

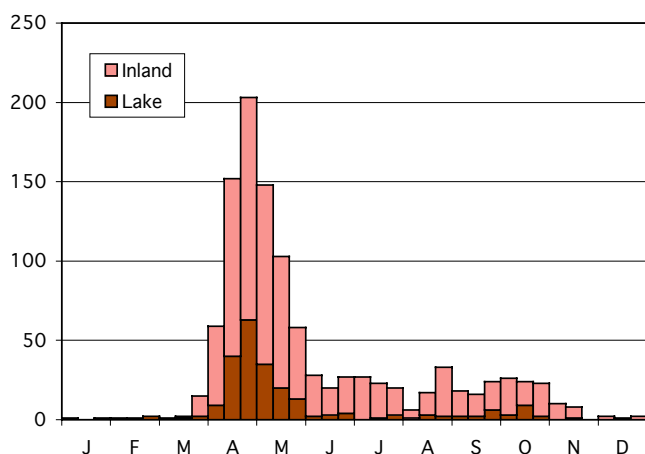
## American Bittern

## *Botaurus lentiginosus*

### Historical Information

**First Published Record:** Butler (1898) noted an occurrence from the Calumet River in 1871, but Indiana's earliest fully dated report occurred in Monroe County 5 May 1886 (Mumford files).

Butler (1898) deemed the bittern a "tolerably common" migrant and local summer resident (breeding reported in six counties), noting that a few linger in the state during mild winters. It was judged a regular migrant, but uncommon by Keller (1966). Mumford and Keller (1984) reported that breeding had decreased, but otherwise this species remained fairly common.



### Current Status

Today the American Bittern is Uncommon (6) to Rare (7), except in winter, when it is Accidental (10).

### Occurrence

There is little doubt that the depletion of wetlands has negatively impacted this cattail loving bird. Over the past two decades the average number of birds reported across the state has been about 25 per year; it has been reported in more than 57 counties. Encouragingly, the number of reports increased somewhat during the 1990s.

### Migration

The migration histogram reveals that records exist for every month of the year, but this species is, by far, most common during the spring migration. A distinct fall migration is not apparent on the histogram; consequently, meaningful autumn migration envelopes were not generated.

### Winter

Winter reports include several December and February records, plus two January records: 7 January 1939 in Marion County (DNR files) and 28 January –21 February 1959 in Porter County (Brock 1997).

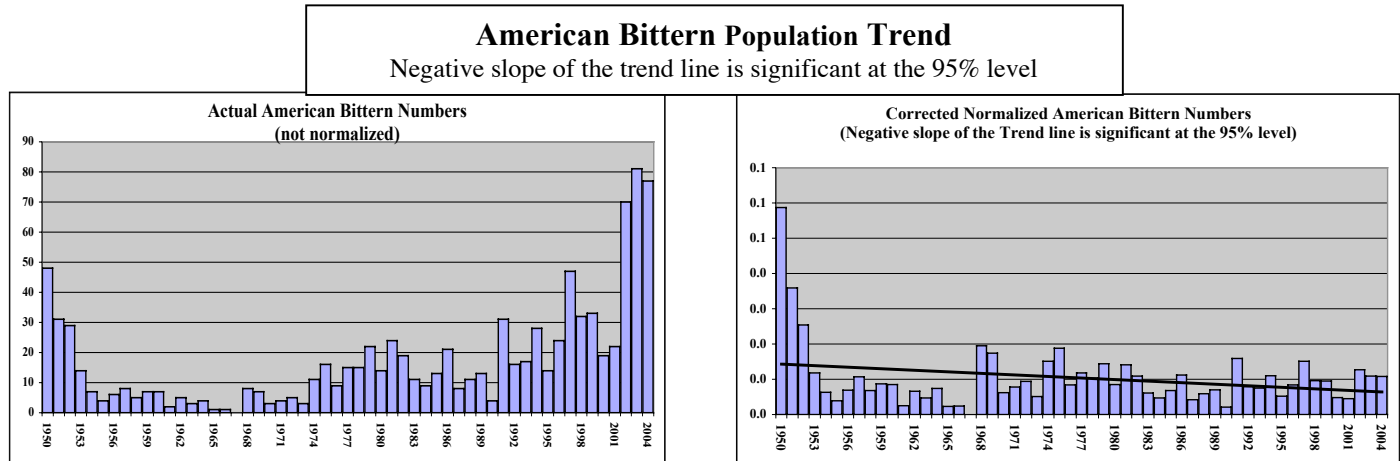
### Status

Bruner (2003) lists the archival sites of a dozen skins of this species.

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				3
National Museum of Natural History				2
Univ. of Michigan Museum				1
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				2
J. Moore Museum, Earlham College				3
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	10	6	7	7
Central Tier	10	7	9	7
Southern Tier	n	6	7	7
Entire State	10	6	7	7

## Population Trend

The decline of this species in Indiana has been noted for several decades and is confirmed by the Population Trend plots. Negative slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



## Breeding

Although recent breeding evidence is sparse, summer period birds have been reported in 14 of the past 20 years. The most recent nesting report came from Gibson County where C. Mills found a nest containing five eggs 31 May 1991, and subsequently saw two fledglings on 11 July (Jackson 1992). Evidence of breeding has also been reported in Boone, DeKalb, Elkhart, Knox, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Lake, LaPorte, Marion, Starke, Steuben, Tipton, Vigo, and Wabash Counties (Keller 1966).

## American Bittern Data

### Maximum Single Party Counts

All				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
20	26-Apr-1997	Ayrshire Mine	J.H. Campbell	NNB
7	18-Apr-1946	Marion Co	C.E. Keller	DNR
7	13-May-1949	Tippecanoe Co	I.W. Burr	IAQ
7	26-Jul-1949	Multiple sites	R.E. Mumford	REM
7	19-Apr-1998	Ayrshire Mine	Midge Lechner	NNB

### Migration Envelopes

Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
<b>North</b>	Win. Res.	8-Apr	28-Apr	20-May	Sum. Res.	306
<b>Central</b>	Win. Res.	9-Apr	29-Apr	22-May	Sum. Res.	111
<b>South</b>	Win. Res.	11-Apr	26-Apr	16-May	Sum. Res.	94

### References Cited

Brock, K.J. (1997) *Birds of the Indiana Dunes*, revised edition, Shirley Heinze Environmental Fund, 251 pp.

Bruner, A. W. (2003) From the Archives – Part 4, CICONIIFORMES – FAMILY ARDEIDAE (Bitterns, Herons, and Egrets), *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 81:70-116.

Butler, A. W. (1898) The Birds of Indiana, Indiana Department of Geology and Natural Resources Annual Report, 22:575-1187.

DNR files, A collection of data compiled on computer disks for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources by C.E. Keller.

Jackson, S.F. (1992) Field Notes Summer 1991, *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 70:188-200.

Keller, C.E. (1966) Status of the Ciconiiformes in Indiana. *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, 44:56-86.

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.