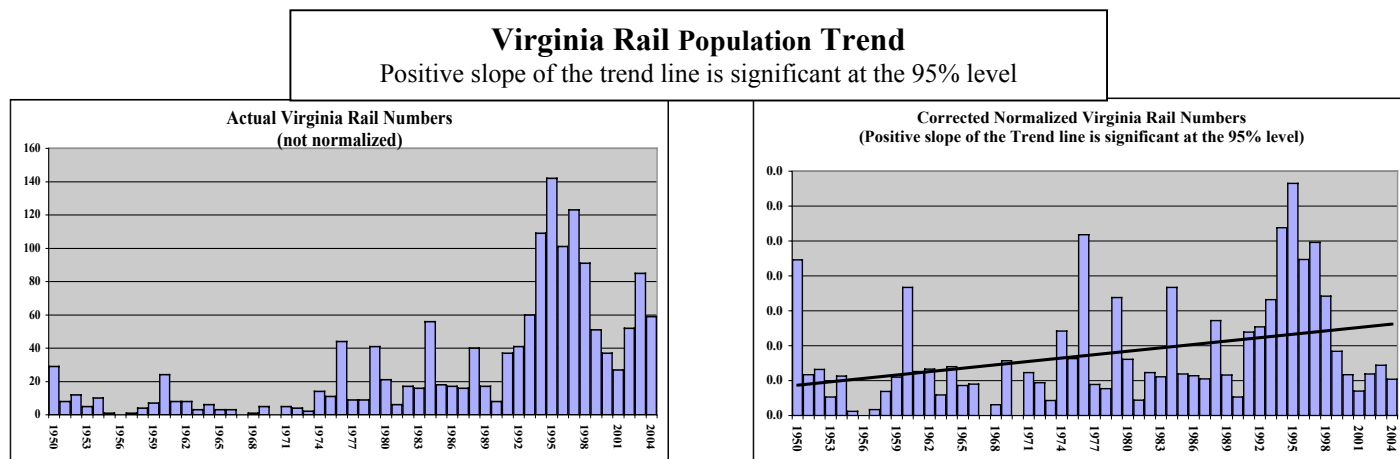
### Status

Physical Evidence: Some 14 skins and one egg are archived in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list, J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list, and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Carnegie Museum of Natural History				1
Chicago Academy of Sciences				2
Chicago Field Museum				3
National Museum of Natural History				5
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				2
Univ. of Michigan Museum				1*
* Egg				
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	7	5	6	7
Central Tier	10	7	8	8
Southern Tier	n	7	9	9
Entire State	7	5	6	7

## Population Trend

Although positive slope of the illustrated trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level, the data set includes census results from surveys conducted in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore during the 1990s. These counts, which are easily visible on the plots, add bias to the trend.



## Breeding

As a breeding species the Virginia Rail is included on the Indiana Department of Natural Resources endangered species list. The Indiana Atlas reported this species in 14 counties; all but three of these were in the northern tier Castrale et al. (1998). R.E. Phillips found a nest containing seven eggs in Scott County 30 May 1952; this record constitutes Indiana's southernmost confirmed breeding. Eggs have been reported during the interval 26 April – 14 June and young have been observed as late as 11 July.

Virginia Rail Data				
Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
49	05-May-1995	Indiana Dunes	Staff- Lakeshore	BBC*
49	07-May-1997	Indiana Dunes	Staff- Lakeshore	BBC*
35	16-Apr-1997	Indiana Dunes	Staff- Lakeshore	BBC*
*Census results				
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
4	15-Aug-1979	Willow Slough	T.T. Cable	DNR
3	04-Oct-1975	Cowles Bog	Noel Cutright	NCu
3	21-Sep-1969	Eagle Creek Park	Bud Starling	IQA

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
<b>North</b>	Win. Vis.	16-Apr	7-May	27-May	Sum. Res.	390
<b>Central</b>	30-Mar-2003	14-Apr	30-Apr	26-May	8-Jun-1986	97
<b>South</b>	4-Mar-1975	5-Apr	25-Apr	15-May	6-Jun-1964	49
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
<b>North</b>	Sum. Res.	25-Jul	9-Sep	1-Nov	Win. Vis.	93
<b>Central</b>	7-Aug-1986	---	21-Sep	---	18-Dec-1965	25
<b>South</b>	15-Aug-1976	---	23-Sep	---	10-Nov-1976	19

### References Cited

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

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.

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