

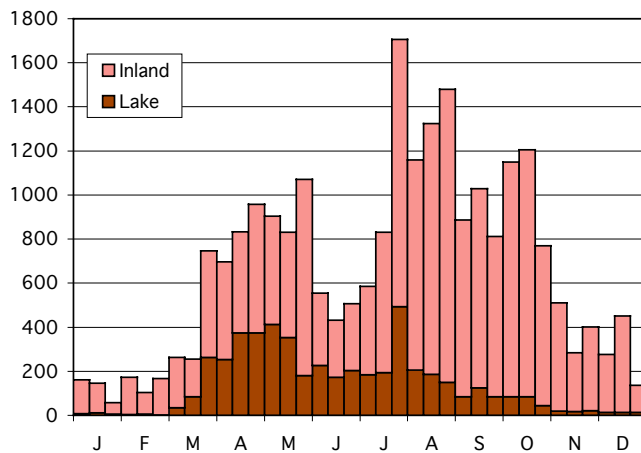
Great Blue Heron

Ardea herodias

Historical Information

First Published Record: The earliest Great Blue Heron report in Indiana is attributed to J.J. Audubon, who listed four at Diamond Island, Vanderburgh County, 4 November 1820 (Mumford files).

According to Butler (1890) this regal heron was a, “Common migrant throughout the southern part of the State, breeding abundantly in suitable localities north of the latitude of Indianapolis.” An assessment by Keller (1966), characterized this species as a common migrant and summer resident. Mumford and Keller (1984) deemed the Great Blue Heron a fairly common migrant, but rare to casual in winter. They further noted, “It is not nearly as abundant a nesting species as in former years and probably should now be classified as a rare nester.”



Status

Physical Evidence: At least a dozen specimens and four eggs are archived in the nation's museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Academy of Sciences				4*
National Museum of Natural History				8
Univ. of Michigan Museum				2*
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				2
*includes eggs				
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	6	3	4	4
Central Tier	7	6	7	4
Southern Tier	5	4	5	3
Entire State	5	3	4	3

Current Status

Since publication of Mumford and Keller (1984) the Great Blue Heron has expanded significantly throughout Indiana. For example, Castrale (2000) reported that 124 colonies, in 70 counties, were counted during a 1998-1999 Indiana Nongame and Endangered Wildlife program survey. Today it is a permanent resident, which is Very Common (3) in spring and fall and Common (4) in summer.

Occurrence

The Great Blue Heron is widespread across Indiana. It has been reported in 87 counties, but almost certainly has occurred in all 92. Clearly the 150 bird tallies listed in the Maximum Single Party Count table do not constitute true state maxima, as the Castrale (2000) survey reported a colony containing 473 active nests. That site surely contained more than 150 birds.

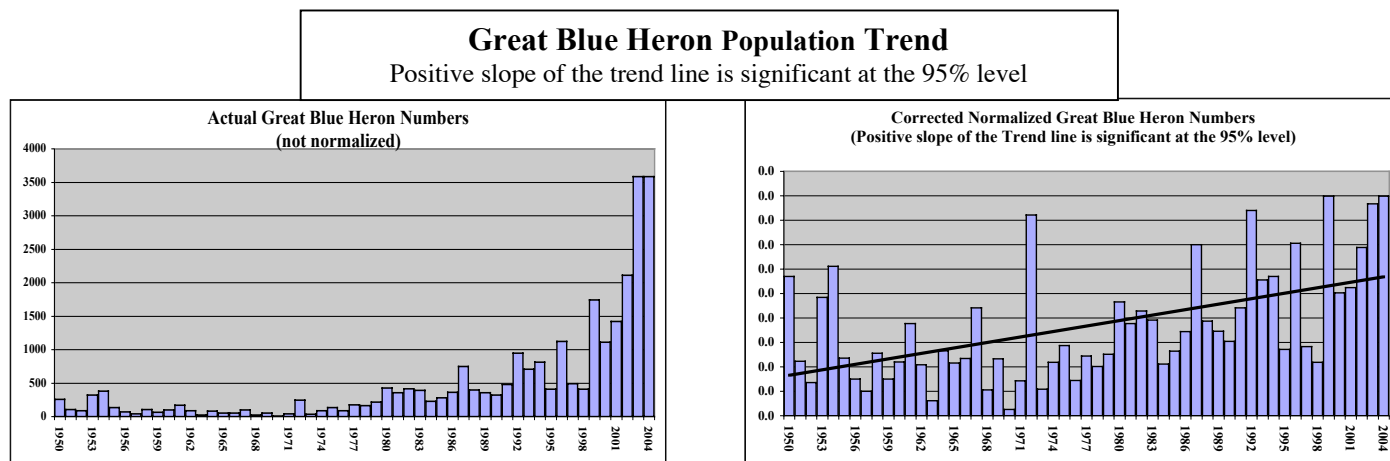
Winter

Keller (1966) called this species an irregular rare to very rare winter resident. However, it has been recorded annually in winter since 1982, and is currently reported regularly, even in the

northern tier of counties. Graphic evidence of the winter population increase was provided by the 17 December 1992 observation of an incredible 110 at the Great Miami River Oxbow in Dearborn County by Paul Wharton and Joe Bens (Brown 1993). Today it is clearly a Fairly Common (5) winter resident.

Population Trend

The population trend data clearly illustrates the dramatic increase in Great Blue Heron over the past 50 years. Positive slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Breeding

Castrale (2000) reported a 59 percent increase in colonies between the 1993-94 and 1998-99 state-wide survey. The 1998-99 census yielded 124 colonies in 70 counties; six colonies exceeded 200 nests and the mean number of active nests was 53. The largest colony contained 473 active nests.

Great Blue Heron Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
130	21-May-1916	Carroll Co	???	REM
128	21-May-1954	Willow Slough	W.E. Madden	REM
111	25-May-2003	Willow Slough	J.J. McCoy	INB
Late Summer/Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
150	28-Jul-1980	Cowles Bog	James Bull	KJB
150	26-Sep-1999	Posey Co	Sharon Sorenson	INB
150	13-Sep-1987	Lake Gibson	Denny Jones	NIQ

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	23-Mar	23-Apr	26-May	Sum. Res.	1008
Central	Win. Res.	16-Mar	27-Apr	23-May	Sum. Res.	96
South	Win. Res.	11-Mar	17-Apr	26-May	Sum. Res.	130
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Sum. Res.	24-Jul	3-Sep	28-Oct	Win. Res.	1008
Central	Sum. Res.	4-Aug	8-Sep	23-Nov	Win. Res.	101
South	Sum. Res.	8-Aug	26-Sep	13-Nov	Win. Res.	211

References Cited

Brown, M.R. (1993) Field Notes Winter 1992-93, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 71:185-193.

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. (2000) Survey of Colonial-nesting Waterbirds in Indiana, 1998-1999, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 78:16-28.

Keller, C.E. (1966) Status of the Ciconiiformes in Indiana. *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 44:56-86.

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.