

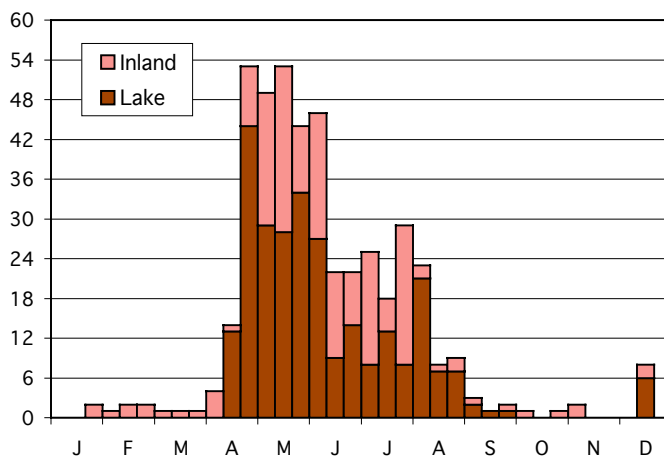
Yellow-headed Blackbird

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus

Historical Information

First Published Record: According to Butler (1898), in 1871 C.E. Aiken found this species breeding along the Calumet River in Lake County; however, the earliest fully dated record involved a specimen collected by Ruthven Deane at English Lake (Starke County) on 7 August 1897 (Butler 1898).

Butler (1898) considered the Yellow-headed Blackbird a locally abundant summer resident in northwestern Indiana. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it a very rare migrant in the north and casual at other times and locations. Mumford and Keller (1984) summarized the Yellow-headed Blackbird's history in the state, but provided no status assessment.

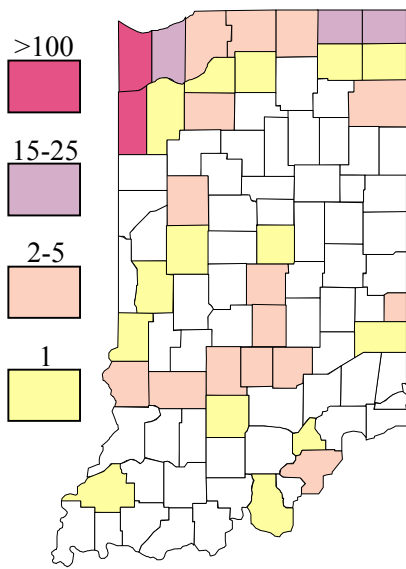


Status

Physical Evidence: At least three specimens are known to be preserved in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
National Museum of Natural History				2
Indiana State Museum				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	n	6	7	7
Central Tier	n	n	n	n
Southern Tier	10	10	10	9
Entire State	10	6	7	7

Yellow-headed Blackbird Numbers per County



Current Status

In the northern tier the Yellow-headed Blackbird is Uncommon (6) in spring and Rare (7) in summer and fall.

Occurrence

This colorful blackbird has been reported in some 34 Indiana counties, but most reports come from the northern tier (see distribution map).

Fall Migration

The migration histogram reveals no discernible fall flight. Instead numbers decline rapidly in August and trail off through November.

Winter Records

A dozen winter records exist: five in December, two in January, and five in February.

Breeding

Historical breeding reports were confined to Lake County where Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported nesting along the Calumet River in 1871 (Butler 1898) and near Whiting until 1940 (Mumford and Keller 1984). The next breeding activity occurred in Gleason Park, Lake County where D.Z. Arvin found two nests containing eggs on 21 May 1980 (Arvin 1981). Breeding also occurred at Willow Slough FWA in 1981 and 1982 (Mumford and Keller 1984). Yellow-headed Blackbirds abandoned the Gleason Park site by 1985 and Willow Slough after 1990. There are currently no known breeding sites in Indiana; however, since about 1997 this species has nested in Eggers Marsh, Illinois, which is adjacent to the state line in Hammond.

Castrale et al. (1998) reported breeding evidence in only four counties: Lake, Newton, Porter, and Starke, but nesting was confirmed only in Newton County.

Yellow-headed Blackbird Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
11	30-Apr-1981	Gleason Park	K.J. Brock	KJB
7	15-May-1983	Willow Slough FWA	T.T. Cable	IAQ
6	01-May-1980	Gleason Park	K.J. Brock	KJB
Fall/Late Summer				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
20	22-Jul-1977	Pigeon River FWA	L.A. Casebere	REM
18	09-Aug-1997	Forsythe Park	Joy Bower	JBo
5	15-Aug-1981	Gleason Park	K.J. Brock	KJB

Migration Envelopes						
Entire State						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
Spring	9-Mar-1978	21-Apr	11-May	4-Jun	Sum. Res.	152
Fall	Sum. Res.	16-Jul	7-Aug	21-Sep	5-Nov-1983	40

References Cited

- Arvin, D.Z. (1981) *Xanthocephalus* (The Yellow-headed Blackbird) Returns to Indiana, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 59:56-58.
- 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.
- 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.

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