

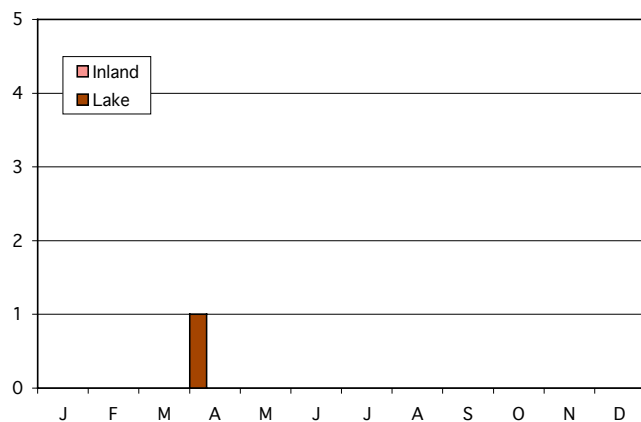
“brown-headed nuthatch”

Sitta pusilla or *Sitta pygmaea*

Historical Information

First Published Record: A.F. Wilson reported a Brown-headed Nuthatch in Whiting Park 5 April 1932 (Mumford and Keller 1984), but the Indiana Records Committee accepted this sighting only as either a Brown-headed or Pygmy Nuthatch (Bruner 1996).

Based on reports from Michigan, Missouri, and Ohio, Butler (1898) added the Brown-headed Nuthatch to Indiana’s hypothetical listing. Keller et al. (1979) also considered it hypothetical. Mumford and Keller (1984) deemed the Brown-headed Nuthatch an uncorroborated accidental visitor.



Status

Physical Evidence: There are no known specimens or photographs.

STATUS TABLE	
Specimens	
Museum	No.
No known specimens	0

Current Status

Based on the uncertainty regarding this bird’s identity, its status must be considered indeterminate.

Occurrence

Two letters from A.F. Wilson to S.R. Esten (original letters are currently in the Mumford files) describe this observation in detail; the following was distilled from those correspondences. Upon the initial sighting Wilson immediately recognized this as, “one I had never seen before.” He was able to approach within 20 feet of the bird and observed it for some time. According to Wilson’s description, “The bird was slightly smaller than our common White-breasted Nuthatch, about the size of the Red-breasted. The top and back of the head was (sic) a dirty grayish color with a brownish cast. There was no white visible on the nape, which is the only discrepancy, but I may have overlooked this. When feeding the tail showed a narrow fringe of grayish white on the outer tail feathers of each side. The rest of the tail was dark gray, about the shade of the breast of a Junco. The rest of the back and wings were the same color, varying slightly in shade. The under parts were lighter, being a dirty white color with a somewhat buffy tinge, particularly under the tail on the under tail coverts, but even there not distinct. The same tinge of buff was also noticeable along the flanks. I noted particularly that there was no white above the eye as in the Red-breasted.”

Wilson also described the bird’s behavior and noted that, “At various times quite frequently it uttered a “warble,” just a few liquid notes, entirely different from the ordinary nuthatch nasal sound.” The bird was also present the following day when the identification as a Brown-headed Nuthatch was corroborated by D.H. Boyd, a very well known northwestern Indiana naturalist.

References Cited

Bruner, A. W. (1996) Report of the Indiana Bird Records Committee—1992-1995, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 74:65-80.

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

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.