

INDIANA DUNES AREA BIRD REPORT: FALL 2009

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Just as the vicissitudes of fall migration were becoming somewhat intelligible, 2009 came along and scrambled everything. The recently concluded autumn migration was astonishingly out of sync with past flights. Virtually every species was much later than normal and several formerly regular species were absent or appeared in low numbers (e.g., Goldeneye, Stilt Sandpiper, Black-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull, Common Tern, Parasitic Jaegers, and Sedge Wren). There was also a plethora of odd occurrences. For example, most warblers appeared in low or modest numbers, but the lakefront was awash in Orange-crowned Warblers. Other irregularities included the lakefront's first autumn Mississippi Kite, an August Kittiwake, a very tardy mid-November Yellow Warbler, two autumn hawk flights of unprecedented magnitude, and the season's first migrant Pine Siskins did not arrive until 28 November.

An explanation for this odd season is wanting, but it is worth noting that between 29 August and 26 November the lakefront experienced a halcyon period without strong cold fronts. The few fronts that did appear brought feeble westerly winds. This absence of storms, with strong northerly winds, appears directly correlated with the dearth of migrant water birds. The lowest numbers in more than a decade were recorded for Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye, Black-legged Kittiwake, Bonaparte's Gull, Sabine's Gull, Thayer's Gull, Black Tern, and Parasitic Jaeger; many others were observed in below average numbers.

The season did have some highlights. Among these were the following rarities: Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, Mississippi Kite, Snowy Egret, Hudsonian Godwit, Red-necked Phalarope, Californian Gull, Long-tailed Jaeger, Townsend's Solitaire, and Worm-eating Warbler.

Unusually high daily counts were logged for Double-crested Cormorant, Great Egret, Red-tailed Hawk, Common Moorhen, Dunlin, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Phoebe, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Vesper Sparrow.

Record early arrival dates were set for Greater Scaup, Townsend's Solitaire, and Wilson's Warbler. In contrast, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Chimney Swift, Eastern Wood-

Pewee, Barn Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Ovenbird, and Summer Tanager all logged unusually late departure dates.

The table below summarizes the fall lakefront migration by bird groups using a parameter known as the Migration Index (MI- definition appended). The range of values in the table is difficult to interpret, but the numbers clearly reveal strong migrations for loons/grebes, herons, and diurnal raptors. Terns, gulls, shorebirds, and ducks staged the weakest flights. With the exception of vireos and swallows, which appeared in high numbers, the passerine migration was near normal and generally slightly above average.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	-0.15	Flycatchers	-0.01
Loons/Grebes	+0.58	Vireos	+0.18
Herons	+0.46	Swallows	+0.18
Raptors	+0.29	Wrens	+0.06
Shorebirds	-0.22	Thrushes	+0.07
Gulls	-0.41	Warblers	+0.07
Terns	-0.44	Sparrows	+0.07

The Season in Perspective

August

For the month Chicago temperatures were 1.2°F below normal and precipitation was slightly below average. August began in fine style with the following reported at Miller Beach: a state record cormorant count, three Marbled Godwits, an all-time early Wilson's Warbler, plus a Snowy Egret at Wolf Lake. Another of those sporadic August hawk flights occurred on the afternoon of the 8th. Indeed, impressive hawk flights were noted in the Dunes on both 8 and 15 August. At mid-month two Piping Plovers appeared at Miller Beach. A Hudsonian Godwit and three Avocets appeared on the 17th, more Avocets were seen on the 18th, and a juvenile Mississippi Kite provided a gigantic surprise on the 20th. A nice front passed during early morning hours of 22 August. It brought the season's first jaegers, including an adult Long-tailed at Miller Beach along with a Red Knot at Michigan City Harbor. Two Whimbrels and another Knot

were at Miller Beach the following day. Following another front on the month's final weekend, Miller Beach lakewatchers logged a Little Gull, another Long-tailed Jaeger, and a Red-necked Phalarope on Saturday the 29th. On Sunday the 30th a loose flock of three Parasitic Jaegers was seen off Dunes State Park. An astonishingly early Kittiwake appeared off Miller Beach on the 31st. The last week of August was unusually cool.

September (first half)

Weather throughout the first half of September was dominated by a high-pressure airmass that stalled over the Midwest. Associated atmospheric conditions were sunny, dry, and delightfully pleasant; however, they were not conducive for migration. The few highlights that occurred during this interval included a remarkable 16 Moorhens at the Cline Avenue Marsh, the lakefront's first autumn Worm-eating Warbler in 17 years, and a Prothonotary in Beverly Shores. On the 5th, 16 warbler species were found in the traps along with an Olive-sided Flycatcher at Beverly Shores. September 7th brought two White Pelicans to Miller Beach. However, no migrant concentrations were reported anywhere on the lakefront. On the 11th juvenile Short and Long-billed Dowitchers were found at Wolf Lake. This segment ended with three somewhat early Dunlin on the beach at Michigan City Harbor.

September (second half)

A micro-front (September's first) passed through on the evening of the 15th. Following winds were ENE and generated no movement on the lake, but a juvenile Golden Plover did appear at Miller Beach on the 19th. The enjoyable weather continued through the weekend of 19-20 September; during which a juvenile Golden Plover appeared on Wolf Lake, a wavelet of Red-breasted Nuthatches decorated the lakefront, and 15 warbler species were counted in the traps. Despite the absence of frontal activity Brad Bumgardner counted 20 warbler species on the 21st, including two Golden-wingeds, a Parula, and a Mourning. Saturday the 26th yielded 19 warbler species, plus Eared Grebes and a Sharp-tailed Sparrow. A moderate front arrived during early morning of the 28th. The westerly following winds yielded little more than four Golden-Plovers and a Lesser Black-backed Gull. A second front passed the following day bringing 10-15 knot northwest winds, but no movement on the lake. Weather for the month was warmer than normal (+1.5°F) with below average precipitation.

October (first half)

For the month Chicago temperatures averaged 3.3°F below normal and precipitation was high (within the ten wettest on record). The chilly first half of October was dominated by what weather maestro Tom Skilling called "November high temperatures," with daily maxima 10-15°F below normal.

According to the *Chicago Tribune* the first half of October was the coldest on record. This cold air diminished the passerine flight to even lower ebb. A White Pelican at Wolf Lake provided a 1 October highlight. McCool Basin yielded both Sharp-tailed and Le Conte's Sparrows on the 3rd. Two White Pelicans were discovered at Wolf Lake on the 4th. Surprisingly, 14 warbler species were seen in the traps on the latter date. On the 5th two unexpected Pine Warblers were found at Inland Marsh. Other than a few moderately late passerine migrants, nothing unusual was reported through 10 October. An all-time late Summer Tanager appeared in the State Park on the 12th and the following day, weak northerly winds yielded the season's first Surf Scoters.

October (second half)

This segment began on a very bright note: B.J. Grube saw an early Townsend's Solitaire at Dunes State Park. A wave of late fall migrants on the 17th, included a record Orange-crowned Warbler count, 13 Brown Creepers, 30 Winter Wrens, 88 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 23 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, five warbler species, and a dozen species of sparrows (including Clay-colored). At mid-month the lengthy cold spell finally broke, making way for seasonable temperatures. On the 18th Brad Bumgardner's team banded two Saw-whet Owls. A front passed at mid-day on the 22nd bringing an unidentified jaeger to Miller Beach; heavy rain pummeled the area on following day. Saturday the 24th brought a nice wave of sparrows, several late passerine migrants, a plethora of Orange-crowned Warblers, and a major Dunlin movement on Lake Michigan. October's final day yielded a number of noteworthy birds, including: Red Phalarope, Northern Shrike, Townsend's Solitaire, and Red Crossbill.

November (first third)

November weather was dominated by 27 consecutive days of above normal temperatures (great weather for sane humans, but poor for lakewatchers). Not surprisingly therefore, this segment was sunny, dry, and warmer than average; conspicuously absent were "November-grade" cold fronts. A Cattle Egret, a late Chimney Swift, and the Solitaire were seen at West Beach on the first. A weak front on the third yielded a modest duck movement and the season's first Tundra Swans. On the 5th the lakefront's first-ever November Palm Warbler was found at Forsythe Park. The first Saturday of the month brought marvelous weather with 72° F temperatures (20°+ above normal) and bright sunshine. Avian highlights for the day included a spectacularly late Yellow Warbler, several migrating Snow Goose flocks, two Red-necked Grebes, and all three scoters. The Yellow Warbler appeared again on the 10th.

November (second third)

The splendid Indian Summer-like weather continued through this period and there were no significant cold fronts. A south wind day on the 12th flattened the lake's surface allowing observers to detect a distant Pacific Loon and Western Grebe off Beverly Shores. That day also yielded the lakefront's first jaeger report since 22 Oct. Saturday the 14th, also brought southerly winds with little activity on Lake Michigan, the lakefront gang was drawn to St Joseph, Michigan for stunning looks at a visiting Ancient Murrelet. Back in Indiana's waters all three scoters, including an adult male Surf, were seen, along with a Red-necked Grebe. Two tardy Gray Catbirds were found in the Beverly Shores Great Marsh. This segment ended with 206 Horned Grebes and a Red-necked Grebe at Miller Beach.

November (final third)

Delightfully warm sunny weather on the 21st yielded all three scoters, 28 Red-throated Loons, a Western Grebe, and two Little Gulls along the lakefront, plus a Catbird and two Yellow-rumped Warblers at Ogden Dunes. The following day Western and Red-necked Grebes plus 1000 Common Loons were seen off the Beverly Shores lakefront. A long awaited cold front with brisk following winds passed through at mid-morning on Thanksgiving Day (26 November). Although this front stimulated little movement on Lake Michigan (other than Common Loons) it did generate a gull build-up at the Port of Indiana that yielded single adult California and Iceland Gulls. A lakewatch on the 27th yielded an excellent count of 311 Redheads. On 28 November a heavy Snow Bunting flight occurred on the lakefront and a record Dunes area Turkey count was made in Furnessville. The season's final front arrived on the 29th bringing a Kittiwake plus single Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls.

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose:- On 4 Oct a flock of (17) off Beverly Shores (J.K. Cassady), provided the season's only report.

Snow Goose:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best flight since 2005 with 86 birds reported for the season (TYM=116.8). The largest count consisted of a flock of (60 birds, 50 blue and 10 white) off Miller Beach on 7 Nov (Joel Greenberg et al.).

DUCKS

The duck flight was below par with an average MI/species of -0.15. Two species, Common Merganser and Harlequin

Duck, were missed this fall and the Common Goldeneye and Canvasback were observed only in very small numbers. The duck raft that usually forms off Miller Beach failed to develop this fall. On the positive side Wood Ducks and Red-breasted Mergansers were observed in excellent numbers.

Wood Duck:- Thanks to a fine count of (112) in Gary on 1 Sep (Bob Zaremba), the highest fall numbers since 2005 were recorded.

Northern Pintail:- Only 84 were reported for the season (TYM=271).

Canvasback:- The 10 reported is the lowest fall total in five years and far below the TYM of 44.4.

Redhead:- A fine flight of (270 at Miller Beach and 41 at Beverly Shores) was recorded on 27 Nov (J.J. McCoy and J.K. Cassady). This is the lakefront's second largest count.

Harlequin Duck:- For the second consecutive fall, this small sea duck was not reported (TYM=1.4).

Common Merganser:- For the second autumn in the last three years this duck went unreported (TYM=8.4).

Red-breasted Merganser:- This "saw-bill" staged a good flight with 4388 reported for the season (TYM=1864).

Ruddy Duck:- Remarkably (26, in three flocks) accompanied the 31 Oct duck movement at Miller Beach; this species is normally a nocturnal migrant.

Wild Turkey:- A record count for the Dunes area was set 28 Nov when S.R. Bagby observed a loose flock of (21) on Furnessville Road near the cemetery. The previous Dunes area maximum was 17.

LOONS & GREBES

A bright spot in this generally gloomy fall migration was the loon-grebe flight. The addition of Pacific Loon and Eared Grebe to a plump list of the regular species yielded a record average MI/species of +0.58.

Red-throated Loon:- Red-throated Loon numbers continue to increase every fall. This year a record 146 were reported on the lakefront, which far exceeds the TYM of 50.7. The peak daily count consisted of (38), at four lakefront sites on 12 Nov (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, & KJB).

Pacific Loon:- The lakefront's first autumn Pacific Loon since 2005 was seen in a giant Common Loon raft off

Beverly Shores on 12 Nov (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, & KJB).

Common Loon:- A record 4468 birds were counted this fall (TYM = 1962). The peak daily tally was an estimated (1000) seen off Beverly Shores on 22 Nov (B.J. Grube).

Red-necked Grebe:- A better than average season on the lakefront yielded six birds (TYM=5.6).

Eared Grebe:- Two individuals, mainly in basic plumage, were seen swimming off Miller Beach on 26 Sep (J.K. Cassady et al.).

Western Grebe:- Singletons were seen off Beverly Shores on 12 Nov (J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, & KJB), off Miller Beach on 21 Nov (J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, S.R. Bagby, J.C. Kendall, R.J. Pals, & KJB), on the Beverly Shores lakefront 22 Nov (B.J. Grube), and at Miller Beach 28 Nov (Michael Topp).

Double-crested Cormorant:- An Indiana record count of (5650) was tallied off Miller Beach on 1 Aug (J.J. McCoy, S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, Michael Topp, & KJB).

American White Pelican:- C.A. Marsh reported (1) on a Wolf Lake island on 28 Aug, providing a first-ever August record for the lakefront. Two were photographed off Miller Beach on 7 Sep (Ethan Gyllenhaal) and C.A. Marsh reported a peak of (4) on Wolf Lake 26 Oct. On 4 Oct J.J. McCoy and J.K. Cassady found (2) on Wolf Lake; one lingered there until at least 23 Nov (C.A. Marsh).

BITTERNS, HERONS & EGRETS

Numbers recorded for this group were quite impressive. In addition to the seven expected species, Snowy Egret was added to the fall list. Among these only the Little Blue Heron was below normal, with one reported compared to a TYM of 2.2. The average MI/species was an impressive +0.46.

American Bittern:- For the first time since 1991 more than one individual was reported during the fall lakefront flight. This year singletons were observed at Miller Beach on 19 Sep (J.J. McCoy) and in the Hammond Sanctuary on 10 Oct (Amy Kearns).

Great Egret:- A count of (198) was recorded at the Grant Street (Gary) wetland on 11 Aug (J.K. Cassady & KJB). This is an all-time maximum tally for the lakefront. The region's second latest record was set 30 Nov when Jeff Skrentny, et al. identified one near Roxanna Pond.

Snowy Egret:- An adult, discovered on Wolf Lake (near Forsythe Park) on 4 Aug (C.A. Marsh), provided the first autumn record for the lakefront since 2004.

Cattle Egret:- The lakefront's tenth latest record was logged at Forsythe Park when a singleton was observed 23 Oct (C.A. Marsh). Another, perched atop the West Beach nature center on 1 Nov, tied the lakefront's fifth latest (Alison Vilag & Bob Huguenard).

DIURNAL RAPTORS

The overall diurnal raptor flight was quite good with an average MI/species of +0.29. This value was elevated by a Mississippi Kite plus excellent Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawk numbers (see next paragraph). Northern Harrier and Rough-legged Hawk made the poorest showings.

During strong west winds on 8 Aug B.J. Grube observed a major hawk movement at Beverly Shores. Brendon estimated that 100 birds per hour were moving eastward along the beach. The flight consisted mostly of Red-Taileds, but a few Broad-wingeds were present, along with one immature Bald Eagle. The following Saturday another spectacular flight occurred; on this occasion S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, R.J. Pals, Michael Topp, and KJB spent 3.5 hours (between 10:30AM and 2:00PM) at Dunes S.P. counting an unprecedented 250 raptors as they flew westward. These were dominantly Red-taileds with about 10% Broad-wingeds; almost all were immatures. The wind was initially s.e. at 10 but gradually shifted westward and decreased. At 2:00PM (count termination) the wind was s.w. at 3.



Juvenile Mississippi Kite at Miller Beach on 20 August 2009. This is the lakefront's first autumn record. Note the square-cut tail. Photo by J.C. Kendall.

Mississippi Kite:- A juvenile, photographed 20 Aug at Miller Beach (J.C. Kendall), provided the lakefront's fifth overall record and first ever for the fall season.

Bald Eagle:- Although Bald Eagle sightings are frequent in much of Indiana, these large raptors remain unusual on the lakefront. Accordingly, the adult that landed on a nearby snag at the Beverly Shores Great Marsh on 14 Nov (J.J. McCoy et al.) and the immature perched at Miller Beach on 26 Aug (J.C. Kendall) were quite noteworthy.

Northern Harrier:- Only one was reported all season (TYM=6.3); a fall total this low was last recorded in 1992.

Sharp-shinned Hawk:- The large 15 Aug flight included (2) Sharpies, which provided the ninth August record for the lakefront.

Broad-winged Hawk:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best fall flight since 1986 with 41 reported (TYM = 3.5). The peak movement occurred 15 Aug when S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, R.J. Pals, Michael Topp, and KJB counted (29) at Dunes S.P., accompanying the Red-tailed movement.

Red-tailed Hawk:- The 15 Aug movement at Dunes S.P. (green tower site) yielded a state fall record count of (214) birds (S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, R.J. Pals, Michael Topp, & KJB). The migrants were almost all young birds, many were year-old individuals; all flew east to west.

Rough-legged Hawk:- B.J. Grube observed (1) in rural n. Porter Co on 17 Oct, to provide the lakefront's earliest arrival date since 1991. Michael Topp recorded a light morph at Miller Beach on 28 Nov for the season's only other report. This is the lowest season total since 1992 (TYM=8.2).

Common Moorhen:- A juvenile, at the Grant St. wetland on 8 Aug (J.J. McCoy), provided the lakefront's first fall record since 2007. Michael Topp's excellent count of 16 (5 adults & 11 juvs) constituted the lakefront's highest count since 1992.

SHOREBIRDS

Once again the lakefront shorebird flight was quite poor. This fall 28 species were recorded giving an average MI/species of -0.22. Twenty-one of the observed species appeared in below normal numbers. Three expected species were missed: Purple Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Unexpected were Hudsonian Godwit and Red-necked Phalarope. Species with the lowest MI values (other than those missed) were Wilson's Snipe, Solitary Sandpiper, and Red Knot. The Willet, Marbled Godwit, and Dunlin made the best showings.

Piping Plover:- Different banded adults were photographed at Miller Beach on 8, 11, & 27 Aug (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, J.C. Kendall, Michael Topp, & KJB).

Willet:- A fine flock of (27), the lakefront's eleventh largest fall tally, was seen at Dunes S.P. on 10 Aug (Brad Bumgardner). This report was paled by the flock of (62) that J.C. Kendall counted at Michigan City Harbor on 17 Aug. The latter was Indiana's fifth largest fall count.

Fall Avocet Records

Date	No	Location	Observer(s)
17-Aug	3	Dunes S.P.	B. Bumgardner
18-Aug	1	Mich. City Harb.	J.C. Kendall
18 Aug	1	Miller Beach	K.J. Brock
25-Sep	2	Dunes S.P.	B.J. Grube

Fall Whimbrel Records

Date	No	Location	Observer(s)
5-Aug	1	Miller Beach	J.C. Kendall
14-Aug	1	Miller Beach	Michael Topp
23-Aug	2	Miller Beach	J.K. Cassady

Hudsonian Godwit:- Erik Troske obtained a close-range view of (1) as it flew past Michigan City Harbor on the morning of 17 Aug.

Marbled Godwit:- A flock of (3) flew past Miller Beach on 1 Aug (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, Michael Topp, & KJB).

Red Knot:- Only three were reported for the season (TYM=7.8). This shorebird has become disturbingly scarce.

Purple Sandpiper:- This is the third fall, of the last five years, in which this coastal shorebird was not reported on the lakefront.

Dunlin:- A major flight occurred at Miller Beach on 24 Oct with (635) tallied over the morning (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, Mike Becker, Ed Hopkins, Jeff McCoy, Kevin Nervers, Randy Pals, & KJB). The birds passed in westbound flocks of up to 50 individuals. This is Indiana's fourth largest daily count.

Stilt Sandpiper:- For the second consecutive year no autumn Stilt Sandpipers were reported on the lakefront (TYM=6.5).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper:- Not reported on the lakefront for the first year since 1998 (TYM=3.4).

Long-billed Dowitcher:- Michael Topp obtained an excellent photo of a juv on Wolf Lake (adjacent to Forsythe Park) on 11 Sep. This is the lakefront's seventh earliest record.

Wilson's Snipe:- The two birds reported this fall constitute the lowest autumn lakefront total since 1996 (TYM=15.3).

Red-necked Phalarope:- A close-range juv. flew past Miller Beach observers, on 29 Aug (J.K. Cassady, Marty Jones, Ray Helmuth, R.J. Pals, & KJB). This phalarope is quite rare on the lakefront (TYM = 0.2).

Red Phalarope:- A distant flyby was observed off Miller Beach on 31 Oct (KJB, S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, J.C. Kendall, J.J. McCoy, Perry Miller, R.J. Pals, Leland Shaum, and Michael Topp).

GULLS

Thanks to an eleventh hour effort by J.C. Kendall, the gull flight avoided total disaster. On 29 November John recorded these season's only Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls, plus the only November Kittiwake. Even with this sterling performance the average MI/species was -0.41. Entirely lacking from the fall gull list were Sabine's and Laughing Gulls. Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls were observed in very low numbers.

Black-legged Kittiwake:- Mike Resch, a visiting New England birder, observed a juvenile at Miller Beach on 31 Aug (this is only the third August record for Indiana). The season's only other report involved a juvenile observed by J.C. Kendall at Miller Beach on 29 Nov.

Sabine's Gull:- Not reported on the lakefront for the first fall since 2004 (TYM=7.2).

Bonaparte's Gull:- For the entire season only 455 "Bonys" were reported. This is the lowest fall total since 1993 (TYM=1379).

Franklin's Gull:- Only 4 were reported this fall (TYM=90.7). This is the lakefront's lowest autumn total since 1999.

Little Gull:- A juv flew westward past Miller Beach on 29 Aug (J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, P.B. Grube, E.M. Hopkins, Joel Greenberg, KJB, & m.ob.) and (2) adults accompanied a Bonaparte's flock at Beverly Shores on 21 Nov (B.J. Grube).

California Gull:- An adult was picked out of a large gull flock at the Port of Indiana on 26 Nov (J.J. McCoy). Remarkably, this is the first California Gull ever recorded in Porter Co.

Thayer's Gull:- J.C. Kendall's adult bird at Miller Beach on 29 Nov (TYM=4.3) was the season's only report.

Iceland Gull:- J.J. McCoy picked out an adult "Kumlien's" at the Port of Indiana on 26 Nov. This is the lakefront's first fall

period Iceland in eight years.

TERNS

It was another down autumn for terns with the numbers of all four species well below normal. The average MI/species was a basement level -0.44, which is the lowest value ever recorded. Black and Common terns staged the weakest flights.

Common Tern:- Only 744 were reported for the season, which is the lowest fall total since 1993 (TYM=3714). The peak daily was recorded 23 Aug when J.K. Cassady logged (374) at Miller Beach.

Black Tern:- A paltry twenty-seven were counted on the lakefront this fall (TYM=497), which is the lowest fall count in 32 years. The peak tally was (24) at Miller Beach on 22 Aug (J.K. Cassady & KJB).

JAEGERS

The season got off to a fine start with a record 12 jaegers, including two adult Long-taileds, in August. Unfortunately, however, this August count ultimately comprised 71% of the entire season's total. The absence of fronts was clearly detrimental to the season's jaeger count. The 17 jaegers reported for the season is the lowest total since 1995.

Jaegers per Month												
	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Aug	2	1	8	4	2	2	6	11	3*	9	4	12
Sep	15	15	6	39	19	91	30	33	16	14	34	2
Oct	7	22	9	31	0	9	14	4	8	15	3	2
Nov	10	63	2	7	3	0	6	6	24	2	12	1
Sum	34	101	25	81	24	102	56	54	51	40	53	17

*Includes one July bird

Parasitic Jaeger:- The lakefront experienced a very feeble flight with only seven reported (TYM=14.9). This is the lowest fall total since 2002.

Fall Parasitic Jaegers				
date	#	loc	observers	age
22-Aug	1	MB	B. Grube, J. McCoy	subadult
29-Aug	1	MB	J.J. McCoy	Juv/sub
30-Aug	1	DP	B.J. Grube	adult
30-Aug	1	DP	B.J. Grube	subadult
30-Aug	1	DP	B.J. Grube	Imm.
30-Aug	1	MB	J.J. McCoy	Juv
12-Sep	1	MB	J.J. McCoy	adult

MB=Miller Beach MC=Mich. City Harbor
DP = Dunes S.P. Beverly Shores=Beverly Shores

Long-tailed Jaeger:- An adult soared past the Miller Beach concession stand at close range on 22 Aug (Joel Greenberg, J.J. McCoy, B.J. Grube, S.R. Bagby, J.C. Kendall, Sulli Gibson, Mike Becker, R.J. Pals, Michael Topp, and KJB). A second adult was seen at Miller Beach 29 Aug (J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, Marty Jones, m.ob.).



Adult Long-tailed Jaeger at Miller Beach on 22 August 2009. Note the long tail streamer. Photo by K.J. Brock

Eurasian Collared-Dove:- One flew over Forsythe Park on 3 Oct (J.K. Cassady).

Black-billed Cuckoo:- Not reported on the lakefront for the fifth consecutive fall (TYM=1.4).

Snowy Owl:- No reports (TYM=2.5).

Short-eared Owl:- One was seen over Lake Michigan by Miller Beach lakewatchers on 24 Oct (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, Mike Becker, Ed Hopkins, Kevin Nevers, Randy Pals, & KJB).

Northern Saw-whet Owl:- On 18 Oct Brad Bumgardner banded (2) females at the new Dunes S.P. banding station. Brad's banding efforts will surely revolutionize our knowledge of this furtive owl, as there were only seven previous October records in the entire Dunes area. A female captured on 31 Oct had been previously banded at Steven's Point, Wisconsin, on 3 October 2008. For the season Brad banded 19 Saw-whets and attracted six others.

Chimney Swift:- A singleton, observed flying along the lakeshore at West Beach on 1 Nov by Michigan birder Alison Vilag, provided the lakefront's third latest record.

Common Nighthawk:- Thanks in large part to a fine count of (81) in the high dunes on 24 Aug (Brad Bumgardner), the fall lakefront total of 194 was the highest since 1997 (TYM=142).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird:- With the help of a bank of feeders established by Brad Bumgardner at the green tower site (Dunes S.P.), the season yielded a record total of 171 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (TYM=81.7).

FLYCATCHERS

For the first time since 2001 autumn flycatcher numbers were down; the average MI/species was -0.01. Seven of the ten species were at or above their TYMs, but low counts of Acadian, Alder, and Great Cresteds, placed the group in the red. Only the Willow Flycatcher was reported in impressive numbers.

Eastern Wood-Pewee:- On 24 Oct J.J. McCoy and B.J. Grube observed a juvenile at Beverly Shores, which tied the all-time late Dunes area departure date.

Acadian Flycatcher:- Only two fall birds were reported (TYM=7).

Alder Flycatcher:- Not recorded for the third consecutive autumn (TYM=0.8).

Willow Flycatcher:- The five counted this fall tied the lakefront's best and was well above the TYM of 1.55.

Eastern Phoebe:- The lakefront's second highest fall tally was recorded on 24 Oct when (12) were logged along the lakefront from Marquette Park to Beverly Shores (S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, & KJB).

Great Crested Flycatcher:- Only seven were reported (all singletons), compared to a TYM of 9.6. This is the fourth consecutive fall in which Great Crested numbers have been below average.

VIREOS

Once again the vireos fared quite well. This fall all except the White-eyed had positive MI values and the average MI/species was +0.18. Blue-headed Vireo made the strongest showing.

Blue-headed Vireo:- B.J. Grube logged a fine count of (7) at Beverly Shores on 24 Oct; this tally ties the lakefront's third highest daily count. For the season 29 were reported (TYM=11.6).

Warbling Vireo:- It was a record autumn for the lakefront with 24 reported (TYM=8.1). The previous fall maximum was 17 in 2007.

Northern Shrike:- The season's first report was logged at Beverly Shores on 31 Oct (Leland Shaum, Perry Miller, et al.).

SWALLOWS

It was a good fall for swallows with all species except Purple Martin appearing in above normal numbers. The average MI/species was +0.18.

Most interesting was a 13 October report of (4) unidentified *Petrochelidon* swallows near the east end of the Gary Airport; if these were indeed Cliff Swallows they would have provided the lakefront's first ever October record.

Purple Martin:- For the seventh consecutive autumn Martins were reported in below average numbers. This fall only 34 were counted, which is well below the TYM of 89.3.

Bank Swallow:- The lakefront experienced an unusually strong flight with 82 reported (TYM=26.8).

Barn Swallow:- Two tardy migrants were seen at Miller Beach on 6 Nov (Michael Topp) to provide the lakefront's second latest record.

Red-breasted Nuthatch:- Based on previous migration patterns the fall of 2009 should have brought a major flight; however, only 57 were reported (TYM=58.5).



Winter Wren at the Hammond Sanctuary on 17 October. This hyperactive tike was photographed by Michael Topp.

WRENS

All of the expected wrens, except Sedge, occurred in above normal numbers. The average MI/species was +0.06.

Sedge Wren:- Only one bird reported; it was seen in the Hammond Sanctuary on 27 Sep (J.J. McCoy). This is the lakefront's lowest fall total in 15 years (TYM=6.6).

Marsh Wren:- The 34 birds reported this fall is the largest total in almost a decade (TYM=11.4). The peak tally was (6) in the Great Marsh at Beverly Shores on 15 Sep (Jean Rudd).

THRUSHES

Good Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, and Robin numbers generated an average MI/species of +0.07. Within this group the Wood Thrush made the poorest showing.

Townsend's Solitaire:- On 16 Oct B.J. Grube observed one flying westward past the Dunes S.P. green tower site. This is an all-time early arrival date for Indiana (previous earliest was 22 October 2005). An extremely accommodating adult was seen (and photographed) in trees at the West Beach restroom area on 31 Oct (Kip Miller, Jamie Claus, many observers). Clint and Dana Maddox saw it in the same area the following day. Presumably, the same adult was seen at Burns Ditch (along access road to Portage Lakefront Park) on 10 Nov (KJB).



Townsend's Solitaire at West Beach on 31 October. This individual was discovered by Michigan birder Kip Miller. Photo by J.K. Cassady.

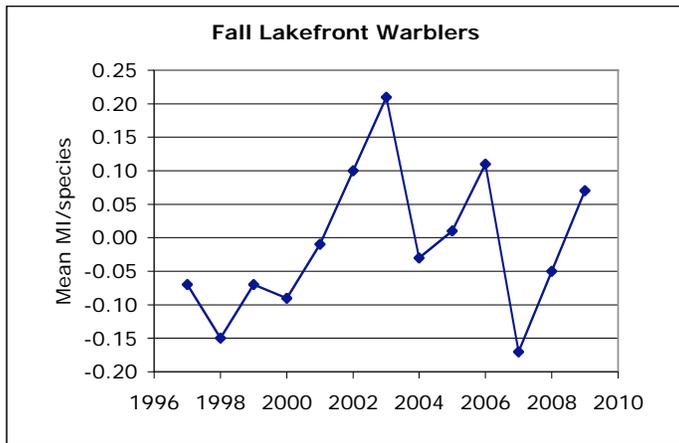
Swainson's Thrush:- A tardy individual was identified at West Beach on 24 Oct (R.J. Pals) to provide the lakefront's third latest record.

Hermit Thrush:- On 24 Oct B.J. Grube counted (91) in Beverly Shores, which is the Dunes area's third largest count.

Wood Thrush:- The four reported this fall constituted the lowest fall total since 1999 (TYM=8.0).

WARBLERS

The warbler migration was most perplexing. Although a hefty 33 species were reported (tying the record fall tally set in 1989 and 1992) most observers deemed the warbler flight quite lean. Part of this confusion resulted from the lateness of the flight, which was 3-5 days later than average. Of these 33 species 14 were reported in numbers below their twenty-year mean; the average MI/species was +0.07, which is the highest since 2006. The poorest numbers were logged for Golden-winged, Connecticut, Ovenbird, and Palm. In contrast, Orange-crowned, Nashville, and Yellow warblers all staged surprisingly strong flights. Brad Bumgardner recorded the season's peak daily count of 20 in the High Dunes on 21 Sep.



Tennessee Warbler:- A tardy migrant was seen in the west Beverly Shores great marsh on 24 Oct (R.J. Pals, S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, & J.J. McCoy). This date ties the latest lakefront record.

Orange-crowned Warbler:- It was a phenomenal season for this normally hard to find warbler. In mid-October, B.J. Grube established record Indiana counts with (11) on the 16th (9 at Beverly Shores & 2 at Dunes S.P.) and (14) on the 17th, at Beverly Shores. Brendan then topped off the record at (23) on 31 Oct. The state's previous daily maximum was only ten. For the season a phenomenal 82 were reported (TYM=17.7), which almost triples the next highest fall total of 31 (recorded in 2007).

Nashville Warbler:- A record flight on the lakefront yielded 97 individuals for the season (TYM=40.5). The peak daily count occurred 26 Sep when (13) were tallied in the Lake Co traps (J.K. Cassady, R.J. Pals, Michael Topp, & KJB). A

remarkable four late migrants were reported at Beverly Shores on the late date of 24 Oct (B.J. Grube & J.J. McCoy).

Yellow Warbler:- The thirty-one reported this fall was an all-time high fall count for the lakefront (TYM=12.3). Most amazing, however, was the discovery of one bathing at the Dunes S.P. nature center fountain on 7 Nov (Steve Sarratore, J.A. Haw, Brad Bumgardner, Holly Meyers et al.). The bird was seen again, in the same area, on 10 Nov (Brad Bumgardner). This individual added more than a month to the latest lakefront record and provided Indiana's first ever November record.



Yellow Warbler at the Dunes State Park Nature Center on 7 November. This tardy migrant, which was seen again on the 10th, added a month to the Dunes area's latest date for this species. Photo by Holly Meyers.

Pine Warbler:- Amy Kearns found (2) at the Inland Marsh on 5 Oct, providing a first record for that site.

Palm Warbler:- Michael Topp discovered (1) at Forsythe Park on 5 Nov to provide an all-time late (and first November) record for the lakefront. The previous latest Palm was reported in the High Dunes on 28 October 1916 by H.L. Stoddard.

Blackpoll Warbler:- A tardy migrant at the Gary Sewage Plant on 17 Oct (J.K. Cassady) was the third latest ever recorded on the lakefront.

American Redstart:- An imm. male or female at the Hammond Sanctuary on 17 Oct (Michael Topp & J.J. McCoy), provided the lakefront's fifth latest record.

Prothonotary Warbler:- One was photographed in west Beverly Shores on 2 Sep (KJB) to provide the lakefront's eighth September record.

Worm-eating Warbler:- Brad Bumgardner obtained an excellent look at (1) in Dunes S.P. on 1 Sep. This is the first autumn lakefront record since Clyde Fields found one in the Hammond Sanctuary on 19 Sep 1992 (TYM=0.1).

Ovenbird:- Sam and Julie Plew obtained fine looks at a tardy migrant in the West Beach pinery on 25 Oct. This is the lakefront's fourth latest record.

Wilson's Warbler:- A record early arrival was discovered at Miller Beach on 1 Aug when S.R. Bagby identified a female. Henry West, former editor of the *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*, reported the previous early record, on 4 August 1955.

Summer Tanager:- On 12 Oct Brad Bumgardner identified a calling bird in Dunes S.P., to establish an all-time late date for the lakefront. This was only the second October record for the lakefront.

SPARROWS

Although no rare sparrows were reported, the fall flight was good with an average MI/species of +0.07. Harris's Sparrow went unreported and Le Conte's, Fox, Lincoln's and Junco had negative MI values; all others appeared in numbers above the TYM.

An enormous assemblage of migrant sparrows accumulated at West Beach on 24 October. Within this throng birders counted 14 species, including Clay-colored, Vespers, and Savannahs.

Clay-colored Sparrow:- Michael Topp discovered (1) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 17 Oct. Three, tying the maximum fall count, were found at West Beach on 24 Oct (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, Ed Hopkins, Jeff McCoy, Randy Pals, & KJB).

Vesper Sparrow:- A remarkable (6) were logged at West Beach on 24 Oct (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, Ed Hopkins, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, & KJB), which provided the lakefront's second highest autumn count. For the season a record ten birds were reported (TYM=2.7).

Savannah Sparrow:- Lakefront birders experienced an unusually strong flight with 59 reported (TYM=22.2).

Le Conte's Sparrow:- The season's only report was found at McCool Basin on 3 Oct (J.K. Cassady & R.J. Pals).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:- The tall thick grass, which dominates the floor of McCool Basin, yielded (1) on 26 Sep (KJB, J.K. Cassady, & R.J. Pals). A remarkable (6) were seen at this location on 3 Oct (J.C. Kendall and IAS field trippers). This total tied the state's 8th largest single day count.

Fox Sparrow:- A weak flight with only 37 reported (TYM=43.1).

Harris's Sparrow:- Not reported for the second consecutive year (TYM=1.2).

Snow Bunting:- A noteworthy flight occurred along the lakefront on 28 Nov with (787) on the eastern lakefront (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby et al.) plus another (450) at Miller Beach. For the season some 2101 were tallied (TYM=1061). Most of this fall's Snow Buntings appeared in the last three days of November; indeed, the 2009 migration peak was almost three-weeks later than normal.

WINTER FINCHES

Purple Finch:- Appeared in slightly above average numbers with 61 reported (TYM=40.5). The peak tally consisted of (12) in Beverly Shores on 29 Sep (J.K. Cassady et al.).

Red Crossbill:- A calling female flew past Miller Beach lakewatchers at the Marquette Park concession stand on 31 Oct (J.J. McCoy & J.K. Cassady)

Common Redpoll:- Not reported on the lakefront for the first fall since 2005.

Pine Siskin:- Astonishingly, the lakefront's only two records occurred at opposite ends of the season. Brad Bumgardner heard one flying over the Dunes S.P. Nature Center on 13 Aug, providing only the state's fourth August record. The lakefront's first true fall migrant did not appear until 28 November. For the season four Siskins were logged, which is the lowest number recorded during an odd-numbered fall since 1981.

Explanation of abbreviations

Season totals are frequently compared to average seasonal counts in the "Dunes area" (Calumet Region or lakefront) over the past 20 years, including the present year. This value is abbreviated "TYM" for Twenty Year Mean. The term "STYM" refers to the twenty-year mean for the entire state.

The item "MI" is the Migration Index, a parameter calculated by the following relation: $MI = (Total - TYM)/(Total + TYM)$. Here "Total" refers to the total number of individuals, of a given species, reported during the season. If Total = 0, MI is assigned a value of $-\ln(1+TYM)$ with a minimum value of -1.00 . MI values provide an assessment of the current migration compared to counts over the past 20 years; positive values indicate a better than average flight, whereas, negative MI's reflect a below normal migration.

In considering the TYM and MI parameters keep in mind that observer effort has not been constant over the twenty-year interval, indeed observer effort has surely increased over the past decade. This means that negative MI's should be examined closely as they may reflect significant declines.