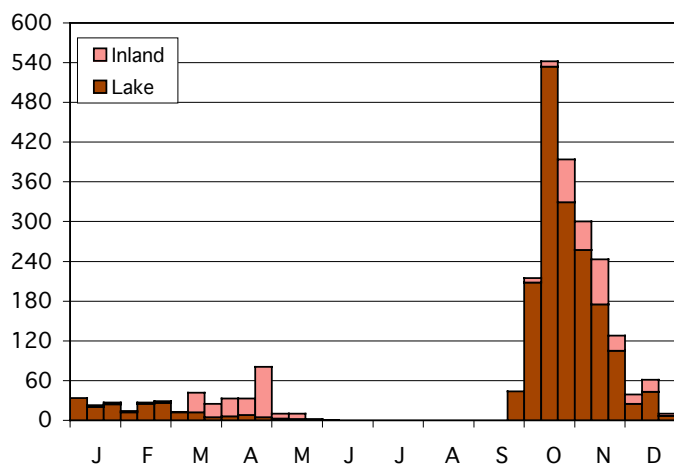


Surf Scoter

Melanitta perspicillata

Historical Information

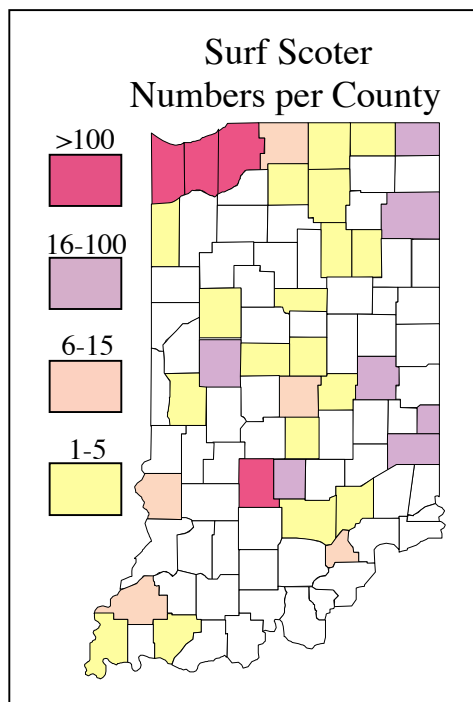
First Published Record: Undated reports include an immature that was collected on the Wabash River near Mt Carmel, Ill in October 1875 (Butler 1898) and another in Monroe County in 1886 (Mumford files). Oddly, however, the first completely dated record did not occur until M.D. Baumgartner reported one on the White River, Marion County 28 February 1941 (Mumford files).



Butler (1898) characterized the “Sea Coot” as a rare winter resident on Lake Michigan, and occasional elsewhere. Keller et al. (1979) listed it as a rare fall migrant and a very rare spring migrant and winter visitor in the north and a casual migrant elsewhere in the state. Mumford and Keller (1984) concurred with Butler’s status assessment.

Status

Physical Evidence: One skin is preserved in the National Museum of Natural History collection (S.F. Jackson, unpublished list).



STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
National Museum of Natural History				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	6	7	10	5
Central Tier	9	7	n	7
Southern Tier	8	7	n	7
Entire State	6	6	10	5

Current Status

Recent observations, especially on Lake Michigan, reveal that the Surf Scoter occurs more frequently than believed by previous authors. It is currently Fairly Common (5) on the lake during fall migration.

Occurrence

Although Surf Scoters are most frequently observed on Lake Michigan, this sea duck has been recorded in some 35 Indiana counties. Over the past twenty years an average of 78 birds per fall season have been recorded on

Lake Michigan, attesting to the Surf Scoter's abundance as a fall migrant. Numbers of this magnitude are not observed in spring, when the mean count is only 1.5 birds per year on the lake. The vast majority of these birds are females or immature males.

Summer Record

The state's only summer record consisted of a first-year male that was documented by Michael Hooker and Matt Enos as it lingered on Lake Maxinkuckee, Marshall County from 30 May through 4 June 1994 (Jackson 1995).

Extreme Record

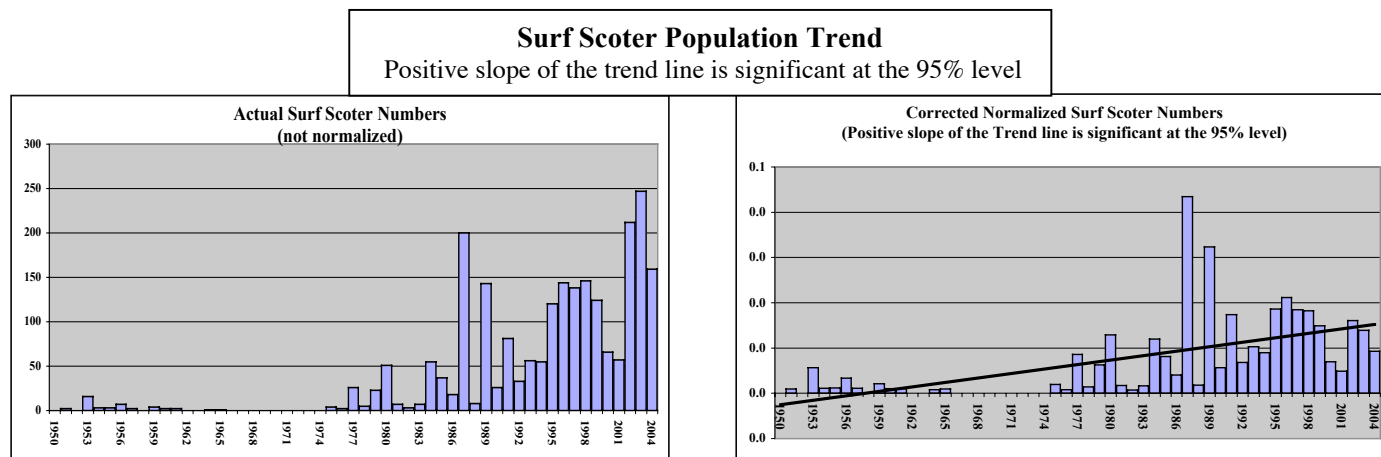
Indiana's maximum count of 178 involved a flight on Lake Michigan. During the early afternoon of a calm and sunny 11 October 1987 a spectacular flight occurred off Beverly Shores. During a 1.5-hour period Surf Scoters moved past in six flocks containing 3, 23, 36, 47, 23, and 46 birds respectively. Interestingly, these flocks contained 46 White-winged and no Black Scoters.

Inland Records

Surf Scoters are far less common away from Lake Michigan. The largest inland numbers occur in spring, but the annual spring mean is only about 7.9 birds per year. This average includes the all-time high inland count of 35 birds listed in the Maximum Count Table.

Population Trend

Observational data strongly suggest an increase in Surf Scoters in Indiana. Positive slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Surf Scoter Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
35	25-Apr-1996	Brookville Res.	W.H Buskirk	IAQ
29	19-Mar-2005	Multiple sites*	Jay Stenger	INB
24	29-Apr-2003	Lake Monroe	D.R. Whitehead	INB
*16 at Summit Lake (all adult males) and 13 at Brookville Res.				
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
178	11-Oct-1987	Beverly Shores	K.J. Brock	KJB
47	12-Nov-1995	Beverly Shores	K.J. Brock	KJB
44	19-Oct-1980	Mich. City Harb	K.J. Brock	KJB

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	4-Mar	19-Apr	16-May	4-Jun-1994	50
Central	Win. Res.	---	28-Mar	---	16-May-1997	10
South	Win. Res.	---	26-Apr	---	15-May-1996	15
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	21-Sep-1999	7-Oct	27-Oct	18-Nov	Win. Res.	275
Central	3-Oct-1999	---	2-Nov	---	Win. Res.	27
South	4-Oct-1999	24-Oct	7-Nov	20-Nov	Win. Res.	36

References Cited

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

Jackson, S.F. (1995) Field Notes Summer 1994, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 73:37-56.

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.

Last update: 21 March 2005