

INDIANA DUNES AREA BIRD REPORT: FALL 2012
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It seems that every autumn brings new avian wonders to the Indiana lakefront and the fall of 2012 was no exception. This season yielded: an incredible nine Long-tailed Jaegers, the unfulfilled birder expectations of Hurricane Sandy's gales, plus an unprecedented incursion of irruptive species. Fascinating is an apt descriptor for the fall season.

August's average temperature was almost one degree above normal and precipitation was 2.8 inches below average. September's temperatures were 0.5°F below normal, which was the first month since March with below average temperatures. It was also dry with rainfall about 1.5 inches below average. The month of October averaged 1°F below normal. November temperatures were seasonable and it was dry, with precipitation 2.2 inches below normal.

A singular aspect of the season was a spectacular influx of winter irruptive species. This incursion began on 1 November and yielded record numbers of Bohemian Waxwings, Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks. Most of these passed through quickly and had virtually disappeared by mid-month. The below table compares this fall's numbers with those on 2007 (the most recent winter finch incursion).

Comparison of the 2007 and 2012 Autumn Irruptions on the Indiana Lakefront		
Species	2007	2012
Red-breasted Nuthatch	252	166
Bohemian Waxwing	1	149
Purple Finch	217	146
Red Crossbill	9	102
White-winged Crossbill	1	129
Common Redpoll	288	268
Hoary Redpoll	-	1
Pine Siskin	701	478
Evening Grosbeak	16	104

Hurricane Sandy: Fall weather was punctuated by a taste of the outer winds of Hurricane Sandy. Unfortunately for birders, the hurricane delivered no Atlantic rarities to the lakefront (though Gannet and Dovekie were reported farther up the

lake in Michigan). This saga unfolded as follows. A cold airmass plowed through the lakefront on the evening on 25 October. Similar frontal systems occur regularly in autumn, but the following winds typically subside or change direction within a day or two as the system drifts eastward. Apparently, Hurricane Sandy's presence in the Atlantic blocked the eastward movement of this airmass and powerful due-north gales remained locked in place for six days. As Sandy moved inland across Pennsylvania, its winds merged with the flow over Lake Michigan, generating even stronger gales on the lake (fourth and fifth days). Wind and temperature readings observed at Michigan City are tabulated below. Location of the weather station was not given, but was likely not on the lakefront; consequently winds over the open lake likely exceeded the values listed.

Hurricane Sandy			
Date	Wind	Gusts	Hi °F
26-Oct	16	25	46
27-Oct	16	22	48
28-Oct	15	25	46
29-Oct	32	44	46
30-Oct	35	69*	44
31-Oct	21	32	44
1-Nov	14	20	50
*this value came from National Weather Service, which also mentioned an offshore wave height of 21.7 feet			

The season's rarity list included: Western Grebe, Yellow Rail, Black Rail, Long-tailed Jaeger, Cave Swallow, Townsend's Solitaire, Bohemian Waxwing, Worm-eating Warbler, both crossbills, Hoary Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak.

The 2012 Fall Migration

The table below summarizes the fall migration by bird groups using a parameter known as the Migration Index (MI, definition appended). Numbers in the table reveal strong flights for herons, thrushes and warblers; whereas, gulls, ducks, and terns were quite scarce. Most other migrant groups appeared in normal numbers.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	-0.17	Flycatchers	-0.10
Loons/Grebes	+0.02	Vireos	-0.01
Hérons	+0.34	Swallows	+0.11
Raptors	+0.11	Wrens	+0.12
Shorebirds	-0.07	Thrushes	+0.19
Gulls	-0.23	Warblers	+0.14
Terns	-0.16	Sparrows	+0.05

The Season in Perspective

August

Autumn migration was launched in fine style when Leland Shaum's group discovered a Red-necked Phalarope at Hitchcock Road Pond on the 4th. This was followed by a Dunes State Park sighting of the rarely seen (especially in fall) Worm-eating Warbler. The month's only significant front, which arrived on Friday the 10th, yielded a record three Long-tailed Jaegers for Michael Topp et al. at Miller Beach. Following a weak front on the 16th John Kendall found an Upland Sandpiper and Little Blue Heron at this site. Two different Yellow-rumped Warblers were reported on 18 August, constituting Indiana's second and third earliest fall records. Miller also yielded a Piping Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and 22 Willets on the 24th. Shorebirds tend to move on hot sultry days; those conditions were present the following day and delivered two American Avocets and a Whimbrel to Miller Beach. John Kendall logged the season's maximum Black Tern movement at Miller Beach on the 27th.

September (first half)

Amid the remnants of Hurricane Isaac, John Cassady and Randy Pals found an adult Sabine's Gull at Miller Beach on the first, providing an exciting start to the month. Jeff "Magic" McCoy, who had birded little since spring, singlehandedly logged three Long-tailed Jaegers plus a bonus Red Knot at Miller Beach on the 3rd. The following day a Buff-breasted Sandpiper appeared at the Red Knot site, but the coveted Knot had departed. Two Avocets and two Buff-breasteds were at Miller Beach on the 6th. A fine cold front on the weekend of 8 and 9 September brought a wave of jaegers, with three on Saturday and eleven on Sunday. On the 13th a modest front, with north winds of 15 knots, delivered a Piping Plover and five jaegers to Miller Beach. A heavy passerine flight occurred

on the 14th, as evidenced by 23 warbler species, including Golden-winged and Connecticut, that Michael Topp found in the Hammond Sanctuary. The 15th was also a spectacular day. In addition to hoards of passerines in the traps (including a record Palm Warbler count), a Red-necked Phalarope and a Western Grebe were at Miller Beach.

September (second half)

A phenomenal 26 Sabine's Gulls, reported by three observer groups, accompanied a front that passed on the 18th. Also on that day Brad Bumgardner and Brendan Grube reported four Parasitic and four unidentified jaegers off Dunes State Park. The 18th also yielded three Long-tailed Jaegers at Miller Beach, plus a Western Grebe that Craig Shillinglaw discovered off Whiting Park. On the 20th Brad Bumgardner found the season's first Nelson's Sparrow at McCool Basin. A fairly strong front passed on the 23rd, but proved to be a classic dud for lakewatchers; the best birds included a Red-necked Phalarope and four Franklin's Gulls. However, it did deliver hoards of passerines to the traps. Among the more interesting birds reported Saturday the 29th were two Woodcocks, 147 Palm Warblers, a Le Conte's Sparrow, and five Nelson's Sparrows.

October (first half)

A wave of migrants accompanied a cold airmass that arrived on Friday the 5th. Birders in the Hammond Sanctuary recorded 13 warbler species (including Black-throated Blue and Wilson's) and 13 Sparrow species (including Clay-colored, Le Conte's, & Nelson's). On Saturday the 6th, Michael Topp found a freshly deceased Yellow Rail in the Hammond Sanctuary parking lot. The first Saw-whets were banded at Dunes State Park on the 7th. Several mild fronts passed during the next week, but yielded little movement on Lake Michigan; however, small groups of Siskins appeared, supporting the hypothesis that we were in for a fine winter finch flight. The latter contention was further substantiated by a flock of White-winged Crossbills that Craig and Kirk Shillinglaw observed flying past Portage Lakefront Park on 13 October. Also on this date John K. Cassady found three Le Conte's Sparrows at McCool Basin. The final day of this segment yielded a Black Rail that Ed Hopkins flushed from thick vegetation along the margins of Wolf Lake.

October (second half)

Penny Starin et al. re-found last spring's male Eurasian X American Wigeon hybrid at Hitchcock Road Pond on the 18th. On Sunday the 21st Jeff McCoy flushed a Le Conte's Sparrow in the West Beach little bluestem field. The next frontal activity, which arrived on the evening of the 25th, persisted through the month's end and was linked to Hurricane Sandy (see table of wind speeds in the introduction). Accompanying this blow on the 26th were all three scoters, and a Franklin's Gull at Miller Beach. On the 27th the powerful winds delivered a Red-necked Grebe and Short-eared Owl to Miller Beach. In addition to good duck numbers, lake observers afield on the 29th logged two unidentified jaegers, 190 Dunlins, plus Franklin's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Gale-force winds on the 30th yielded a Long-tailed Duck, Kittiwakes, and a Parasitic Jaeger at Portage Lakefront Park. By the 31st winds abated somewhat and the lakefront's best reports included Red-necked Grebe and Kittiwake.

November (first third)

Although Sandy's winds had subsided by 1 November, suspended sediment rendered Lake Michigan's violated waters muddy to the horizon. Additionally, the lake was virtually birdless. That day's most exciting reports consisted of five Red Crossbills that Michael Topp observed at Marquette Park. Highlights on the 2nd included a flyby Red Phalarope at Miller Beach, a nice flock of 16-20 Redpolls at Cowles Bog, and 10 Red Crossbills at Ogden Dunes. On the 4th Randy Pals discovered a passel of 47 Bohemian Waxwings at Johnson Beach. The next day birders at Johnson Beach logged a dozen Bohemian Waxwings, two Red Crossbills, and three White-winged Crossbills. Upon departing Johnson beach several birders ventured to Ogden Dunes where two flocks of Bohemian Waxwings, totaling 55 birds, were seen. On the 6th John Kendall located a Townsend's Solitaire at Ogden Dunes and Evening Grosbeaks appeared at three Dunes locations. Ed Hopkins bagged two Cave Swallows at Marquette Park on the eighth. This segment ended on a balmy 70° day and a high count of 31 Evening Grosbeaks at Dunes State Park, which according to Brad Bumgardner was this fall's largest tally in the Midwest.

November (second third)

The singular highlight on the 11th was the three

Cave Swallows that Brendan Grube identified at Dunes State Park (he also saw another dozen swallows that could not be identified). A cold front on the 12th brought westerly winds that generated little movement on Lake Michigan. From this date through Thanksgiving, the weather remained stable with no fronts. During this period a sprinkling of Bohemian Waxwings, crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks were reported; however, only Redpolls increased in numbers, as illustrated by the 70 birds that Brendan Grube tallied on the 17th during a longshore flight at the Green Tower site. It also became apparent that two Northern Shrikes had established territories on Beverly Drive: one near the North Church and another just east of St. Clair Street. Matt Kalwasinski discovered a Red-necked Grebe off the Hammond Sanctuary on the 18th. This segment ended with Pete Grube photographing a Hoary Redpoll just outside the Dunes area (near Valparaiso) on 20 November.

November (final third)

Highlights on the 21st included a single Bohemian Waxwing and the Townsend's solitaire at the Ogden Dunes pinery, plus a male Evening Grosbeak at the Dunes State Park feeder. A front passed through late in the evening of Thanksgiving Day (22 November). A lakewatch on the 24th yielded 10 White-winged Scoters and three Black-legged Kittiwakes. Remarkably, Brad Bumgardner photographed the lakefront's first autumn Hoary Redpoll at Dunes State Park on the 25th. This redpoll rendered the lakefront's 2012 winter finch list 100 percent complete, except for Pine Grosbeak. The season's first Snowy Owl appeared at Miller Beach on the 27th and John Cassady discovered a flock of 15 Bohemian Waxwings at the Ogden Dunes Pinery on the 28th. Also on the latter date Jeff McCoy found a Western Grebe off Miller Beach. As the season drew to a close Eric and Rob Ripma photographed Indiana's first November Clay-colored Sparrow at Ogden Dunes.

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Snow Goose:- Only seven were reported on the lakefront this fall (TYM=199).

DUCKS

Dabblers fared quite well with fine numbers for every species except American Wigeon. In contrast, virtually all bay ducks, sea ducks and mergansers were markedly scarce, suggesting that the majority of these ducks remained north of Indiana during the fall period. The group's average MI/species was -0.165.

Eurasian X American Wigeon:- Apparently the same hybrid male that frequented Hitchcock Road Pond last spring returned to that location on 18 October (Penny Starin & Susan Cohen).

Lesser Scaup:- The 1116 birds reported on the lakefront this fall constitutes the lowest fall total since 1983 (TYM=3908).

Surf Scoter:- A flight of (3) at Miller Beach on 22 September (John K. Cassady) provided Indiana's second earliest record (by one day). A flock of (47) at Miller Beach on 26 October (John K. Cassady, et al.) tied Indiana's fourth largest count.

Common Merganser:- The season's only report consisted of (2) birds that Jeffrey J. McCoy saw off Dunes State Park on 22 Nov (TYM=10.3).

LOONS & GREBES

This group was a mixed bag with low Common Loon and Horned Grebe numbers, but there was an excellent Pied-billed Grebe flight. The group's average MI/species was +0.016.

Common Loon:- As occurred last autumn and in the fall of 2004, numbers were acutely low. This fall only 613 were reported, a number dwarfed by the TYM of 1957. The season's maximum count was the (136) observed during a 23 November lakewatch at Miller Beach (John K. Cassady et al.).

Pied-billed Grebe:- Lakefront numbers were the highest since 1977, with 362 reported for the fall season (TYM=118). The peak count was (47) at

Hitchcock Road Pond on 6 October (John K. Cassady).

Horned Grebe:- The 412 birds reported this fall constitutes the lowest count since 2001 (TYM=858).

Western Grebe:- Indiana's first September record was logged at Miller Beach on the 15th (John K. Cassady, Susan R. Bagby, et al.). This individual, or another, was seen 13 miles to the west, off Whiting Park, on 18 September (Craig Shillinglaw). The latter bird reappeared at Whiting on 5 October (Jeffrey J. McCoy & John C. Kendall). The final sighting occurred 28 November when Jeffrey J. McCoy found (1) off Miller Beach.

BITTERN, HERONS & EGRETS

It was a wonderful autumn for this group, as every species had a positive MI value. The average MI/species was an impressive +0.336.

American Bittern:- The lakefront's first autumn records in three years were logged in the Hammond Sanctuary. John C. Kendall found the first on 22 September and Michael Topp found the others on 5 and 6 October (TYM=0.60).

Great Egret:- A report from the U.S. Banding Lab indicated that the wing-tagged bird, discovered by Matt Kalwasinski at Grant Street Wetland on 15 July 2012, had been banded in Ontario, Canada in June 2011. They clearly do wander a bit.

Little Blue Heron:- A juvenile was at the Chase Street wetland on 9 August (John K. Cassady & KJB) and an adult flew past Miller Beach on 16 Aug (John C. Kendall), providing the lakefront's highest fall count in eight years.

Cattle Egret:- This small egret has become quite rare on the lakefront (TYM=0.75). Indeed, the year's only report occurred on Wolf Lake (off Forsythe Park) on 20 October (Edward M. Hopkins, Susan R. Bagby, John K. Cassady, & KJB).

DIURNAL RAPTORS

The raptor flight was strong with an average MI/species of 0.106. Only the Osprey and Rough-

legged Hawk were reported in below normal numbers.

Osprey:- A poor autumn flight for the second consecutive year with only five birds reported (TYM=8.45).

Broad-winged Hawk:- The fall flight was the best since 2009, with 23 reported (TYM=5.6). The peak daily count was (9) at Miller Beach on 4 August (John K. Cassady, Susan R. Bagby, Michael Topp, & KJB).

Merlin:- The 15 birds (all singletons) recorded this fall constitute a record autumn count for the lakefront (TYM=6.1).

YELLOW RAIL:- On 6 October Michael Topp found a dead individual lying in the Hammond Sanctuary parking lot; it was freshly killed, as rigor mortis had not yet occurred. The bird likely collided with the overhead transmission lines. The lakefront's last Yellow Rail report occurred in 1988. This well-preserved specimen was taken to Brad Bumgardner at Dunes State Park.



A bittersweet moment. At mid-morning on 6 October Michael Topp (pictured above) found this freshly killed Yellow Rail in the Hammond Sanctuary parking lot. The bird apparently struck the overhead power lines while in flight. The specimen was given to Brad Bumgardner at Dunes State Park. Photo by KJB.

BLACK RAIL:- Remarkably, on 15 October Edward M. Hopkins flushed (1) along the edge of Wolf Lake southwest of the Forsythe Park parking lot and baseball fields. Ed described the

sighting as, "I was struck by the small size of a rail that I flushed 20' ahead of me in a marshy edge of Wolf Lake. The rail was all black. It did not have any brown on the back of a Sora or rufous coverts of a Virginia which are both bigger. The rail flew 20' low over the marsh and dropped. I could not relocate it." This is the lakefront's fifth, and first October, record. This is the first report since 5 August 1996.

Common Gallinule:- Buoyed by the (20) birds that Bob Zaremba counted at Grant Street wetland on 11 October, the season total of 52 is the highest in two decades (TYM=9.25).

SHOREBIRDS

For the seventh consecutive year, the lakefront shorebird migration was in the red; the 2012 average MI/species was -0.070. Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Whimbrel, and Red Knot topped the negative ledger. In contrast Red-necked Phalarope, Upland Sandpiper, and White-rumped Sandpiper made strong showings.

Black-bellied Plover:- The (7) birds that Michael Topp found at Miller Beach on 8 November constitutes the lakefront's largest November tally since 1989.

Piping Plover:- It was a good autumn for this endangered species with six birds reported (TYM=2.5). All were seen at Miller Beach.

American Avocet:- See below table.

Avocet Records

No	Date	Location	Observer
2	25-Aug	Miller Beach	Michael Topp
2	6-Sep	Miller Beach	KJB et al.
1	13-Sep	Johnson B.	C. Shillinglaw

Willet:- The below table summarizes the season's records; the 25 birds reported represents the lakefront's lowest autumn total since 1998.

Willet Records

No	Date	Location	Observer
1	3-Aug	Miller Beach	Michael Topp
22	24-Aug	Miller Beach	Michael Topp
1	25-Aug	Miller Beach	M. Topp et al.
1	31-Aug	Ham. Sanct.	Michael Topp

Upland Sandpiper:- This shorebird is rarely seen on the lakefront; consequently, the migrant photographed on the sands of Miller Beach 16 August (John C. Kendall) is quite noteworthy (TYM=0.25).

Whimbrel:- The two birds reported this fall (see below table) constitute the lowest autumn total since 2000 (TYM=6.8).

Whimbrel Records

No	Date	Location	Observer
1	17-Aug	Miller Beach	Jeff McCoy
1	25-Aug	Miller Beach	Randy Pals

Ruddy Turnstone:- The lakefront experienced the poorest flight in six years with only eight birds reported (TYM=39.4).

Red Knot:- Only two were reported this fall. Jeffrey J. McCoy found a juvenile at Miller Beach on 3 September; Leland Shaum photographed it. A second juvenile was present in the U.S. Steel impoundment on 6 September (Michael Topp). The TYM for the Knot is 6.55.

Dunlin:- The vast majority (75%) of the fall flight flew past Portage Lakefront Park during the Hurricane Sandy gales, with (190) on 29 October (John K. Cassady et al.) and (177) the following day (KJB et al.).

White-rumped Sandpiper:- One at Hitchcock Road Pond on 8 August (Bob Zaremba), represents the lakefront's first autumn record in five years (TYM=0.30).

Baird's Sandpiper:- An unusually feeble flight; the seven birds reported on the lakefront constitute the lowest fall total in six years (TYM=16.4).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper:- The lakefront experienced the best flight in four years with seven birds reported (TYM=3.7). The most interesting report came from the Little Calumet River east of Kennedy Ave. where Matt Kalwasinski found a juvenile on 16 September. All others were at Miller Beach.



This handsome Buff-breasted Sandpiper spent much of 4 September on the remote stretch of Miller Beach adjacent to the U.S. Steel breakwall. It was one of seven "Buffys" reported on the lakefront this fall. Photo by KJB.

Red-necked Phalarope:- For the second consecutive autumn this species appeared on the lakefront, with three birds reported (TYM=0.5). A molting adult was identified at Hitchcock Road Pond on 4 Aug (Leland Shaum et al.). It lingered through 8 Aug (Bob Zaremba) and was seen by many. A juvenile was photographed at Miller Beach on 15 September (Ryan J. Sanderson) and another was seen on that beach 22 September (John K. Cassady).



In terms of the numbers, Red-neckeds are the rarest phalaropes on Lake Michigan; consequently, this fine juvenile at Miller Beach 15 September was a very pleasant surprise. Photo by Ryan J. Sanderson.

Red Phalarope:- The season's only report consisted of a singleton that flew past Miller Beach on 2 November (Michael Topp).

GULLS

It seemed that most of the gulls also remained north of the Indiana lakefront this fall, as the average MI/species was -0.232. Except for Sabine's, Laughing, and Lesser Black-backed all gulls were reported in below normal numbers.

Black-legged Kittiwake:- See below table.

Black-legged Kittiwake Records

No	Date	Location	Observer
3	30-Oct	Portage L.P.	Ed Hopkins
1	31-Oct	Mich City Harb	J. McCoy
1	5-Nov	Mich City Harb	Kalwasinski
2	24-Nov	Miller Beach	J. McCoy
1	24-Nov	Port of Indiana	J. McCoy

Sabine's Gull:- A rarely reported adult was seen at Miller Beach on 1 September (John K. Cassady, Randy J. Pals, Michael Topp, et al.). Birders at Lake Street (Cassady & Pals) obtained the best look; they noted a full black hood and a gray back. This is Indiana's eighth adult (among 203 individuals) and is the first reported since 2001. On 18 September the lakefront was awash with Sabine's Gulls: (8) were seen off Dunes State Park (Brad Bumgardner & Brendan J. Grube) and a westbound flock of (16) flew past Miller Beach (John K. Cassady, Joel Greenberg, & KJB). The first bird at Dunes State Park was recorded at 9:50AM and the Miller Beach flock passed at 10:00; as 11 miles separate the two sites, these sightings clearly involved different birds. The Miller report provided Indiana's second highest daily count.



A modest front on 18 September stimulated John K. Cassady, Joel Greenberg, and KJB to conduct a lakewatch at Miller Beach. Construction had closed traditional watching sites; consequently, the group birded from the Aquatorium's upper level. At 10:00AM, John, who had a vantage point allowing an eastward view down the beach, announced that a nearshore tern flock was approaching from the east. As most of the morning's birds had been far offshore, we prepared to enjoy a close view of the terns. As the flock approached John suddenly shouted, "the entire flock is Sabine's Gulls." Sure enough, when the flock came into view, there were more Sabine's Gulls than any of us had ever seen. Bounding among the breakers the Sabine's Gulls flew past in bright sunlight revealing the golden-brown mantles of juvenile birds. It was a spectacular sight; Joel literally danced with joy. An excited field tally netted 23 birds, however, some of these were Common Terns. John systematically examined his photos and confirmed the presence of 16 Sabine's Gulls. Photo by John K. Cassady.

Laughing Gull:- Brendan J. and Peter B. Grube discovered (1) at Michigan City Harbor on 8 August. Apparently this same individual was at Miller Beach on 14 August (Peter B. Grube, John K. Cassady, & KJB), and was still present 1 Sep (John K. Cassady et al.).

Glaucous Gull:- Indiana's first October record in 13 years was observed at Michigan City Harbor on the 31st (John C. Kendall).

Kelp X Herring Gull hybrid (the so called Chandeleur Gull):- John C. Kendall found this

interesting bird on NIPSCO beach at Michigan City Harbor on 31 October, providing the sixth report of this hybrid on the Indiana lakefront. Another was photographed at Michigan City Harbor on 22 November (Jeffrey J. McCoy & KJB). Jeffrey J. McCoy saw this individual again at the latter site on 28 November.

TERNs

Once again the tern flight was extremely poor. Other than the Black, which executed a fine movement on 27 August (see below), all terns had negative MI values. The average MI/species was a dismal -0.159.

Black Tern:- On 27 August the season’s high count of (653) was logged at Miller Beach (John C. Kendall). This total is Indiana’s fourth largest daily tally.

Common Tern:- Only a meager 829 were reported this fall, compared to the TYM of 3754. The peak count occurred 8 September when (215) were tallied at Miller Beach (Susan R. Bagby, John K. Cassady, Jim & Tracy Zervos).

JAEGERs

The jaeger flight occurred primarily in early September with 36, of the season’s 42 birds, tallied during the first 18 days of that month.

Annual Jaeger Counts											
	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
Aug	2	2	6	11	3*	9	4	12	1	2	3
Sep	19	91	30	33	16	14	34	2	17	50	36
Oct	0	9	14	4	8	15	3	2	3	7	3
Nov	3	0	6	6	24	2	12	1	10	10	0
	24	102	56	54	51	40	53	17	31	69	42

*Includes one July bird

Dark morph Parasitic Jaeger:- On the afternoon on 8 September three birds, in a single loose flock, flew past Miller Beach about 400m offshore in bright sunshine (John K. Cassady, m.ob.). The first two were foxy-red “juvs” and the third appeared coal-black (same size as first two; displayed upper-wing flashes). The dark-morph was initially believed to have been an adult, but Ryan Sanderson’s photos reveal large white wing patches and splotches of rufous, suggesting that the dark-morph bird was a juvenile.

Fall Parasitic Jaegers				
Date	#	loc	obs	age
8-Sep	3	MB	Many observers	juv
9-Sep	1	DSP	Brendan J. Grube	adu
9-Sep	1	DSP	Brendan J. Grube	subad
9-Sep	3	DSP	Brendan J. Grube	juv
9-Sep	1	MB	Michael Topp	juv
13-Sep	1	MB	KJB	sub
13-Sep	1	MB	J.C. Kendall	juv
15-Sep	1	MB	John K. Cassady	juv
18-Sep	1	DSP	Brad Bumgardner	juv
18-Sep	3	DSP	Brad Bumgardner	???
30-Oct	1	PLP	KJB	adu

MB=Miller Beach PLP=Portage Lakefront Park
DSP= Dunes State Park

Long-tailed Jaeger:- On the record early date of 10 August Michael Topp, Bud Doddriil, John Kendall, and Landon Neumann identified (3), two adults and a juvenile, at Miller Beach. This sighting provided Indiana’s largest single day count. It also kept intact the string of 14 consecutive annual sightings of this rare species on the Indiana lakefront. The above record was tied on 3 September when Jeffrey J. McCoy saw an adult plus two juveniles (flying together) at Miller Beach. Incredibly, (3) more Long-tailed were seen at Miller Beach on 18 September (John K. Cassady & KJB). The latter report involved an adult plus two juveniles (also seen together).

Black-billed Cuckoo:- The five birds counted this fall constitute the highest fall total since 2003 (TYM=1.5).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo:- It was a fine autumn for this reclusive bird with 19 reported (TYM=7.55). This is the largest fall total since 2006, when 11 were tallied.

Great Horned Owl:- On 19 August Penny Starin counted (5) calling birds in Dunes State Park. This is a new high daily count for the lakefront.

Snowy Owl:- A first-year male was photographed on the U.S. Steel slag pile on 27 November (KJB).

Short-eared Owl:- Only two were reported this fall (TYM=4.7), both at Miller Beach. The first was on 25 October (Michael Topp) and the second was seen 27 October (John K. Cassady).

Northern Saw-whet Owl:- Brad Bumgardner's crew had a record banding season at Dunes State Park with 47 birds banded. The earliest occurred on 7 October (2) and the peak occurred 13 November when a total of (9) birds were banded.

Common Nighthawk:- The lakefront flight was feeble with only 26 birds reported and (21) of these were seen over Chesterton on 27 August (Brad Bumgardner). Bob Zaremba found (1) at the Grant Street Wetland on 11 October tying the lakefront's second latest fall date.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird:- As of 28 November a hatch-year male was coming to a feeder in Dyer (Brad Bumgardner, Brendan J. Grube, Nila Grube, and Peter B. Grube). This constitutes the lakefront's second latest record.

FLYCATCHERS

The autumn flycatcher flight was below average. Both the Acadian and Alder went unreported and Olive-sideds were surprisingly scarce. In contrast Willow Flycatchers staged a record flight (see below). The average group MI was -0.097 per species.

Willow Flycatcher:- Lakefront birders logged a record autumn total this year, with eleven birds reported, more than doubling the previous fall maximum of five (TYM=2.55). Susan R. Bagby recorded the peak daily count of (4) in Beverly Shores on 6 September.

Northern Shrike:- On 20 October Ed and Lise Schools found an early migrant in Dunes State Park (*fide* Brad Bumgardner). This record ties Indiana's third earliest arrival date. For the season nine were reported (TYM=4.2).

VIREOS

An exceptionally poor showing by the White-eyed Vireo (see below) dragged the vireo group numbers into the red. The average MI/species was -0.008. Warbling Vireo staged a record flight and the Philadelphia numbers were also quite good.

White-eyed Vireo:- The Dunes area's only fall report consisted of a 16 September singleton found in Dunes State Park by Jim Zervos. This is the lowest fall count since 1981 (TYM=7.6).

Philadelphia Vireo:- A hefty 18 birds (the lakefront's third highest fall total) were reported on the lakefront this fall (TYM=13.2).

Warbling Vireo:- This vireo appeared in record numbers with 30 reported (TYM=10.2). The peak daily count was (4) in central Beverly Shores on 6 September (Susan R. Bagby). The previous fall seasonal maximum was 25 in 2009.

SWALLOWS

Among the regular swallows the fall flight was slightly below normal; however the addition of five Cave Swallows to the list elevated the average group MI/species to +0.113. Bank Swallows were especially scarce, but others were observed in normal or above average numbers.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow:- One observed at Miller Beach on 9 November (John C. Kendall), provided an all-time late date for the lakefront. The previous latest was 26 October 2004. This is also the fifth latest record for the state.

Bank Swallow:- A remarkably feeble flight occurred on the lakefront this fall, with only four birds reported (TYM=29.3). This is the lakefront's poorest autumn flight since 2001.

Cave Swallow:- Edward M. Hopkins saw (2) flying along the beach marram grass at Marquette Park on 8 November. This is Indiana's fifth record and the third lakefront record. Brendan J. Grube identified (3) at Dunes State Park on 11 November, but he also saw 12 other swallows that were too far away to identify.

Red-breasted Nuthatch:- This small nuthatch invaded, bringing the best numbers since autumn 2007. Some 165 were reported on the lakefront (TYM=68.8). The peak daily count was (8) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 8 September (Michael Topp).

WRENS

Numbers for this group was above normal with an average MI/species of +0.124. The House Wren was the only species that was well below normal (24 reported compared to a TYM of 37.8).

Marsh Wren:- This wren staged the best autumn flight in three years with 30 reported (TYM=13.4).

THRUSHES

It was a fine season for thrushes with the above normal numbers of every species except Wood Thrush (see below). The average/MI species was a hefty +0.189. Swainson's Thrush made the strongest showing, with 499 reported (TYM=142).

Townsend's Solitaire: Following a three-year hiatus, John C. Kendall discovered (1) at the Ogden Dunes pinery on 6 November. Thanks to an alert by John, Amar Ayyash and Kirk Roth also saw the bird on the discovery day and Peter B. Grube obtained excellent photos. This individual lingered through at least 21 November (Sam Plew).



Townsend Solitaires were annual visitors to the Porter County lakefront from 2005 through 2009, but not reported thereafter. John K. Kendall terminated that hiatus with this fine example at the Ogden Dunes pinery on 6 November. Peter B. Grube captured this superb photo on the discovery day.

Wood Thrush:- For the sixth consecutive autumn the lakefront total was below the TYM. This year seven was reported, which is the largest autumn count since 2007, but still below the mean (TYM=7.2).

Northern Mockingbird:- It was a fine autumn for this uncommon lakefront species with 13 reported (TYM=3.95). The most unexpected sighting occurred when Don Mohar and Nancy Reiter found (1) at the southwest corner of overflow parking lot at Chelberg Farm (National Lakeshore) on 20 October.

Bohemian Waxwing:- The last time Hoosiers saw this many Bohemian Waxwings was in the winter and spring of 1920. This autumn's unprecedented incursion generated the largest fall flight ever recorded in Indiana, with 134 reported (TYM=7.6). The birds arrived most abruptly. On Saturday, 3 November, a score of birders scoured the lakefront searching for crossbills; despite this intense effort no Bohemians were reported. The following day, however, they arrived in force with (4) at Ogden Dunes (Peter B. Grube, Alan W. Bruner, & Jeff Canada) plus an amazing (47) at Johnson Beach (Randy J. Pals, Brad Bumgardner, & John C. Kendall). The latter tally was Indiana's fourth largest daily count. These reports also established a new earliest fall arrival date for the state; the previous early date was 12 November 1989. Birders at Ogden Dunes on the 5th did even better with a total of (55) Bohemians in two flocks (Brad Bumgardner et al.).



Following an early November Bohemian Waxwing tsunami that swept through the Dunes, a few stragglers lingered throughout the month. This individual was still at the Ogden Dunes pinery on 16 November. Photo by Michael Topp.

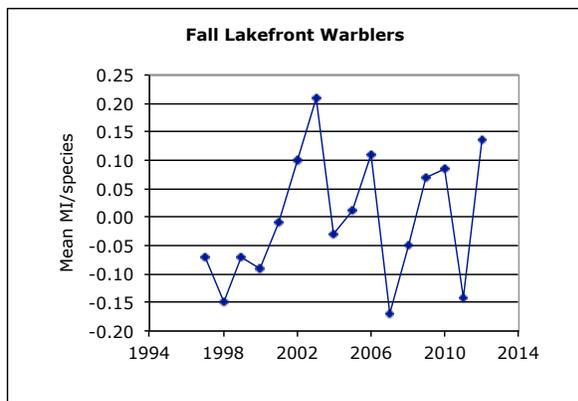
WARBLERS

For the first time since 1992 thirty-three warbler species were recorded during the lakefront's fall flight. In addition to finding the difficult to

locate breeders (e.g., Blue-winged, Cerulean, Prothonotary, Louisiana Waterthrush etc.) a Worm-eating Warbler was added to this autumn's list.

The fall migration peaked on the 14th & 15th of September (right on the average peak). On the former day Michael Topp tallied a remarkable (23) species in the Hammond Sanctuary. The following day Brock's Saturday group counted a total of (23) species in Forsythe Park, Hammond Sanctuary, and Whiting Park.

For the season the average MI/species was +0.139, which is the lakefront's second highest value on record (see chart). In terms of MI values, Hooded, Blue-winged and Connecticut warblers staged the weakest flights. In contrast, Palm Warbler and Northern Parula, and Blackburnian Warbler all occurred in record numbers.



Golden-winged Warbler:- Autumn of 2012 brought the best fall Golden-winged flight in eight years, with nine birds reported on the lakefront (TYM=5.7).

Northern Parula:- A record high daily count for the lakefront was set 22 September when Neal Miller et al. counted (9) individuals (7 at Forsythe Park and two at the Hammond Sanctuary). The previous fall maximum was only three. For the season a record number of fall Parulas were tallied with 22 reported (TYM=6.65).

Chestnut-sided Warbler:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best autumn flight in nine years with 55 individuals recorded (TYM=26.8). One seen in the Hammond Sanctuary on 10 October (John

C. Kendall) tied the lakefront's second latest record.

Yellow-rumped Warbler:- Yellow-rumped, normally the latest migrant warbler, arrived early this year. Five birds, including (2) on the 18th (Indiana's second earliest fall arrival date), were recorded in August (17% of all the state's August records). The 18 August Yellow-rumped were at Miller Beach (John K. Cassady) and Forsythe Park (Susan R. Bagby).

Blackburnian Warbler:- This warbler appeared on the lakefront in record numbers, with 20 recorded for the season. The previous fall maximum was 17 in 2010 (TYM=9.6).

Palm Warbler:- It was a spectacular season for this warbler. Prior to 2012 the maximum fall single day count was 117. This former record was exceeded twice during this fall's flight. On 15 September (157) were counted by Carolyn A. Marsh, Alan Bruner, and Peter E. Scott and on 29 September Susan R. Bagby, John K. Cassady, Jim Zervos et al. tallied (147) in the lakefront traps.

Cerulean Warbler:- Remarkably, three birds were reported in the Dunes area this fall, which is the best autumn tally since 1989 (TYM=0.8). The records were: singing birds in Dunes State Park on 6 August (Susan R. Bagby) and 30 August (Brad Bumgardner), plus a rarely seen first-cycle female in Furnessville on 30 August (Susan R. Bagby).

Worm-eating Warbler:- One was seen and heard chipping in Dunes State Park by a group of Illinois birders on 8 August. This is only the second fall record for the lakefront in the last 20 years (TYM=0.1).

Ovenbird:- A significant rebound in the numbers occurred this fall, with 41 reported (TYM=37.7). This is the lakefront's highest fall total in nine years and the first time the total has exceeded the TYM since 2003.

Connecticut Warbler:- Only three were reported on the lakefront this autumn, marking the sixth consecutive fall in which the fall total was below the TYM of 4.55.

Mourning Warbler:- Occurred in the best numbers since 2004, with eleven birds reported (TYM=9.65). Michael Topp logged the season's peak daily count with (2) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 14 September.

Hooded Warbler:- This handsome warbler provided the fall's poorest showing. The season's only report consisted of (1) found by Susan R. Bagby at Furnessville on 29 August (TYM=5.95). This low tally likely reflects the lack of birding in the breeding habitat, rather than a population decline.

SPARROWS

It was a spectacular fall for the "orange sparrows" with excellent flights of both Le Conte's and Nelson's. The situation was less spectacular for the entire group, with an average MI/species of +0.045. Vesper and Harris' sparrows went unreported, otherwise most were counted in near normal numbers.

Chipping Sparrow:- Matt Kalwasinski identified a tardy migrant at Beverly Shores on 10 November, tying the lakefront's second latest record.

Clay-colored Sparrow:- Indiana's first November record was logged on 29 November when Eric and Rob Ripma photographed (1) at Ogden Dunes. An Indiana December record also exists.

Le Conte's Sparrow:- The nine birds reported on the lakefront this fall constitute the largest autumn count since the year 2000 (TYM=3.6). Numbers peaked on 13 October when John K. Cassady and KJB found (3) at McCool Basin.

Nelson's Sparrow:- It was a record fall flight for this handsome sparrow with 15 reported (TYM=3.45). The peak count of (5) occurred at McCool Basin on 29 September (Aaron Boone, Andrew Aldrich, Caleb Putnam, Curtis Dykstra, Rick Brigham, & Sean Fitzgerald) and provided the lakefront's third largest daily count.



A study of immature Le Conte's Sparrow Plumages. On the left is a yellowish juvenile that Michael Topp photographed in the Hammond Sanctuary on 5 October; it entirely lacks the facial orange typical of adults. The first-cycle bird on the right displays brighter orange (but still duller than an adult); it was at McCool Basin on 13 October. Photo by John K. Cassady.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak:- It was a good fall on the lakefront for this striking grosbeak with 62 individuals reported (TYM=28.1). This is the largest fall count since 1984. Michael Topp logged the season's peak daily count with (15) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 14 September.

Blue Grosbeak:- The Miller Beach bird was still

singing on 9 August (John K. Cassady) and was last seen 16 August (John C. Kendall). The latter date is the lakefront's fourth latest record.

Bobolink:- Thanks to Scott Namestnik for reporting that co-worker Abby Lima identified (6) birds at the Clay Street Wetland (Gary) on 26 September (TYM=1.22).

WINTER FINCHES

As had been forecasted, winter finches, especially those that do not appear regularly, arrived in delightfully large numbers.

Purple Finch:- The lakefront's second best fall flight, behind the 217 birds logged in 2007, was recorded this autumn with 146 reported (TYM=51.2). Brad Bumgardner logged the peak daily count with (18) at the Dunes State Park feeders on 15 September.

Red Crossbill:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best autumn flight on record with some 98 birds reported (TYM=10.6). A flock of (15) that flew past the Green Tower site on 3 Nov (Brendan J. Grube) provided the season's peak daily count. John C. Kendall researched the flight calls and determined that the lakefront birds were Type 3.

White-winged Crossbill:- On 13 October Craig and Kirk Shillinglaw identified a flyby group at Portage Lakefront Park. This is the lakefront's (but not Indiana's) earliest arrival date by 17 days. The (3) that Steve Housefield and Cloyce Hedge saw at Johnson Beach on 5 November proved to be the vanguard of the main autumn flight, which was of record magnitude. Some 129 were counted at eight locations (TYM=8.4). On 10 November John K. Cassady, Amy Kearns, Lee Sterrenburg, Kathy McClain, et al. counted (33) at the Ogden Dunes pinery; this tally is a record fall count for Indiana. The lakefront's previous best fall flight consisted of 26 birds in 2008.

Common Redpoll:- An excellent movement of redpolls accompanied the autumn winter finch irruption; indeed, the 264 birds reported constitute the lakefront's second highest fall total (TYM=43.2). The peak daily tally was 70, which were counted during a longshore flight at the Green Tower site on 17 November (Brendan J. Grube).

Hoary Redpoll:- On 25 November Penny Starin and Brad Bumgardner found (1) at the Dunes

State Park feeders at the Nature Center. This is Indiana's first record for the fall season. Addition of this rare species to the lakefront winter finch tally provided the most extensive list of irruptive finches ever recorded.

Pine Siskin:- Five forerunners of a spectacular fall flight appeared at Dunes State Park on the early date of 3 October (Brad Bumgardner). For the season 478 were reported (TYM=179). The season's peak daily tally was (75) at West Beach (John K. Cassady).

Evening Grosbeak:- Several birds (a wave by recent lakefront standards) arrived in the Dunes on 6 November, providing the first lakefront record in five years. Sightings that day included (5) at Jean Rudd's feeder in Beverly Shores and a dozen in Dune Acres (John C. Kendall). On 10 November Susan R. Bagby, *et al.* counted (31) feeding at the Dunes State Park Nature Center feeders; this is the lakefront's largest autumn count since 1997.



They are not extinct after all. For the first time in a decade, Evening Grosbeaks appeared in good numbers, providing the highest fall counts in 15 years. The incursion peaked on 10 November when (31) were counted at the Dunes State Park Nature Center feeders. John K. Cassady photographed this arresting male on that day.

Convention with numbers To add clarity to the numerical chaos, bird numbers observed on a single day are contained within parentheses, (10). Season totals are written in numerals without parentheses.

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.