

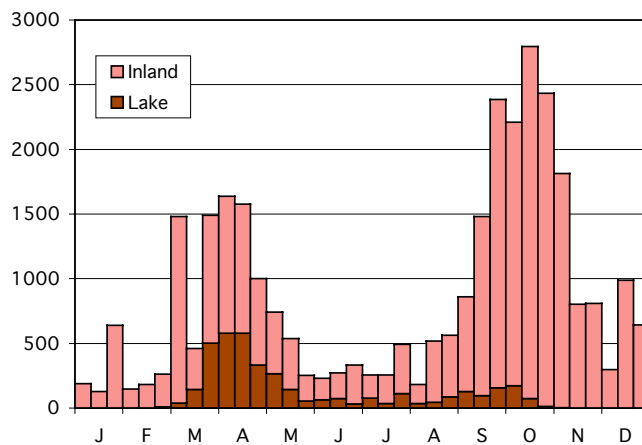
Turkey Vulture

Cathartes aura

Historical Information

First Published record: The DNR files mentioned that J.J. Audubon reported this species in Vanderburgh County 4 November 1820, which constitutes the state's earliest report.

Butler (1890) considered the "Turkey Buzzard" a common resident in the south that wintered in mild years. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it a rare migrant and very rare summer resident in the north, but a common migrant and fairly common summer resident elsewhere. Mumford and Keller (1984) characterized the Turkey Vulture as a common migrant and uncommon summer resident in the southern two-thirds of the state. It was generally a rare migrant and summer resident in the north.



Current Status

The Turkey Vulture population has expanded significantly since 1984. Today it is a Very Common (3) fall migrant and Uncommon (6) summer resident throughout the state. In winter it is Common (4) to Fairly Common (5) except in the north where it remains Rare (7).

Occurrence

This permanent resident is widespread across the state except in winter, when it withdraws from the northern tier. Although actual reports exist for 90 counties, without doubt the Turkey Vulture occurs in all 92 of Indiana's counties. It is most commonly encountered in the southern two-thirds of the state and the population appears to be flourishing. In the Dunes it is commonly reported during spring hawk flights, though most of these sightings likely represent local birds. Most of the largest counts occur in fall (see Maximum count table), but substantial numbers are also recorded during spring hawk flights in the Dunes.

Winter Records

Most winter birds are reported in the southern two-thirds of Indiana. There are some ten triple-digit tallies from December and January. The largest of these consisted of 300 in Turkey Run

Status

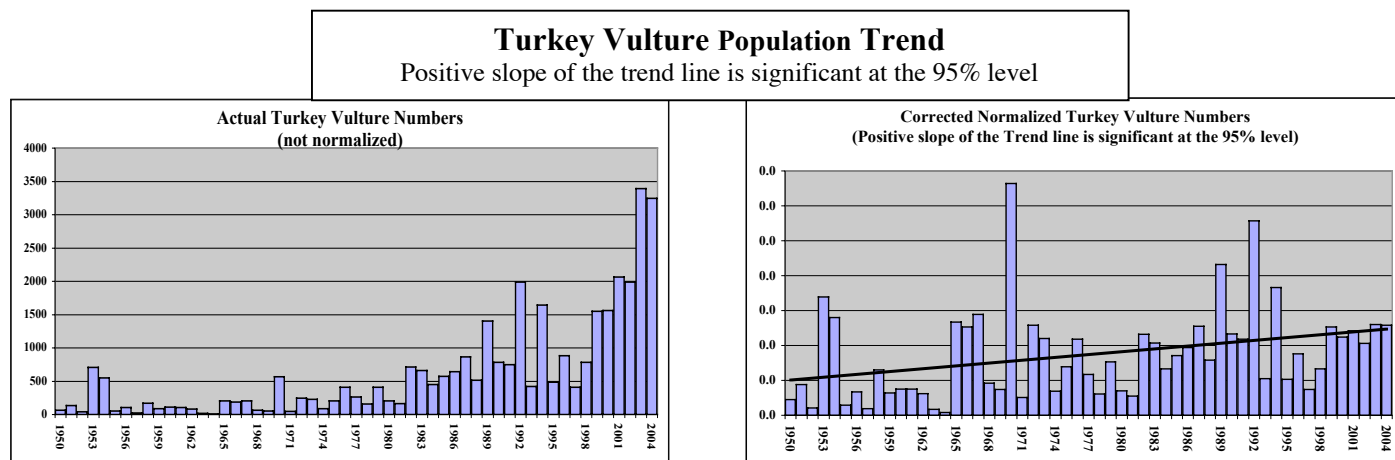
Physical Evidence: Eight specimens and five eggs are preserved in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list, J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list, and Richards 1987)

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
National Museum of Natural History				3*
Milwaukee Public Museum				3
Univ. of Michigan Museum				3*
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				3
*includes eggs				
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	7	4	6	4
Central Tier	4	5	6	3
Southern Tier	5	4	6	3
Entire State	4	4	6	3

State Park on 18-22 December 1987 (Brock 1988). In the northern tier winter birds have been reported in 17 of the last 20 years, and annually since 1990. The largest winter tally in this region was 63 recorded by Michael Hooker in Marshall County 27 February 2006 (IN-BIRD).

Population Trend

Positive slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Breeding

Butler (1898) noted that eggs were observed from 25 April through May, and reported at least three clutches collected near Brookville. A 1894 nest in Wabash County was also mentioned. Mumford and Keller (1984) listed 30 nesting records, stating that eggs were observed from 7 March to 27 May. Bruner (2004) included photos of eggs and nestlings taken in Montgomery County. Castrale et al. (1998) reported confirmed breeding evidence in 18 counties, from LaPorte County in the north to Warrick County in the south. Confirmed breeding evidence was not found in northeastern Indiana.

Turkey Vulture Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
All				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
550	9-Mar-1970	Ripley Co	Bud Starling	IAQ
500	26-Oct-1911	Greene Co	???	REM
350	8-Nov-1989	Parke Co	A.W. Bruner	IAQ
320	24-Oct-1996	Parke Co	A.W. Bruner	NNB
300	22-Dec-1987	Turkey Run S.P.	A.W. Bruner	IAQ

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Vis.	19-Mar	13-Apr	16-May	Sum. Vis.	1075
Central	Win. Res.	8-Mar	19-Apr	23-May	Sum. Res.	193
South	Win. Res.	6-Mar	7-Apr	16-May	Sum. Res.	201
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Sum. Res.	5-Aug	22-Sep	20-Oct	Win. Vis.	619
Central	Sum. Res.	10-Aug	6-Oct	8-Nov	Win. Res.	133
South	Sum. Res.	25-Aug	7-Oct	13-Nov	Win. Res.	234

References Cited

- Brock, K.J. (1988) Field Notes; Winter 1987-88, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 66:157-164.
- Bruner, A. W. (2004) From the Archives – Part 5, CICONIIFORMES CONTINUED – FAMILY THRESKIORNITHIDAE (Ibis, Spoonbill), CICONIIDAE (Wood Stork), CATHARTIDAE (Vultures), and PHOENICOPTERIDAE (Flamingo), *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 82:19-43.
- 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.
- Castrale, J.S., E.M. Hopkins, and C.E. Keller (1998) *Atlas of breeding Birds of Indiana*, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 388 pp.
- DNR files, A collection of data compiled on computer disks for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources by C.E. Keller.
- IN-BIRD, a Listserv 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, 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.