

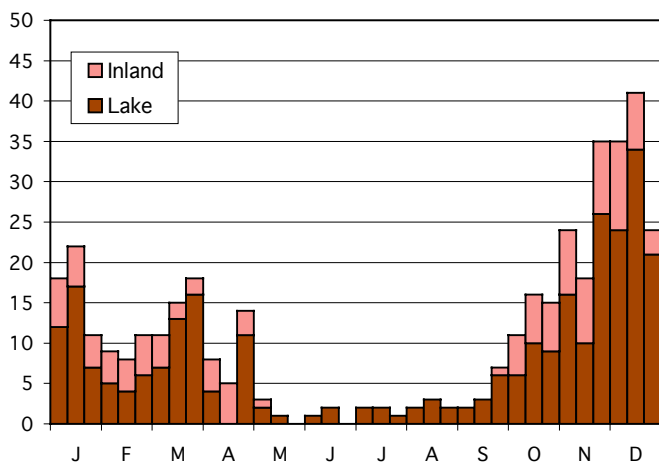
Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Historical Information

First Published Record: An adult bird seen at Michigan City Harbor by Mr. and Mrs. A. Campbell on 2 October 1948 (Brock 1979), provided Indiana's first record of this Old World species. The state's first specimen, an adult of the subspecies *graellsii*, was collected at Willow Slough FWA 9 April 1962 (Mumford and Rowe 1963).

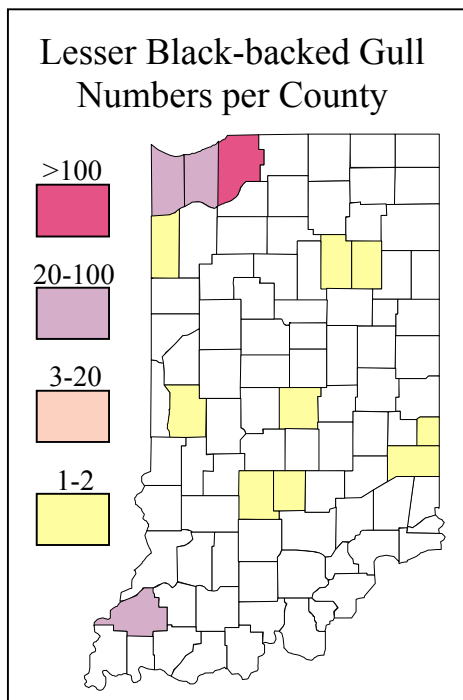
Keller et al. (1979) considered this species accidental and Mumford and Keller (1984) listed four records, but provided no status assessment.



Status

Physical Evidence: Two Lesser Black-backed Gull specimens are known to exist in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list). A photo was also published on the front cover of the 1994 *Indiana Audubon Quarterly* Vol. 72 No. 1.

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				1
National Museum of Natural History				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	6	7	8	6
Central Tier	10	n	n	10
Southern Tier	7	7	n	7
Entire State	6	7	8	6



Current Status

The Lesser Black-backed Gull has been recorded throughout the year, but is most frequently encountered in fall and winter when it is Uncommon (6). It is Rare (7) in spring and Very Rare (8) in summer on Lake Michigan.

Occurrence

As shown on the migration histogram and distribution map, the Lesser Black-backed Gull is most often encountered in the lake-district counties. There it frequents landfills and beaches with wintering gull flocks. Statewide, an average of 18.2 birds per year have been reported over the past two decades. The largest counts occur in winter.

Inland Records

Outside the lake-district, the Lesser Black-backed Gull has been recorded in ten counties. Except for Gibson, each of

these counties has a single record. The most famous inland occurrence involved an adult that wintered at Lake Gibson annually from 1988-89 through at least 1994-95. This individual became such a familiar sight that birders nicknamed him “Lester.”



Juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull at Indiana Dunes State Park 14 October 2004. Photo by J.K. Cassady.

Migration

As this gull is more or less a permanent resident, no migration envelope was constructed. The migration histogram, however, suggests the presence of a weak spring flight, which peaks in late March.

Plumages

As outlined in the adjacent plumages table, almost two-thirds of Indiana’s Lesser Black-backed Gulls are in adult plumage. The conspicuously low number of first-year birds strongly suggests that birders are overlooking that plumage.

Subspecies

Indiana’s first specimen proved to be of the subspecies *Larus fuscus graellsii* (Mumford and Rowe 1963) and to date no other subspecies has been confirmed. However, a bird observed at Michigan City Harbor and at Dunes State Park in spring 2004, displayed several characters inconsistent with *graellsii*.

Percent of Aged Plumages				
Adult	3rd-year	2nd-year	1st-year or juv.	Imm
71%	6%	12%	10%	1%

Lesser Black-backed Gull Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring/Winter				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
7	15-Dec-2001	Multiple Sites	J.K. Cassady	KJB
5	20-Dec-1997	Multiple Sites	J.J. McCoy	KJB
5	16-Dec-2000	Multiple Sites	J.K. Cassady	KJB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
6	25-Nov-2000	Multiple Sites	K.J. Brock	KJB
3	26-Oct-1996	Multiple Sites	Andy Sigler	KJB
3	16-Oct-2000	Mich. City Harbor	B.J. Grube	KJB

References Cited

Brock, K.J. (1979) Birdlife of Michigan City Area, Indiana, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 57:94-113.

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

Mumford, R.E. and W.S. Rowe (1963) The Lesser Black-backed Gull in Indiana, *Wilson Bulletin*, 75:93.

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