

LAKEFRONT BIRD REPORT: WINTER 2018-2019

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Following an unusually warm December, the weather soured bringing below average temperatures for the balance of the winter. The season's meteorological highlight was a late January visit by the fabled Polar Vortex. It arrived in Chesterton on 30 January bringing a low temperature of -19°F, but then plunged to -22° on the 31st. Mercifully, by 3 February the temperature rebounded to a balmy +50°F.

Departure from Normal: Chicago		
	°F	Precip. Inches
Dec	+5.5	+1.07
Jan	-2.8	+0.23
Feb	-1.8	+1.02

In addition to the Polar Vortex the winter of 2018-2019 brought some amazing birds to Indiana. Indiana's winter list (several of which were not seen on the lakefront) included a Piping Plover, one Gyrfalcon, a phenomenal Great Kiskadee, a single Philadelphia Vireo, an Ovenbird, one January Nashville Warbler, two very late Northern Waterthrushes, and a Dickcissel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GEESE & SWANS

Snow Goose:- An unexpected flock of (63) flew over Munster on 20 February (Matt Kalwasinski), providing the lakefront's second largest winter count and contributed to a fine season total of 84 (TYM=21.2).

Cackling Goose:- It was a much better than average winter for this small goose with 5 reported (TYM=1.65). The maximum count of (2) was logged on two occasions: in the High Dunes on 15 December (Randy J. Pals & Patrick Krueger) and at Seidner Dune and Swale on 8 February (Matt S. Kalwasinski).

DUCKS

Surf Scoter:- Two striking adult males were at Portage Lakefront Park on 21 January (Matthew Beatty and Martin Stoner).

Black Scoter:- Immature males, which are rarely observed on the lakefront, were logged at Jeorse Park on 8 February (Matt Kalwasinski) and at Portage Lakefront Park on 19 February (KJB). Matt's bird

constitutes the lakefront's first report of a first-cycle male.

Red-necked Grebe:- The season's only report consisted of (1) seen off Miller Beach on 3 December by Michael A. Topp.



This clear-eyed adult male White-winged Scoter was one of ten adult males reported on the lakefront this winter. Photo was taken on 3 February at Jeorse Park by Matt S. Kalwasinski.

SHOREBIRDS

Piping Plover:- On 15 December, the day of the Dunes CBC, Brendan and Josh Grube found (1) on the Dunes S.P. beach. This is Indiana's first winter record. The previous latest was a bird at Lake Gibson that lingered from 8 to 28 November 2009. The latter is also Indiana's only November record.



A wonderful surprise for the Indiana Dunes CBC was this Piping Plover. Josh Grube found the bird on the Dunes State Park beach: it provided a first winter record for Indiana. Almost certainly this was the same bird that frequented Chicago's beaches on previous days. This photo was taken by Brad Bumgardner on the 15 December count day.

GULLS

Black-legged Kittiwake:- On 3 December John C. Kendall, Michael A. Topp, et al. observed a juvenile and an adult at Miller Beach.

Glaucous Gull:- For the second consecutive year this gull was reported in disturbingly low numbers. Indeed this season's total of 7, is the lowest winter count since 1989-90 (TYM of 35.0).

Great Horned Owl:- In addition to the regular nester at Cline Avenue Marsh, three other nesting Great Horneds were reported within the lakefront area (all in n. Lake Co).

Other nests were located at the Chase St. wetland (Matt S. Kalwasinski), in Griffith (Matt S. Kalwasinski), and at the private Dupont marsh (Matthew Beatty).

Great Kiskadee:- The season's most astonishing bird, by far, was Indiana's first Great Kiskadee. The excitement began when Deann Dyson photographed the bird at her Noble Co home on 16 December; however some local non-birders reported hearing the bird's distinctive calls for a month. Initial attempts to find the bird were frustrating. It was frequently heard, but rarely seen; however, the bird did appear briefly on the 18th when John C. Kendall obtained photographs. Thanks to Jeffrey J. McCoy's diligence it was determined that the bird likely roosted in the area; consequently it appeared most often in early morning and late afternoon. Based on this information many observers were subsequently able to see the bird. Indeed, it lingered in the area until at least 13 January (John K. Cassady & Lynn H. Vernon) and was enjoyed by scores of birders.



Hands down winner of the Indiana's most astonishing winter bird was this Greater Kiskadee. It was initially photographed by Deann Dyson at her Noble Co home on 16 December. Though often tricky to find, this South Texas wanderer remained until 13 January and was seen by scores of observers. It provided Indiana's first record. This photo was taken by Brendan J. Grube on 20 December.

Northern Shrike:- It was an unusually good winter for this shrike with 20 reports at seven different locations. On 26 December Brad Bumgardner logged (3- two at Beverly Shores and one at Cowles Bog), tying the



It was a fine winter for Northern Shrikes on the lakefront with 20 reported at seven different locations. This brownish tinged youngster was found by Bob Huguenard on U.S. 12 near Burns Ditch on 16 February. It was relocated by Brendan J. Grube and photographed by Peter B. Grube later that day.

lakefront's second largest daily count. The bird that wintered near Chase St (Gary) last year, returned on 31 December (Rick Welton).

Red-breasted Nuthatch:- Lakefront birders experienced a slightly above average winter with 16 birds reported (TYM=11.2).

Gray Catbird:- On 21 January Matthew Beatty and Martin Stoner obtained fine views of (1) at the Ogden Dunes pinery. This was the lakefront's sixth January record.

Brown Thrasher:- Brendan J. Grube found (1) in the Ogden Dunes pinery on 15 February, providing the lakefront's second February record.

WINTER FINCHES

Common Redpoll:- It was a below average winter for redpolls with only 64 reported (TYM=151). The season's peak tally consisted of a flock of (30) that Jeff McCoy et al. observed on Ameritech Road near Ind. 249 on 8 December.

Pine Siskin:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best numbers since the winter of 2008-09, with 236 reported this season (TYM=125).

Snow Bunting:- A dozen buntings were reported on the lakefront in December; otherwise the only reports consisted of (2) that Matthew Beatty observed west of Reynolds Creek on 19 January and (6) that Aerin Tedesco found at Wolf Lake on 5 February (TYM=293).



This amazing Ovenbird was first detected at the Starin's Chesterton residence on 23 January, where it dined on freeze-dried mealworms. This tough as nails warbler not only survived the 30 January Polar Vortex, but remained through the season, apparently enjoying the best winter of its life. Photo by Jim Starin.

SPARROWS

Field Sparrow:- The winter of 2018-19 yielded the best numbers in 16 years with 5 birds reported (TYM=1.20). The season's peak count was (3) that Matt Igleski logged at Miller Beach on 28 December.

Lincoln's Sparrow:- Annie Aguirre and Tanner Troyer found (1) at Cowles Bog on 26 January. This is the lakefront's second winter record and the first ever for January.

WARBLERS

Ovenbird:- M. Penny and Jim Starin photographed (1) at their Chesterton residence as it devoured freeze-dried mealworms on the morning of 23 January. This warbler, recognizing an exceptional opportunity, elected to spend the winter. It was still present at the season's end. The Starin's bird constitutes the second winter record for the lakefront, as Milt Cole found one in Furnessville on 4 December 1989.

Northern Waterthrush:- On the 15 December Dunes CBC Brendan J. and Josh Grube found not one, but two: together in west Beverly Shores. They were about 6.5 miles east of the location at which the Cowles Bog bird was reported on 30 November. This is Indiana's second winter record: the first occurred in Tippecanoe Co on 26 December 1966.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak:- A first-cycle male was photographed at Oak Ridge Prairie Park on 4 December (Lauren Wadas). This is Indiana's sixth record for the 12th month and the lakefront's second (the previous was at Dune Acres on 15 December 1998).



Brendan J. Grube found this Northern Waterthrush in west Beverly Shores on the 15 December Indiana Dunes CBC. It was one of two birds present: they provided a first record for the count and also the first winter record for the lakefront and the second for the state. This photo was taken by Brad Bumgardner on the 15th.