

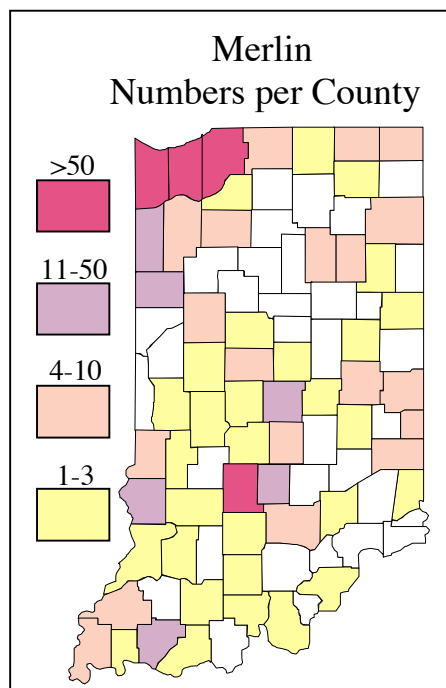
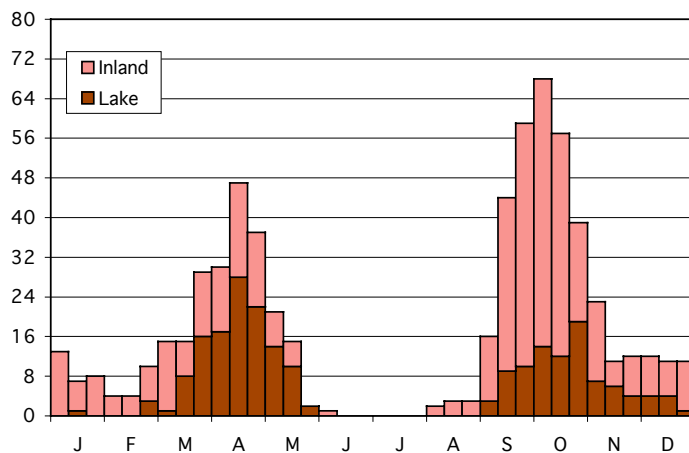
Merlin

Falco columbarius

Historical Information

First Published record: Indiana's earliest "Pigeon Hawk" record involved a bird collected in Boone County 3 March 1874; this specimen is now in the Indiana State Museum (Richards 1987).

Butler (1890) deemed the Merlin a rare resident in the north and a migrant further south. By 1898 his assessment was modified to read: "Regular migrant, and irregular winter resident, not common. It is not implausible that it may rarely nest in the northern part of the State." Keller et al. (1979) considered the Merlin a very rare migrant; casual in winter. Mumford and Keller (1984) agreed with the Keller assessment.



Status

Physical Evidence: At least four specimens are housed in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list, J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list, and Richards 1987).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				2
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	7	7	n	7
Central Tier	9	7	n	7
Southern Tier	7	7	10	7
Entire State	7	7	10	7

Current Status

Merlin reports have increased markedly in recent years. It is now Rare (7) in all seasons except summer, when it is Accidental (10).

Occurrence

Though still sparsely distributed, this aggressive falcon has been reported in at least 58 counties. It is seen regularly during hawk watches in both spring and fall. In spring it is seen more frequently on the lakefront, whereas in fall it is more common inland, especially in Brown and Monroe Counties in fall.

Winter Records

In 1994 J.J. McCoy discovered that winter Merlins roost on the wooden power poles along River Road in Kingsbury FWA. Subsequent to that discovery winter Merlins have been reported annually in Indiana. The average winter count

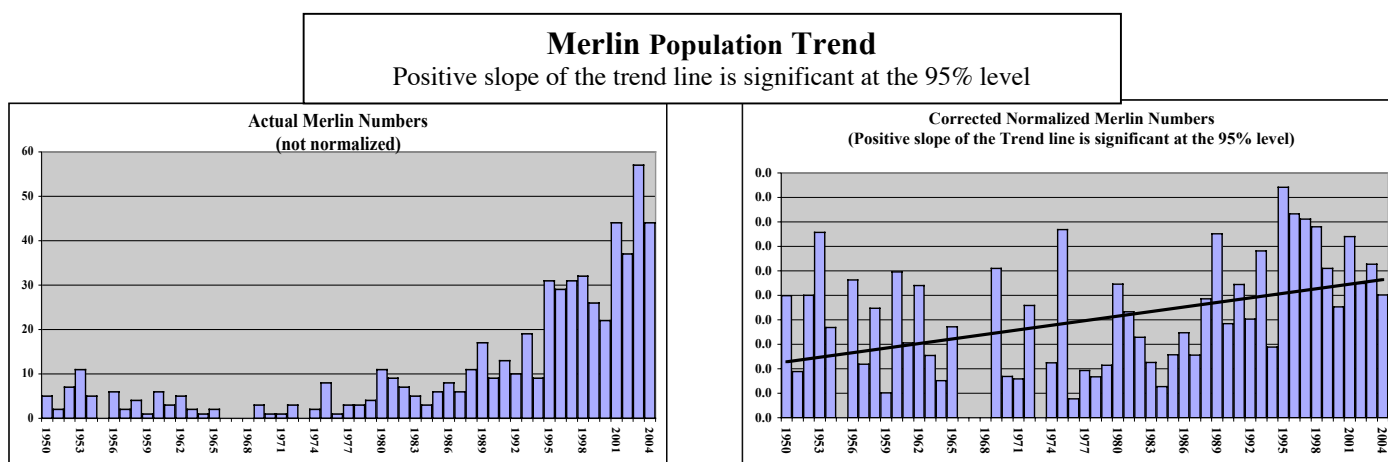
over the past twenty years is 2.4, but the winter mean increases to 3.2 for the post 1994 years.

Summer Record

Indiana's only summer report consists of a bird seen by J.H. Campbell at the Eby Mine, Warrick County, on 3 June 1997 (Jackson 1998).

Population Trend

In concert with a regional population expansion (Niven et al. 2004), Indiana Merlin reports have increased significantly over the past two decades. This rise is illustrated in the Population Trend plots. Positive slope of the trend line shown below is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Merlin Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
No	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
3*	21-Mar-1953	Baileytown	V. Reuter-skiold	VRS
3	18-Apr-1992	Johnson Beach	K.J. Brock	KJB
3	18-Apr-1993	Johnson Beach	S.R. Bagby	SBa
Fall				
No	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
6	14-Oct-2001	Lake Lemon	J. & S. Hengeveld	INB
4	12-Oct-2003	Lake Lemon	J. & S. Hengeveld	INB
3*	13-Oct-1953	Hovey Lake	R.E. Mumford	REM
*3 birds were reported on 8 additional occasions				



Adult male Merlin at West Beach, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, 1 December 2003 (Photo J.J. McCoy).

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Win. Res.	17-Mar	17-Apr	11-May	23-May-2004	123
Central	Win. Vis.	---	11-Apr	---	19-May-1996	19
South	Win. Vis.	---	17-Apr	---	3-Jun-1997	18
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	10-Aug-2002	16-Sep	12-Oct	13-Nov	Win. Res.	123
Central	3-Aug-1963	30-Aug	26-Sep	27-Oct	Win. Vis.	42
South	5-Sep-1998	15-Sep	3-Oct	23-Oct	Win. Vis.	107

References Cited

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