

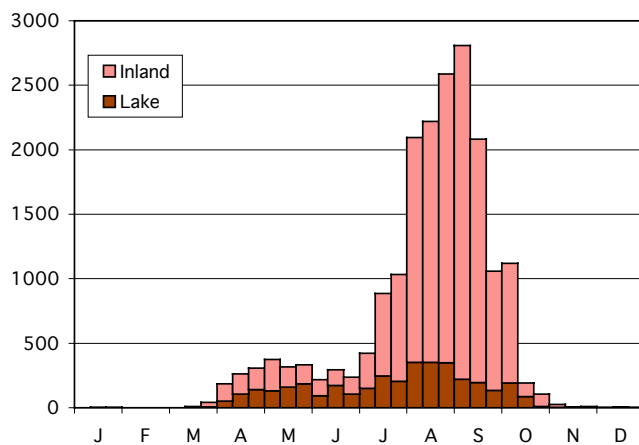
Great Egret

Ardea alba

Historical Information

First Published Record: The earliest published Great Egret record for the state was logged 1 August 1884 in Carroll County (Mumford files).

Butler (1890) dubbed the American Egret a “Summer visitor throughout the State in greater or less numbers; summer resident southward.” Keller (1966) relegated the “Common Egret,” as it was then known, to the fairly common - very common category in summer, and uncommon in spring. Keller et al. (1979) considered it a casual to rare migrant. Mumford and Keller (1984) did not assess this species’ status.



Status

Physical Evidence: A specimen from Indiana is housed in the National Museum of Natural History collection (S.F. Jackson, unpublished list).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
National Museum of Natural History				1
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	10	4	4	4
Central Tier	n	7	6	5
Southern Tier	9	6	6	3
Entire State	8	4	4	3

Current Status

The Great Egret is now Common (4) in spring and summer and Very Common (3) in fall. It is also Very Rare (8) in winter in southern Indiana.

Occurrence

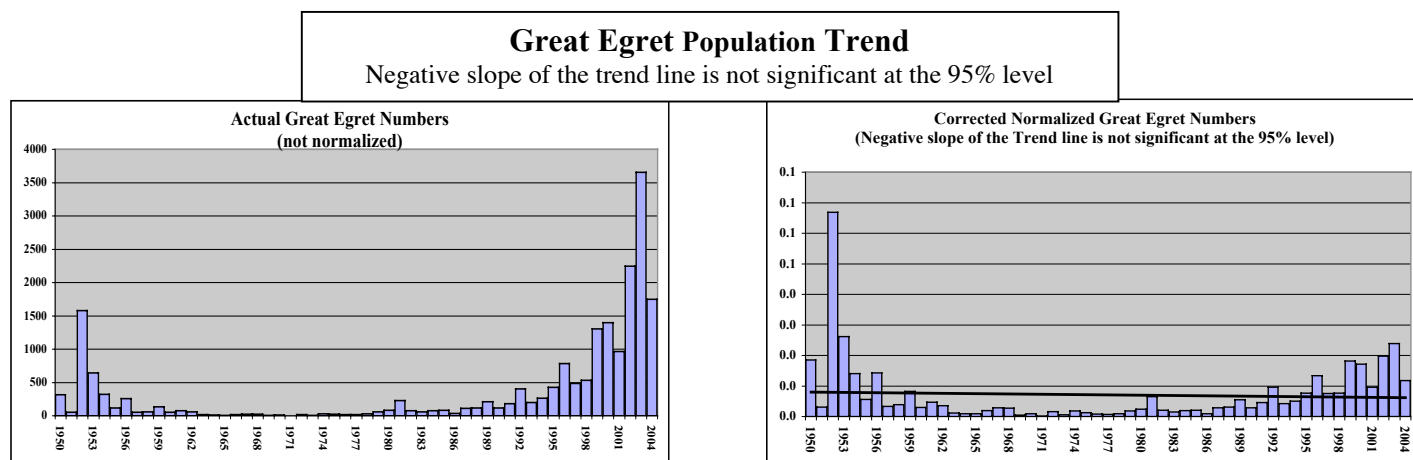
Numbers of this species increase during the post-nesting dispersal period from late July through early October. This trend is illustrated, especially for inland sites, in the migration histogram. During this period Great Egrets occur in wetlands across the state. It has been recorded in at least 81 counties.

Winter Records

Records exist for every winter month except February. There are seven December reports, including a northerly bird at Gleason Park, Lake County, on 1 December 1984 (Brock 1997). Five January reports also exist; the most interesting among these involved a bird that M.R. Brown saw at Turtle Creek Reservoir, Sullivan County, through most of January 2001 (Keller and Keller 2002); this individual was also observed by C.L. Wood and J.D. Hengeveld on 27 January 2001 (IN-BIRD). The latest winter record was logged 30 January 1983 in Dearborn County (Bruner 2003).

Population Trend

Negative slope of the trend line is not statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Breeding

Butler (1898) reported local breeding in northern Indiana and established colonies in the lower Wabash Valley and eggs were collected at Kouts, Porter County May 1895 (Woodruff, 1907). This era was followed by a breeding hiatus; the next known nesting was in 1953 when breeding occurred at Willow Slough Fish and Wildlife Area (Keller, 1966). Whitaker et al. (1988) reported nesting evidence in 12 Indiana counties, but only three of these after 1992. Castrale (2000) reported 1996 breeding activity in Gibson, Lake, and Porter Counties. Other recent breeding records include: a small colony discovered by Michael Topp in Highland, Lake County, in 2001 (IN-BIRD). J.J. McCoy counted four nests at the Highland site on 1 May and 14 incubating birds were present 29 June 2002 (IN-BIRD). On 24 April 2003, J.D Hengeveld reported at least one nest in a Monroe County Great Blue Heron colony (IN-BIRD) and J.S. Castrale counted at least four nests at the East Chicago lakefront Black-crowned Night-Heron colony on 2 June 2005 (IN-BIRD).

Great Egret Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
40	16-May-1954	Willow Slough	Raymond Grow	REM
39	25-May-1996	Lakefront	K.J. Brock	KJB
32	25-May-2003	Willow Slough	J.J. McCoy	INB
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
650	27-Aug-2000	Lake Gibson	J. & S. Hengeveld	INB
570	2-Sep-2002	Lake Gibson	R.L. Hedge	NNB
500	early Aug-1952	Willow Slough	W.E. Madden	REM

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	13-Mar-1955	8-Apr	6-May	1-Jun	Sum. Res.	474
Central	25-Mar-1988	6-Apr	26-Apr	20-May	Sum. Res.	88
South	19-Mar-1991	4-Apr	25-Apr	28-May	Sum. Res.	154
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Sum. Res.	28-Jul	26-Aug	7-Oct	26-Nov-1984	635
Central	Sum. Res.	28-Jul	29-Aug	4-Oct	21-Nov-1972	150
South	Sum. Res.	29-Jul	2-Sep	7-Oct	23-Nov-1992	238

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IN-BIRD, a Listserve 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>

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