

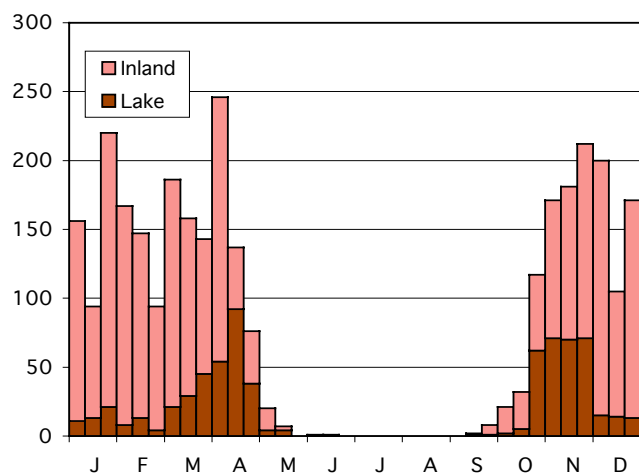
Rough-legged Hawk

Buteo lagopus

Historical Information

First Published record: Indiana's first report of this winter visitor occurred 15 January 1887, when a specimen, whose stomach contained three white-footed mice, was collected in Decatur County (Merriam and Fisher 1893).

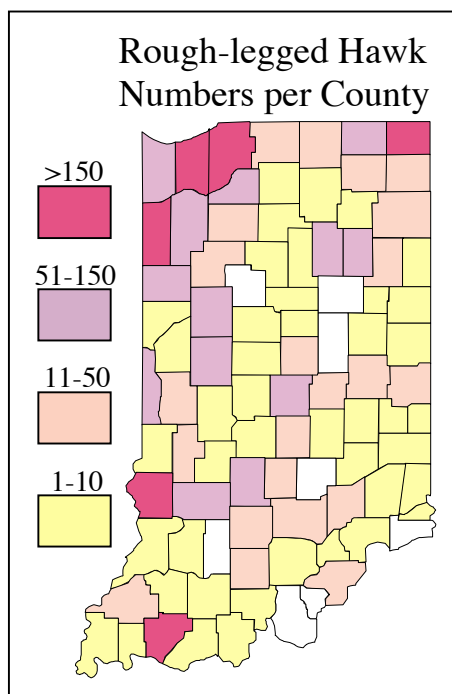
Butler (1890) stated that this buteo is "usually very rare in most places," but also commented about its irruptive nature. Keller et al. (1979) characterized it as an irregularly uncommon to very rare winter visitant. Mumford and Keller (1984) noted that Rough-legged Hawks are "usually rare except along the western side of the state, where it is more or less common."



Status

Physical Evidence: At least 24 specimens exist in North American museums, distributed as shown in the Status Table (S.F. Jackson unpublished notes, J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list, and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				3
National Mus. Natural History				7
Univ. of Michigan Museum				5
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				8
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	5	6	10	6
Central Tier	6	7	n	7
Southern Tier	6	6	n	6
Entire State	5	5	10	6



Current Status

Today this striking raptor is basically a Fairly Common (5) to Uncommon (6) migrant and winter resident.

Occurrence

Rough-legged Hawk numbers vary considerably from year to year. Most winters it is Uncommon (6) in northern and western counties and Rare (7) elsewhere. During invasion years it can be Fairly Common (5) over much of the state. Wintering birds are often attracted to reclaimed strip mines, which explains the higher numbers in Sullivan and Warrick Counties. Indeed three of the six largest single party counts occurred entirely, or partially, at these mines. Although

Rough-legged Hawks have been reported in at least 84 Indiana counties, the distribution map reveals that it occurs most frequently in the northern and western counties.

Migration

The migration histogram shows distinct movements along the lakefront; otherwise there is little evidence of migration peaks. Fall arrivals first appear about the third week of October, but do not reach the southern tier until the end of the month. Spring birds depart the southern tier almost two weeks before leaving the northern tier.

Summer Records

Two June records exist: Dorothy Buck saw one in LaPorte County 1 June 1971 (Mumford and Keller 1984) and Virgil and Marcia Inman documented a light morph immature near Lydick in St. Joseph County on the remarkably late date of 17 June 1988 (Jackson 1989).

Plumage Variations

Although a wide range of plumages is displayed by Rough-legged Hawks, most can be assigned into either a light or dark morph category. Of the 1254 birds designated by color morph, 68 percent were light and 32 percent were dark. Actually, the fraction of light birds is likely higher than this value indicates, as birders tend to more often report the rarer dark form.

Rough-legged Hawk Data				
Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring/late Winter				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
46	15-Feb-2004	Greene & Sullivan Cos	D.R. Whitehead	INB
40	21-Feb-2004	Steuben Co	John Winebrenner	INB
32	6-Apr-2002	Hawthorne Mine	L.W. Sterrenburg	INB
Fall/early Winter				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
37	24-Jan-2004	Greene & Sullivan Cos	L.W. Sterrenburg	INB
35	01-Dec-1977	Montgomery Co	A.W. Bruner	DNR
26	30-Jan-2005	Willow Slough FWA	J.J. McCoy	INB

Migration Envelopes						
Winter						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	12-Sep-1959	22-Oct	winter res.	19-Apr	17-Jun-1988	835
Central	28-Sep-1974	20-Oct	winter res.	11-Apr	18-May-1946	193
South	14-Sep-2001	31-Oct	winter res.	6-Apr	12-May-2001	232

References Cited

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

Jackson, S.F. (1989) Field Notes Summer 1988, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 67:81-92.

Keller, C.E., S.A. Keller, and T.C. Keller (1979) *Indiana Birds and Their Haunts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 214 pp.

Merriam, D.H. and A.K. Fisher (1893) *The Hawks and Owls of the United States in their Relation to Agriculture*, Gov. Printing Office, Washington D.C. 210 pp.

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

Richards, R.L. (1987) The Vertebrate Collection of the Indiana State Museum: "Old" Specimens and Records, *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* 97:547-570.