

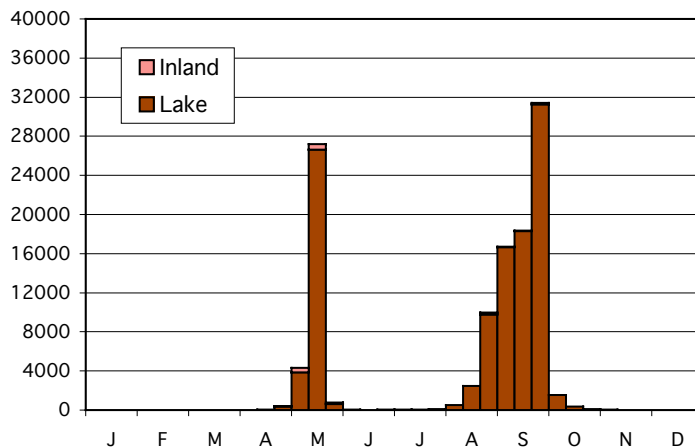
Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Historical Information

First Published Record: A dozen Common Terns, reported in Carroll County 2 May 1884 (DNR files), appear to constitute Indiana's earliest published record.

Butler (1898) referred to the Common Tern as a "Migrant; in some localities abundant." Keller et al. (1979) deemed it common near Lake Michigan, but rare elsewhere. Mumford and Keller (1984) described this tern as common to abundant near the lake, but uncommon to fairly common away from Lake Michigan.



Current Status

Along Lake Michigan's shores the Common Tern is Abundant (2) in fall, Fairly Common (5) in spring, and Rare (7) in summer.



Adult Common Tern at the Port of Indiana 31 May 2003. Photo by K.J. Brock.

Status

Physical Evidence: Five specimens from Indiana are housed in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Academy of Sciences				2
Chicago Field Museum				1
National Museum of Natural History				2
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	10	5	7	2
Central Tier	n	6	8	7
Southern Tier	n	6	7	6
Entire State	10	5	7	2

Occurrence

Despite its name, this tern is encountered less frequently than the similar appearing Forster's Tern. Common Terns have been reported in 50 counties; however, by far the greatest numbers occur on the lakefront where more than 66,000 have been reported in Lake County. In contrast the inland county with the greatest numbers is Marion with about 500 birds. The largest single inland count consisted of 125 birds observed at Lake Gibson by J.J. McCoy 28 May 2001 (IN-BIRD). This

species has a propensity for creating large loose flocks, which contributes to the very large daily counts (see maximum count table).

Spring Migration

Data shown in the migration histogram is somewhat deceptive as Common Terns are quite irregular on the lakefront in spring. The enormous counts logged in the 1950s (see maximum count table) have not been subsequently duplicated and in most years only a handful of spring birds appear on the lakefront. Indeed, since 1959 the only spring tally exceeding 1000 birds was the 2200 that L.S. Hinchman observed migrating past Michigan City Harbor 18 May 1996 (Lomax 1997).

Fall Migration

In autumn large southbound flocks often accumulate at Miller Beach where they are occasionally observed circling upward and departing on a southerly heading.

Extreme Records

Two December Common Tern records exist. S. Calvert et al. reported the first at Geist Reservoir on 5 December 1943 (DNR files). James and Angie Cole observed the other, a winter-plumed adult, at Miller Beach 26 December 2005 (IN-BIRD).

Breeding

According to Butler (1937), breeding in Indiana was first confirmed by A.T. Wilson in 1934 when a nest was discovered on the Lake County lakefront near the Commonwealth Edison power plant. Nesting was also attempted in 1935 and 1936.

Common Tern Data						
Maximum Single Party Counts						
Spring						
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.		
10000	20-May-1957	Gary Harbor	J. Louis	JLo		
4000	17-May-1956	Gary Harbor	J. Louis	JLo		
4000	19-May-1957	Mich. City Harbor	J.E. Landing	JEL		
Fall						
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.		
7930	24-Sep-1996	Mich. City Harbor	R.S. Plank	KJB		
5700	24-Sep-1996	Miller Beach	J.J. McCoy	KJB		
4000	22-Sep-2001	Miller Beach	K.J. Brock	KJB		
Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	9-Apr-1931	1-May	13-May	24-May	Sum. Vis.	160
Central	7-Apr-2004	21-Apr	10-May	27-May	Sum. Vis.	56
South	9-Apr-1966	21-Apr	10-May	28-May	Sum. Vis.	54
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Sum. Vis.	16-Aug	8-Sep	5-Oct	21-Nov-88	607
Central	Sum. Vis.	31-Jul	5-Sep	28-Sep	28-Oct-98	30

South	Sum. Vis.	1-Aug	10-Sep	7-Oct	7-Nov-92	75
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References Cited

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

Butler, A. W. (1937) Common Tern and Wilson Phalarope nesting in Indiana, Auk 54:390.

DNR files, A collection of data compiled on computer disks for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources by C.E. Keller.

IN-BIRD, a Listserve 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.

Lomax, B. (1997) Field Notes Spring 1996, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 75:77-117.

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

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