

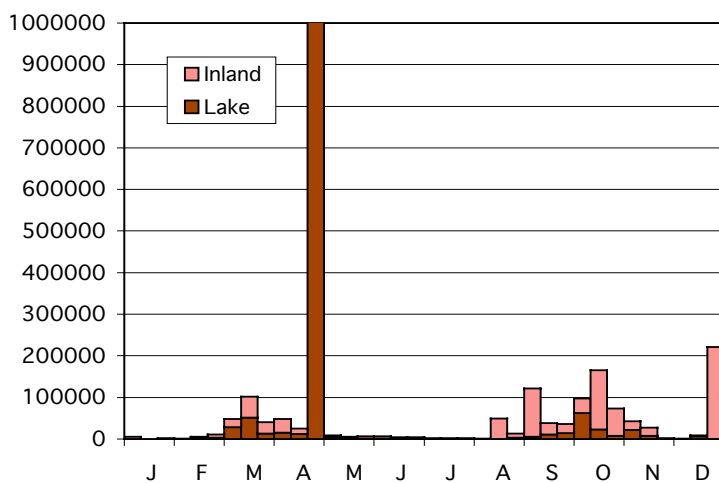
Red-winged Blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

Historical Information

First Published Record: A pair collected in Franklin County on 19 May 1882 (Mumford files), appears to constitute the state's earliest formal record.

Butler (1898) characterized the "Swamp Blackbird" as an abundant summer resident, which occasionally wintered in southern Indiana. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it an abundant summer resident throughout the state; rare to abundant in winter (depending on weather). Mumford and Keller (1984) described the Red-winged Blackbird as an abundant migrant and summer resident; local in winter.



Current Status

The Red-winged Blackbird is Very Abundant (1) in migration and winter.

Occurrence

Webster (1966) reckoned that the Red-winged Blackbird was Indiana's most common breeding bird. Indeed this abundant and widespread species has been reported in every Indiana county, often in huge numbers. During summer it disperses across the state, but at other seasons Red-wingeds accumulate in flocks, frequently with other blackbirds, that are sometimes enormous. In the northern tier numbers diminish in winter.

Extreme Records

An incredible one million Red-winged Blackbirds were reported in Lake County on 24 April 1961 (Mumford 1961). That count exceeds the state's next highest tally by a factor of five and accounts for the conspicuous April "spike" on the migration histogram. Though Mumford and Keller (1984) mentioned a "congregation of at least 200,000," no date, location, or observer was given. The 200,000 that Jim and Susan Hengeveld reported at Beehunter Marsh on 21 December

Status

Physical Evidence: Some 72 specimens, plus eggs and nests, are archived in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Carnegie Museum of Natural History				2*
Chicago Field Museum				8
National Museum of Natural History				47*
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				15
Univ. of Michigan Museum				9*
*Includes eggs or eggs and nest				
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	3	1	3	2
Central Tier	3	3	3	2
Southern Tier	1	2	3	1
Entire State	1	1	3	1

2005 were part of a ribbon of 1.0-1.5 million blackbirds that passed over the marsh in the morning; 20 percent of the flock was estimated to consist of Red-winged Blackbirds (IN-BIRD).

Breeding

The Indiana Atlas project reported breeding evidence in more that 99 percent of the state's 647 priority blocks, clearly attesting to the wide distribution of this blackbird (Castrale et al. 1998). Mumford and Keller (1984) listed egg dates from 3 May through 29 July.

Red-winged Blackbird Data				
Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
1000000	24-Apr-1961	Gary	???	NAB
30000	12-Mar-1990	Mount Baldy	K.J. Brock	KJB
20000	09-Mar-1985	Dunes St Park	K.J. Brock	KJB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
200000	21-Dec-2005	Beehunter Marsh	J. & S. Hengeveld	INB
100000	02-Sep-1979	Gt. Miami Oxbow	Dave Styer	REM
50000	19-Oct-1969	Eagle Creek Park	Bud Starling	IQA
Caution is necessary in assessing these counts. In most cases there is no information about how the number was obtained (count, estimate, or guess). Additionally, most blackbird flocks contain a mixture of species, which renders determining the numbers of an individual species problematic.				

Migration Envelopes						
Entire State						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
Spring	Win. Res.	27-Feb	30-Mar	25-Apr	Sum. Res.	1344
Fall	Sum. Res.	30-Jul	6-Oct	6-Nov	Win. Res.	1161

References Cited

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

Castrale, J.S., E.M. Hopkins, and C.E. Keller (1998) Atlas of breeding Birds of Indiana, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 388 pp.

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-1.html>

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. (1961) Field Notes spring 1961, *Audubon Field Notes*, 15:413-416.

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

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Webster, J.D. (1966) The birds. Pages 452-473 in A.A. Lindsey, ed. Natural features of Indiana, Indiana Academy of Science, Indianapolis.