

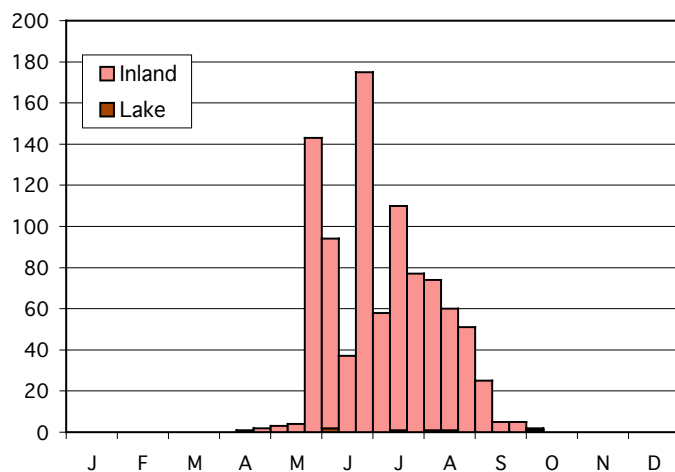
Least Tern

Sterna antillarum

Historical Information

First Published Record: Indiana's first published report of this minute tern involved four birds seen by J.L. Hancock at Wolf Lake 5 June 1882 (Butler 1898). Interestingly, on the same day Hancock also reported a Least Tern nest containing three eggs; however, Mumford and Keller (1984) discredited this breeding report.

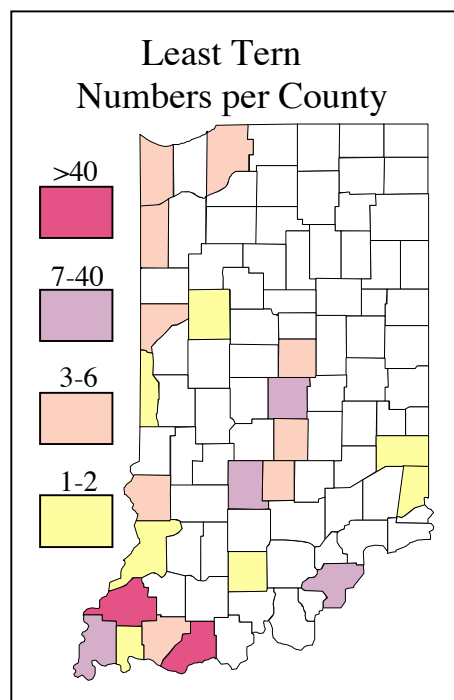
Butler (1890) deemed the Least Tern a rare migrant throughout most of the state and suggested that it was a summer resident in the north. Both Keller et al. (1979) and Mumford and Keller (1984) noted that this small tern was never common in the state.



Status

Physical Evidence: A single specimen from Indiana is known to be preserved in the National Museum of Natural History (S.F. Jackson unpublished list).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	n	n	10	10
Central Tier	n	n	n	9
Southern Tier	n	6	5	6
Entire State	n	6	5	6



Current Status

The establishment of a breeding population in southwestern Indiana in 1986 greatly modified the Least Tern's status. In southwest Indiana, and especially at Lake Gibson, it is now Fairly Common (5) in summer and Uncommon (6) in spring and fall.

Occurrence

Although numbers are concentrated in southwestern Indiana, the Least Tern has been reported in 22 counties. Except for an absence in northeastern and east-central Indiana, extralimital records are scattered widely across the state. The largest numbers occur in Gibson County where more than 900 birds have been reported.

Breeding

The Least Tern is currently on the Indiana endangered species list. Castrale et al. (1998) mentioned nesting at the Falls of the Ohio, which was likely in Kentucky, and

indicated that Indiana's first unambiguous breeding occurred at Lake Gibson in 1986. Mills (1987) described the discovery of two eggs on 20 July 1986; a chick is also illustrated in the article. Successful nesting has occurred in a majority of the subsequent years and had expanded to more than 70 nests by 1998 (Castrale et al. 1999). The latter authors also indicate that egg-laying is usually initiated in late May or early June and that nests average 2.42 eggs per nest. A small breeding colony also exists in Spencer County (Gorney 2005).

Least Tern Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring/Summer				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
80	22-Jun-2001	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	NAB
65	10-Jun-2004	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	INB
50	28-May-1997	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	NNB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
47	11-Jul-1993	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	IAQ
45	25-Jul-2003	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	INB
35	04-Aug-2003	Lake Gibson	C.E. Mills	INB

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	05-Jun-1882	---	---	---	05-Jun-1882	1
Central	9-Jun-1984	---	---	---	9-Jun-1984	1
South	20-Apr-2004	---	28-May	---	6-Jun-1992	28
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	5-Aug-1981	---	---	---	5-Oct-85	4
Central	20-Jul-1963	---	24-Aug	---	19-Sep-83	10
South	15-Jul-2003	20-Jul	12-Aug	7-Sep	3-Oct-99	68

References Cited

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