

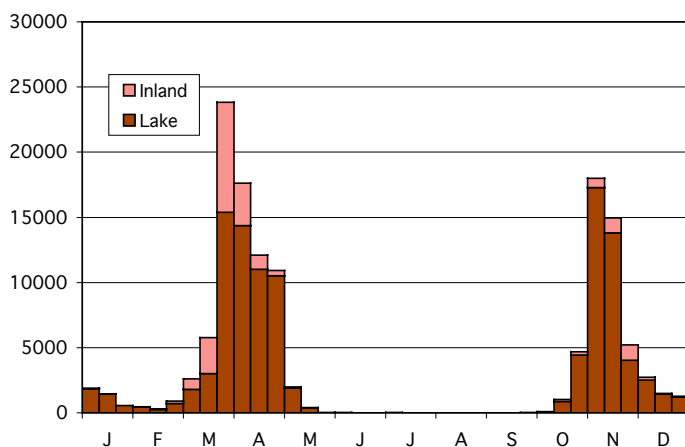
## Red-breasted Merganser

## *Mergus serrator*

### Historical Information

**First Published Record:** According to Butler (1898) on 22 November 1891 Ruthven Deane found this species abundant at English Lake in Starke County. This report constitutes the first formal record of Red-breasted Merganser in the state.

Butler (1890) characterized this duck as a migrant and winter resident throughout the state, but generally rare. Keller et al. (1979) described it as a fairly common migrant, which was very rare in winter. Mumford and Keller (1984) classified the Red-breasted Merganser as a fairly common migrant and usually rare winter resident, being more common on Lake Michigan.



### Current Status

This strongly migratory merganser is an Abundant (2) migrant on Lake Michigan when large rafts appear on the lake. It occurs in lower numbers elsewhere in the state.

### Occurrence

Data in the migration histogram are dominated by numbers on Lake Michigan; the ratio of Lake Michigan to inland numbers is about three to one in spring and seven to one in fall. The peak inland tally was 1000 recorded by Bud Starling at Eagle Creek Reservoir 29 March 1970 (West 1971).

### Summer

As shown by the Status Table this species occasionally lingers into the summer period; there exist 15 summer-period records on the lakefront and a dozen more at inland sites, including six in southwestern Indiana. The largest inland summer count was three, reported by R.F. Buskirk at Eagle Creek Park 2 June 1997 (Jackson 1998), and the maximum lakefront summer tally was eight at Wolf Lake 3 July 1984 (Brock 1985).

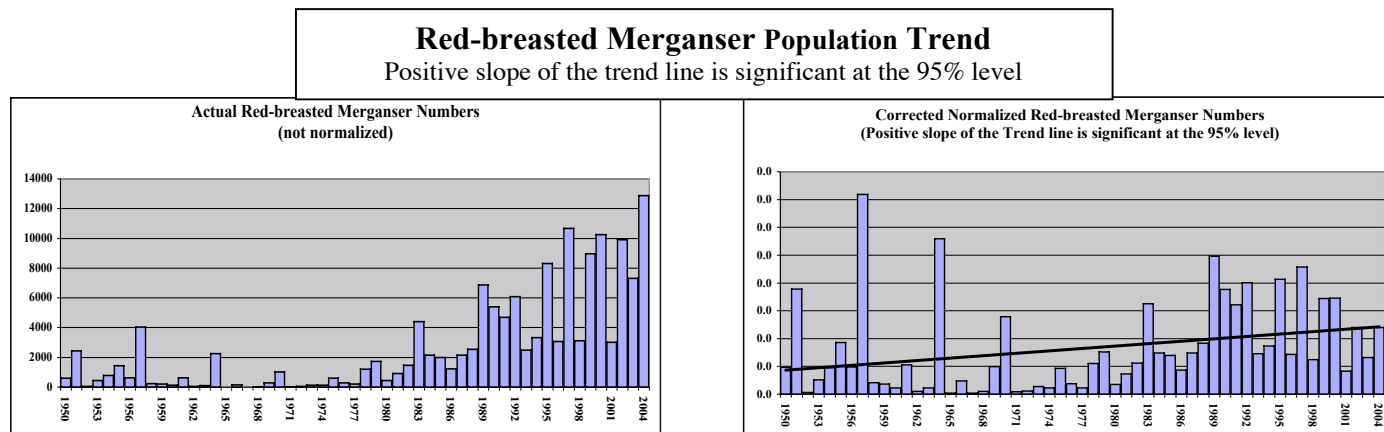
### Status

**Physical Evidence:** Eight skins are preserved in museum collections (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				3
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				5
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	3	2	7	2
Central Tier	7	4	9	6
Southern Tier	5	3	7	4
Entire State	3	2	7	2

## Population Trend

Red-breasted Mergansers appear to be faring well in Indiana, as positive slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



## Breeding

Possible breeding occurred on Lake Michigan during summer 1990. Jackson (1991) described the occurrence as follows, "On 16 June three preening birds were viewed on the boulders of the large breakwater. One was a typical plumed female, while the other two were much paler, appearing crestless with many facial down feathers. When a boat trolled by they chose to swim rather than fly, and at that time it was revealed that the two pale birds were only two-thirds to three-fourths the size of the female and they mirrored her every move. When the boat finally veered away the female jumped back onto a boulder, while the other two swam on. Upon realizing the female wasn't with them, they turned around and quickly scrambled back to her. As they resumed preening it was noted that the two pale birds had underdeveloped primaries, rendering them incapable of flight."

## Red-breasted Merganser Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
3000	27-Apr-2000	Mich. City Harb	J.K. Cassady	JKC
2800	02-Apr-1997	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	JMc
1500	08-Apr-1995	Lakefront	K.J. Brock	KJB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
3415	13-Nov-2002	Lakefront	J.J. McCoy	INB
3000	09-Nov-1957	Gary Harbor	John Louis	JLo
2000	04-Nov-1951	Mich. City Harb	L.H. Walkinshaw	REM

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	13-Mar	3-Apr	3-May	9-Jun-1990	791
Central	Win. Res.	14-Mar	3-Apr	3-May	2-Jun-1994	78
South	Win. Res.	13-Mar	2-Apr	2-May	6-Jun-1988	129
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	15-Jul-1984	20-Oct	6-Nov	24-Nov	Win. Res.	618
Central	19-Oct-1985	---	12-Nov	---	Win. Res.	28
South	15-Jul-1989	30-Oct	17-Nov	28-Nov	Win. Res.	62

## References Cited

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