

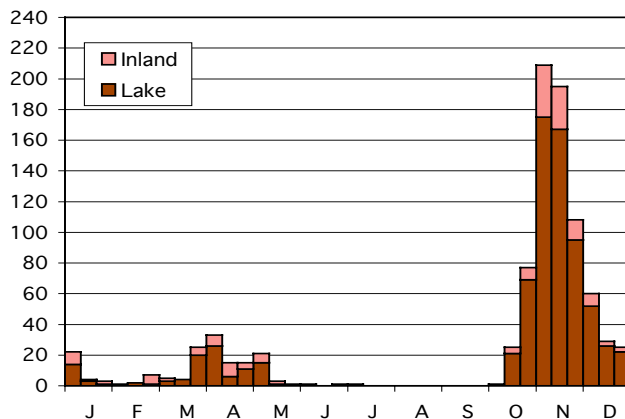
## Red-throated Loon

## *Gavia stellata*

### Historical Information

**First Published Record:** Remarkably, Indiana's first report of this species also provided the state's largest inland count to date. According to Butler (1890), Charles Dury collected one, from a flock of five, near Brookville on 23 February 1885.

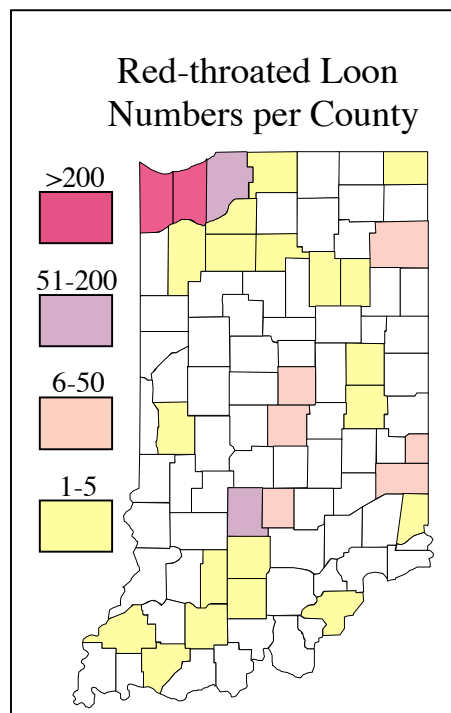
Butler deemed this species a regular migrant that sometimes wintered and occasionally lingered into the summer. By the time Butler's 1898 work was published, this species' status was revised to "Rare winter resident and occasional migrant." Keller et al. (1979) described it as "generally a casual migrant." Mumford and Keller (1984) considered it a rare to casual migrant and casual winter resident. Bruner (2001) noted a "tremendous increase in reports along Lake Michigan" during the last half of the 1990s. This proliferation was attributed, in part, "to a tremendous increase in observer effort, not to mention vast improvements in optics..."



### Status

**Physical Evidence:** Single Red-throated Loon specimens are housed in the Chicago Field Museum and the National Museum of Natural History (Jackson, S.F. unpublished list).

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



### Current Status

The explosion of Red-throated Loon numbers on

Lake Michigan began in the late 1990s (Bruner 2001), and continued into the 2000s (see graph below). It is most frequently encountered in fall when it is Fairly Common (5) on the lakefront.

### Occurrence

Red-throated Loons occur more frequently on Lake Michigan than at inland sites; the ratio of Lake Michigan to inland birds is about 5 to 1. Red-throated Loons have been recorded in 29 counties, with the largest inland numbers reported on Lake Monroe and Lake Lemon. Winter birds have been reported annually since 1993, primarily in December. As shown in the plots below, the state has

experienced a significant increase in Red-throated Loon numbers since the mid-1990s. The effort-corrected plot clearly illustrates this increase. The increase on Lake Michigan is even more profound than the statewide values.

### Spring Migration

Until 1999, the state's maximum spring count was only five birds. Subsequently, several larger tallies have been logged (see maximum count table). In contrast, the largest inland count is still the five birds reported in 1885. The relatively weak spring flight peaks in April.

### Fall Migration

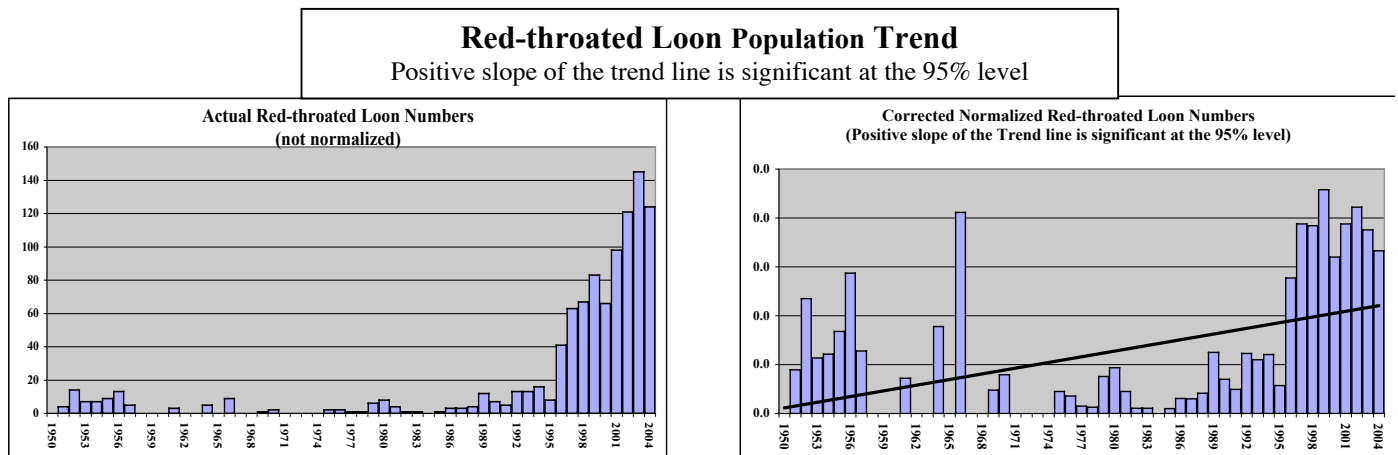
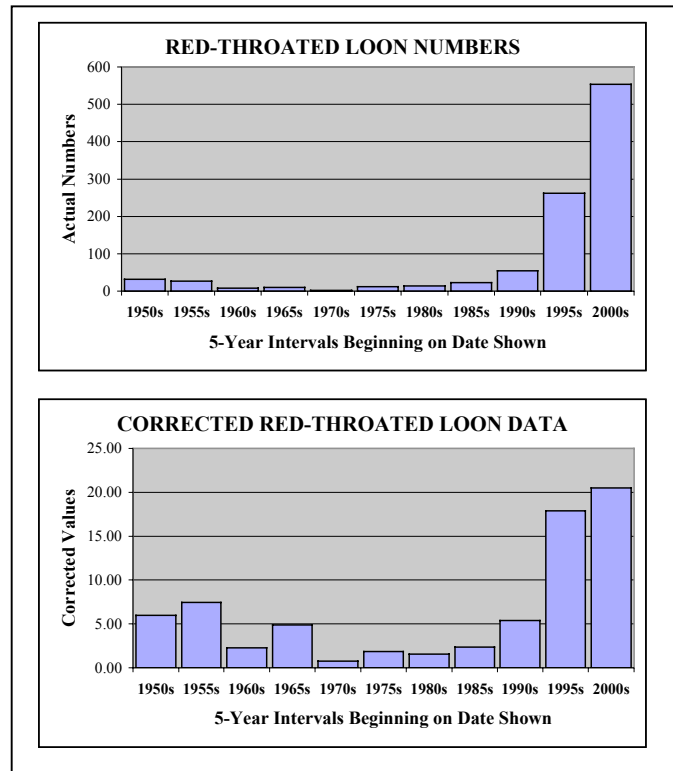
The recent increase in fall records on Lake Michigan is most dramatic. During the interval 1974 to 1986 fall birds were reported only four times. In contrast, autumn Red-throated Loons have been recorded annually on Lake Michigan since 1987, with an abrupt increase that began in 1996. The post-1995 fall average exceeds 50 birds per year with a maximum of 85 in 2002 (Brock 2003).

### Summer

Only three summer records exist for the state: two in June and one in July. R.E. Mumford reported the first in Lawrence County 25 June 1953 (Mumford files), the second was seen at Potato Creek S.P. 6 June 1998 (Bruner 2001), and the third was documented by Billie Rakestraw and Suzanne Belcher in Fulton County 9 July 2003 (Hedge 2004).

### Population Trend

As indicated in the above discussion, Red-throated Loon reports have increased significantly in the state. Positive slope of the trend lines is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



### Red-throated Loon Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
14	28-Mar-2001	Dunes S.P.	J.J. McCoy	INB
11	16-Apr-2004	Dunes S.P.	J.J. McCoy	INB
10	4-May-2003	Dunes S.P.	B.J. Grube	KJB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
14	19-Nov-2001	Miller Beach	J.K. Cassady	JKC
12	13-Nov-2002	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	INB
11*	2-Nov-1999	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	INB
*Five additional Red-throated Loon counts of 11 have been logged.				

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
Lake	Win. Res.	5-Mar	2-Apr	22-Apr	18-May-86	34
Inland	Win. Res.	23-Mar	14-Apr	11-May	25-Jun-53	35
Fall/Winter						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
Lake	7-Oct-52	28-Oct	14-Nov	7-Dec	Win. Res.	386
Inland	11-Oct-87	27-Oct	12-Nov	3-Dec	Win. Vis.	92

### References Cited

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Bruner, A. W. (2001) Status of Bird Reports in Indiana Bird Report Archives, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 79:114-133.

Butler, A. W. (1890) The Birds of Indiana, Appendix to *Transactions of the Indiana Horticultural Society for 1890* (available on the web).

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

Hedge, R.L. (2004) Field Notes Summer 2003, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 82:81-108.

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.

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