

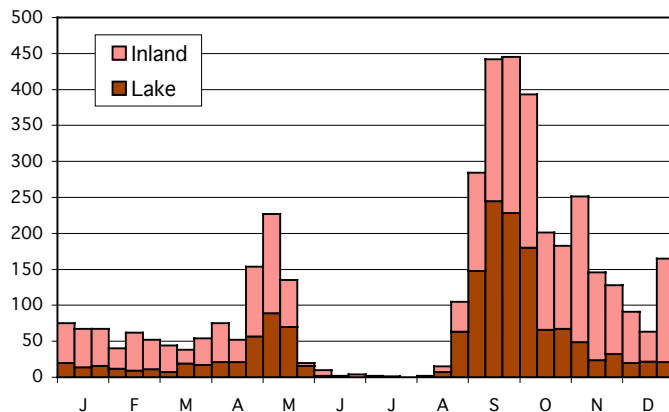
## Red-breasted Nuthatch

## *Sitta canadensis*

### Historical Information

First Published Record: In August 1878 B.W. Evermann found young Red-breasted Nuthatches just able to fly, in Carroll County (Butler 1898), but the earliest fully dated record involved two specimens collected in Franklin County 7 May 1879 (Mumford files).

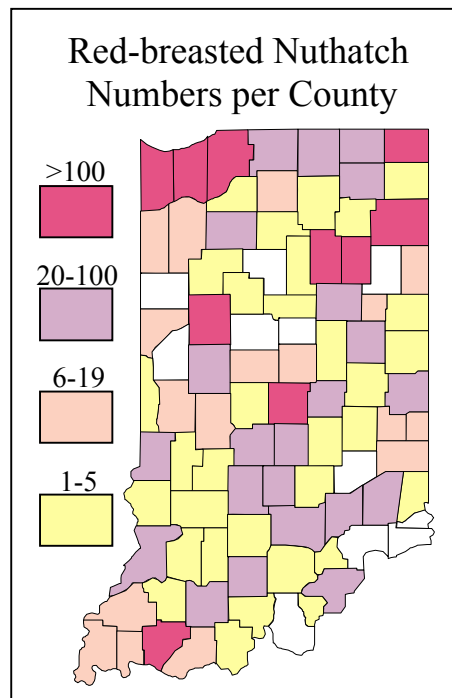
Butler (1898) suggested that, though “irregular,” this nuthatch was usually a rather common migrant. Keller et al. (1979) characterized it as an irregular migrant and winter visitant. Mumford and Keller (1984) mentioned only that winter numbers still fluctuated greatly.



### Status

Physical Evidence: Some 14 specimens are preserved in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list and J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Carnegie Museum of Natural History				1
Chicago Academy of Sciences				2
Chicago Field Museum				3
National Museum of Natural History				4
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				2
Univ. of Michigan Museum				2
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	6	6	8	4
Central Tier	7	6	8	5
Southern Tier	6	6	n	5
Entire State	6	6	8	4

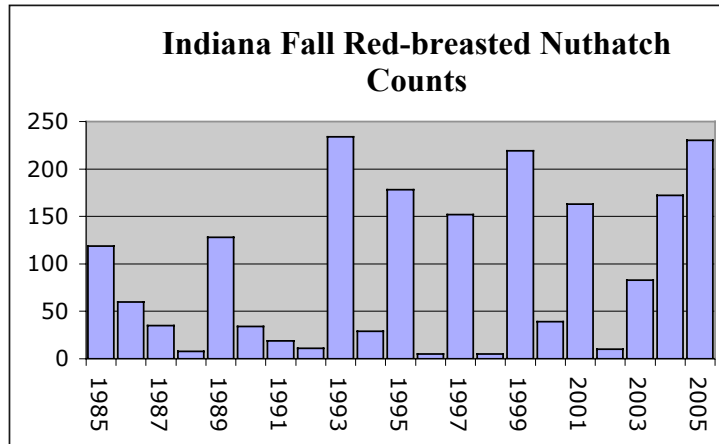


### Current Status

Overall, the Red-breasted Nuthatch is Common (4) during fall migration, but over the past two decades it has been far more prevalent in odd-numbered autumns. It is also Uncommon (6) in winter and Very Rare (8) in summer.

### Occurrence

A majority of the state’s Red-breasted Nuthatches appear in fall migration; indeed, fall numbers exceed those in spring by a factor of three. Statewide, Red-breasted Nuthatches have been reported in at least 81 counties.



### Migration

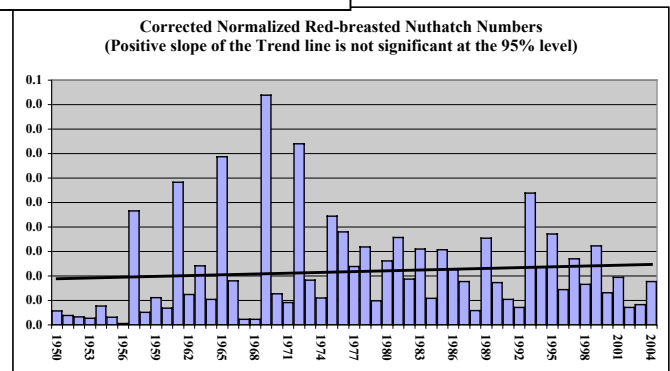
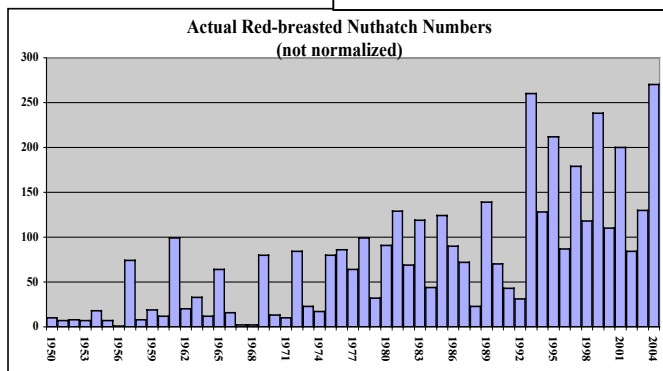
The past two decades have seen the development of a strong pattern of heavy fall flights on odd-numbered years, with usually only feeble movements during intervening years. Though, one or two odd-numbered years lacked strong flights, the pattern is quite evident (see graph). Exceptions to the pattern resulted from the failure of a few odd-numbered years to produce significant flights, but on only one occasion did an even-numbered year produce more than 100 birds; in fall

2004 an unprecedented flight of 172 birds was recorded. An explanation for the 2004 anomaly is wanting.

### Population Trend

The rather flat trend line for the 50-year data suggests a rather stable population. Positive slope of the trend line is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch Population Trend**  
Positive slope of the trend line is not significant at the 95% level



### **Breeding**

Butler (1890) considered the Red-breasted Nuthatch a rare summer breeder in the northern part of the state. However, even today there exists only a handful of breeding reports in the state. Without providing details Mumford and Keller (1984) reported nesting in Howard County (1931), Elkhart County (1965, 1966, and 1980), Vigo County (1979), and Marion County (1982). The following accounts provide more detailed breeding records. In Elkhart County

Witmer (1969) reported that in 1969 a pair “hollowed out” a nest site beneath a branch 50 feet up a willow, but the birds disappeared by 15 May. On 9 May 1981 V. and M. Riemenschneider observed two adults carrying caterpillars to a nest hole (also in a willow) at St. Mary’s College in St. Joseph County and two young were visible in the nest hole 20 May (Mumford files). D. Gorney confirmed the most recent breeding when he observed two adults and two juveniles (one still begging) in Marion County 10 June 2000 (IN-BIRD). There are also at least a half-dozen late June and three July records.

### Red-breasted Nuthatch Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
12	11-May-1996	Dunes St Park	L.S. Hinchman	BBC
10	08-May-1982	Indiana Dunes	K.J. Brock	KJB
9	31-Mar-1994	Warrick Co	J.H. Campbell	NNB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
76	29-Oct-2005	Tippecanoe R. SP	Jon Chapman	INB
60	07-Nov-1993	Kingsbury FWA	L.S. Hinchman	IAQ
47	30-Dec-1965	Warrick Co	C.E. Keller	REM

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	22-Mar	1-May	15-May	2-Jun-1917	382
Central	Win. Res.	1-Apr	30-Apr	14-May	1-Jun-1975	99
South	Win. Res.	8-Mar	7-Apr	6-May	11-May-1995	80
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	20-Jul-1997	4-Sep	28-Sep	8-Nov	Win. Res.	933
Central	17-Aug-1983	5-Sep	4-Oct	5-Nov	Win. Res.	217
South	29-Aug-2001	14-Sep	6-Oct	20-Nov	Win. Res.	155

### References Cited

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.

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

Witmer, S.W. (1969) *Observation Notes on Birds* (of the Goshen College area), unpublished manuscript, 93pp.

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