

INDIANA DUNES AREA BIRD REPORT: FALL 2016

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Flavor of the 2016 migration was decidedly vanilla. It was characterized by abundant Red-breasted Nuthatches, excellent swallows, and good sparrows. In contrast, loons, terns, gulls, and shorebirds were scarce. Importantly, the absence of strong fronts yielded a disappointing November lakewatch season. Avian highlights included two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, a Brant, several Pacific Loons, an unexpeced Yellow Rail, a lingering adult California Gull, two Cave Swallows, and return of the West Beach Townsend's Solitaire.

The dominating meteorological factor this autumn was "warmth." The season's temperatures averaged almost 5°F above normal (see table). Avian activity associated with these abnormal temperatures included: a late passerine migration, few winter finches, and a bland lakewatch season. The fall of 2016 ended with only a trace of snow (on one day) and all water fully open.

Temperature & Precipitation at Chicago: Departure from Normal		
	Temp (°F)	Rainfall (in.)
Aug	+3.4	-0.64
Sep	+5.0	-1.45
Oct	+4.4	+0.62
Nov	+6.5	-1.46

The table below summarizes the 2016 fall migration by bird groups using a parameter known as the Migration Index (MI, definition appended). Numbers in the table reveal exceptionally strong flights for swallows, raptors, and sparrows, In contrast loons/grebes, terns, and gulls all staged weak flights. The unweighted mean of the MI values is +0.023, suggesting an overall slightly better than average flight.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	+0.043	Flycatchers	-0.027
Loons/Grebes	-0.230	Vireos	+0.093
Hérons	+0.063	Swallows	+0.191
Raptors	+0.167	Wrens	+0.112
Shorebirds	-0.087	Thrushes	+0.104
Gulls	-0.130	Warblers	+0.069
Terns	-0.190	Sparrows	+0.137

The Tale of Two Days

This experience confirmed that selecting the best day for a lakewatch remains a crap shoot. The season's best front was forecast to arrive in the wee morning hours of 19 November. The forecast predicted conditions ripe for a major flight on Lake Michigan. Forecast for the 20s was also favorable, but less promising. Actual predicted meteorological values, taken from Chicago's NOAA climate report, are shown in the below table, along with resulting Pals Flight Magnitude values (definition appended).

It turned out that the flight on the 19th was strikingly feeble: a Little Gull constituted singular highlight. In contrast the following day's flight was far better with Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Franklin's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Parasitic Jaeger. Quite clearly these results further obscure the link between weather and longshore flights.

	Max Temp	Wind Velocity	Wind Dir.	Pals F.M.
19 Nov	39	18.2	300°	12.0
20 Nov	35	9.1	340°	69.8

Longshore Flights

Throughout the season strong fronts were as rare as Democrats in the Trump cabinet. Indeed, the first front with gale-force winds did not arrive until 19 November. The season's best flights are tabulated below

Top-10 Longshore Flights		
Date	Location	Pals FM
11-Nov-16	Miller Beach	97.2
20-Nov-16	Miller Beach	69.8
10-Sep-16	Miller Beach	35.6
3-Nov-16	Miller Beach	34.7
20-Oct-16	Miller Beach	32.0
30-Oct-16	Miller Beach	26.9
13-Oct-16	Miller Beach	24.3
20-Aug-16	Miller Beach	23.8
31-Aug-16	Miller Beach	19.7
13-Aug-16	Miller Beach	18.3

The Season's Log

August

Summer's heat continued well into August. Birding was generally slow, but Matt S. Kalwasinski inaugurated the fall season stylishly with a flyby Whimbrel at Miller Beach on the 1st. Matthew Beatty counted nine Willets and three American Avocets at Miller Beach on the 3rd. Also at Miller Beach Ryan Sanderson logged the season's first Piping Plover (a banded juvenile) on 8 August, Matt S. Kalwasinski recorded a different Piping Plover on the 9th, and Michael A. Topp found a Merlin on the 11th. On 13 August a hoard of birders descended on the lakefront; the day's highlights at Miller included a flock of 14 Hudsonian Godwits on the beach (Jeffrey J. McCoy, Michael Bourdon, & many observers), three *very* distant American Avocets (John K. Cassady et al.), a flyby flock of 10 Willets (Don Gorney), and the season's third Piping Plover (Ryan Sanderson and many others). On the 19th Michael A. Topp was astonished to see two eastbound Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks fly past him at Miller Beach. The month's first cold front arrived during the night of 20 August. Ahead of the front (on the 20th) a throng of shorebirds, highlighted by four Red Knots (Michael A. Topp et al.) transited the lakefront. Unfortunately, the front's trailing winds were westerly and moderate, yielding little movement. On the 24th Brendan J. Grube had a good day at Michigan City Harbor with an "on the beach" Upland Sandpiper and two flyby Buff-breasted Sandpipers. The following day Brendan logged three Avocets and four "Buffys" at the harbor. A rainy Saturday morning on the 27th yielded a Red Knot and two more Buff-breasted Sandpipers at Michigan City Harbor (John K. Cassady et al.). The month's second front passed during the night of the 30th. Ahead of the front Landon Neumann had a Pacific Loon and two jaegers at Miller Beach. On the 31st an August record 15 Jaegers, including one Long-tailed (Jeffrey J. McCoy and others), were reported at Miller Beach and an adult California Gull was discovered at Michigan City Harbor (Brendan J. Grube).

September (first half)

Brad Bumgardner launched September with two jaegers at Miller Beach on the 1st. The season's first warbler numbers were also reported this day when Carolyn A. Marsh logged 13 species, including Connecticut, at the Hammond

Sanctuary. The following day John C. Kendall counted (10) Red-breasted Nuthatches at this same location. The latter is Indiana's largest tally in three years. An astonishingly early Black Scoter flew past Miller Beach on the 3rd (John K. Cassady et al.). On the 5th a dozen White Pelicans surprised Ron Martin at Wolf Lake and Michael A. Topp had a flyby Red Knot at Miller Beach. Also at Miller Bob Decker logged an Eastern Whip-poor-will on the 7th and a juvenile Parasitic Jaeger the following day. Almost two-dozen birders gathered at the Lake Street lot on 10 September, as a promising front swept through. Highlights included the season's best tern movement, a flock of four American Avocets, and two Parasitic Jaegers. Also on this day Carolyn A. Marsh found a male Yellow-headed Blackbird at the 129th Street wetland. On the 13th Landon Neumann and Frank Stetler watched a juvenile Parasitic Jaeger harass a Common Nighthawk at Miller Beach. A weak front arrived on the 14th. It generated little movement on the lake, but Jeffrey J. McCoy did log two Parasitic Jaegers at Miller Beach. Amar Ayyash terminated this segment in fine style with two immature Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Michigan City Harbor on the 15th.

September (second half)

The ninth month's second half began spectacularly when Alan W. Bruner discovered a Brant at George Lake (Hammond) on the 16th. On this same day Aaron Boone and Caleb Putnam photographed a Laughing Gull at Michigan City Harbor. Saturday, the 17th, brought 20 warbler species, including Connecticut and Mourning, to the Hammond Sanctuary. On the 20th Landon Neumann conducted a six-hour lakewatch at Miller Beach; highlights included 826 migrating Blue-winged Teal and a flyby Red Knot. Landon also searched for the Brant, but was unable to find it (it was last reported at 1:00pm on the 19th). Brad Bumgardner, Kristin Stratton and Cookie Ferguson logged a Black-billed Cuckoo in Dunes S.P. on the 22nd, providing the park's first fall record in 14 years. Don Gorney discovered a mildly tardy Red Knot at Miller Beach on the 23rd. Saturday the 24th, yielded a Parasitic Jaeger and "Gorney's Knot" at Miller Beach along with several harbingers of winter in the traps: Kinglets, a Creeper, and the dreaded first Juncos. On the 26th a slow-moving cold front stalled over southern Lake Michigan and

remained through the end of the month. The system's moderately strong winds generated little movement on the lake, but did bring a mini-surge of "orange sparrows." On the 27th Karl Overman and Robert Bochenek logged the season's first Nelson's and Le Conte's Sparrows at the Hammond Sanctuary. On that same day Jason Jablonski photographed a dead Nelson's in the parking lot of a Michigan City pharmacy. John K. Cassady and Matthew Kalwasinski observed another Nelson's at Whiting Park on the 28th. Finally, a bit of action occurred on the lake when Jeffrey J. McCoy and Calub Putnam logged five jaegers at Miller Beach on the 29th. Jeff also found a single Lapland Longspur at Portage Lakefront Park on this day.

October (first half)

"Orange sparrows" were the best birds reported on the 1st with a juvenile Le Conte's at the Hammond Sanctuary (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and a Nelson's at West Beach (Don Gorney and Aidan Rominger). These sparrows were complemented by the Red Knot, which Bob Decker reported was still lingering at Miller Beach. Jeffrey J. McCoy logged a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Michigan City Harbor on 2 October. On the 3rd Brad Bumgardner banded the season's first Northern Saw-whet Owl and also tallied 11 Orange-crowned Warblers in the Hammond Sanctuary tying Indiana's fourth largest count. Bob Decker bagged both Le Conte's and Nelson's sparrows at West Beach on the 6th. However, the magnitude of Bob's find was dwarfed later that day when Brad Bumgardner, Matthew Beatty, and Kristin Stratton flushed a Yellow Rail from the West Beach little bluestem patch. A weak frontal system passed through on the afternoon of the 7th. The following morning a lakewatch yielded only a single Franklin's Gull; however, Matthew Beatty did nail a Le Conte's Sparrow at West Beach on this day. Highlights of 11 October was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that Carolyn A. Marsh found at the 129th Street wetland. On the 12th Joy Bower identified a Clay-colored Sparrow at Gibson Woods. A weak front on 13 October generated a new Harlequin Duck early arrival date when Landon Neumann observed a group of three off Miller Beach. On the 14th Leland Shaum, Howard Kauffman, and Neal Miller recorded the lakefront's first October Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at the Hammond Sanctuary along with two Le Conte's Sparrows at West Beach.

As this segment closed Jeffrey J. McCoy found a late Northern Waterthrush at the Lost Marsh.

October (second half)

Matthew Beatty and Kristin Stratton logged at least four Black-bellied Plovers at Michigan City Harbor on the 16th. The following day Bob Decker enjoyed a fine outing at Miller Beach with more than 100 Greater White-fronted Geese, all three scoters, and the season's first Red-necked Grebe. A front passed through on Wednesday the 19th. On the 20th Don Gorney, John C. Kendall, and Becky Heck recorded 106 Black Scoters along with an unprecedented flock of 11 adult Parasitic Jaegers during a Miller Beach lakewatch. On that same day Michael A. Topp recorded a Red Phalarope (briefly on the beach), also at Miller. The following day John K. Cassady and five others logged two jaegers and a Red-necked Grebe during a Miller Beach lakewatch (the latter was "phone-scoped" by Jeffrey J. McCoy). On the 22nd Jeff also observed all-three scoters, including 45 Blacks, in the waters off Jorse Park in East Chicago. Ryan Sanderson and Matthew Beatty found a California Gull at Michigan City Harbor on the 24th. A mild cold front on the 27th generated little movement on Lake Michigan, but did produce the season's first Rough-legged Hawk, a dark morph that Michael A. Topp photographed at Miller Beach. On Saturday the 29th Jeffrey J. McCoy recorded the season's first Little Gull off Dunes S.P. Sunday 30 October brought some exciting birding on the lakefront. In addition to the California Gull, which still lingered at Michigan City Harbor, Nick Kiehl found an adult Townsend's Solitaire at Ogden Dunes and Jeffrey J. McCoy spotted a Pacific Loon off Miller Beach. Peter E. Scott wrapped up this segment on the 31st with a jaeger and a Short-eared Owl at Michigan City Harbor.

November (first third)

On the 2nd Bob Decker relocated the Miller Beach Pacific Loon that Jeffrey J. McCoy found in late October. A lakewatch at Miller Beach on 3 November yielded a Pals Flight Magnitude of 34.7 (John C. Kendall, Chuck & Karen Lunsford, and Michael Topp). Highlights included a Red-necked Grebe, one Franklin's Gull, two Parasitic Jaegers, and a Short-eared Owl. Michigan City Harbor was the hotspot on the 4th: Leland Shaum's group relocated the

long-staying California Gull and Eric Michael had a flock of 90 White-fronted Geese fly over the harbor. A Parasitic Jaeger flew past Michigan City Harbor on the morning of 5 November (Matthew Beatty & Steve Bell). Randy Pals logged this autumn's first Short-eared Owl at Reynolds Creek Gamebird Habitat Area on the 6th. The season's first Northern Shrike was found at Cowles Bog by Kristin Stratton on the 7th. On 8 November Matt S. Kalwasinski photographed four moderately late Greater Yellowlegs at Seidner Dune and Swale. These traditionally excellent birding days were remarkably "frontless."

November (second third)

The season's best front arrived on the 11th. A Miller Beach lakewatch on that date yielded a Pals Magnitude of 97.2, which is the ninth best ever recorded. Flight highlights included a Black-legged Kittiwake, three Parasitic Jaegers, all three scoters, and excellent loon numbers. John C. Kendall found the season's first Redpoll in Ogden Dunes on 15 November. The excellent tally of 140 Rusty Blackbirds that Matthew Beatty logged in Beverly Shores on the 17th, provided the lakefront's largest autumn count in almost four decades. The following day Jeffrey J. McCoy observed two Cave Swallows fly westward across the Michigan City Harbor yacht basin. A strong front passed through on the 19th. Unfortunately, the following gales generated an

unexceptional flight on Lake Michigan: Lakewatchers at Miller Beach settled for a nice Hooded Merganser movement and a flyby Little Gull. Despite weaker winds, a far superior flight occurred the following day when lake watchers logged two Pacific Loons, three Red-necked Grebes, a couple of Franklin's Gulls, one Black-legged Kittiwake, and a Parasitic Jaeger. Also on the 20th Amar Ayyash logged single California and Franklin's Gulls at Michigan City Harbor.

November (final third)

A noteworthy discovery occurred at Ogden Dunes on the 22nd when John C. Kendall found the lakefront's fourth Pine Grosbeak of the last 30 years. On this same day Amar Ayyash photographed a fine adult Kumlien's Gull at Michigan City Harbor. Thanksgiving Day (the 24th) brought a Harlequin Duck to Portage Lakefront Park (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and Eddy Hicks discovered a Northern Shrike near the Bass Pro Shop off SR 249. Randy J. Pals and Cathy Meyer obtained pleasing looks at the Cowles Bog Northern Shrike on Saturday 26 November. Matt S. Kalwasinski tied the lakefront's fourth largest Trumpeter Swan count of 14 at George Lake on 27 November. On the 28th Kristin Stratton counted 34 Wild Turkeys in rural Porter County and Michael A. Topp found a Harlequin Duck at Miller Beach on the 29th.

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

WATERFOWL

Greater White-fronted Goose:- This autumn lakefront birders enjoyed half a dozen migrating White-fronted flocks as they came in off Lake Michigan. The largest of these was observed at Michigan City Harbor on 4 November and contained (90) birds (Eric Michael). These flights, along with other reports, parlayed into a spectacular season total of 355, which is the lakefront's largest fall total ever logged (TYM=22.5).

Brant:- A juvenile, discovered at George Lake on 16 September (Alan W. Bruner), provided the lakefront's first Brant record in 15 years and Indiana's earliest fall record. The bird lingered through 19 September (John Skene) and was seen by scores of birders.



Alan W. Bruner discovered this juvenile Brant at George Lake (Hammond) on 15 September. It lingered for five days and was enjoyed by many birders. John K. Cassady took the above photo in the field across Calumet Ave from George Lake on the 17th.

DUCKS

Overall the duck flight was near average. Of the 25 expected species only eight were reported in below average numbers. The three species with the poorest flights were Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser. Blue-winged Teal appeared in record numbers.

DABBLERS: Faired quite well with all species reported in above average numbers. Blue-winged Teal staged the strongest flight with Wood Ducks a close second. The American Black Duck made the poorest showing with only 88 reported; however, this is the lakefront's largest fall total in five years.

BAY DUCKS: It was generally a poor season for divers with well below average numbers reported for Common Goldeneye, Lesser Scaup, and Canvasback. In contrast, Ring-necked Ducks were tallied in record fall numbers.

SEA DUCKS: The season was near average for this group. Long-tailed Duck logged the poorest flight with only six reported. In contrast, Black Scoters were seen early and often, generating the lakefront's second best autumn flight.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: - The lakefront's second record of this southern duck was logged on 19 August when (2) eastbound birds flew past Miller Beach (Michael A. Topp).

Blue-winged Teal:- The lakefront's best ever fall-season flight was recorded this year. Some 4852 individuals were counted (TYM=1754). The peak daily count was the (964) tallied during a Miller Beach lakewatch on 10 September (Landon Neumann, John K. Cassady et al.).

Ring-necked Duck:- The lakefront's second largest daily count was logged 26 November when John K. Cassady et al. encountered a flock of (300) off Miller Beach. For the season 683 were reported (TYM=253).

Lesser Scaup:- A paltry 275 were reported this autumn (TYM=3109). This is the lowest fall total since 1980 and likely resulted from the warm weather allowing birds to linger in the north.

Harlequin Duck:- On 13 October Landon Neumann had a flock of (3) flyby Miller Beach about 100 yards out. This is Indiana's earliest fall record, replacing the single female that was seen at Gary Harbor (in the steel mill) on 17 October 1972.

Black Scoter:- A record early female-plumed bird flew eastward past Miller Beach on 3 September (John K. Cassady, Randy J. Pals, Lynn H. Vernon, KJB & many others). This individual preceded Indiana's next earliest record by 26 days. On 20 September Don Gorney, John C. Kendall, and Becky Heck tallied (106) during a Miller Beach lakewatch, generating Indiana's fourth largest count. For the season 368 were tallied, which is the lakefront's second largest fall total (TYM=182).

Long-tailed Duck:- Once again this sea duck was quite scarce on the lakefront with only 6 reported (TYM=10.4).

Common Goldeneye:- An incredibly low nine birds were reported (TYM=71.5). Again, many of the birds likely remained in the north.

Common Merganser:- Only (2) were reported this season (TYM=12.1). This is the lowest fall total in four years.

Wild Turkey:- Kristin Stratton tallied (34) in northern Porter Co (C.R. 550E just north of I-90). This constitutes the lakefront's second largest count.

LOONS & GREBES

It was a dismal autumn for this group, as every species except Pacific Loon, Pied-billed and Red-necked Grebe was reported in far below average numbers.

Red-throated Loon:- Reported in the lowest numbers in five years, with 76 tallied (TYM=93.2). The peak daily count was (46), which was logged during the 11 November lakewatch at Miller Beach (Jeffrey J. McCoy, John K. Cassady, et al.).

Common Loon:- This year's (948) loons constitute the lakefront's highest count in six years, but remains far below the TYM of 1884.

Pacific Loon:- It was a remarkable season for this normally rare loon with a total of four reported. Landon Neumann identified a basic-plumed bird off the Miller Beach Lake Street lot on 30 August, providing Indiana's earliest record and the first ever record for the eighth month. On 30 October Jeffrey J. McCoy found another off Miller Beach. Remarkably, lake watchers observed (2) on the water off Miller Beach on 20 November (Don Gorney, Eric Ripma, Landon Neumann, et al.).

Red-necked Grebe:- See table (Season total=6: TYM= 5.8). The (3) seen by Eric Ripma et al. on 20 November ties the lakefront's third largest count.

Red-necked Grebe Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	17-Oct	Miller Beach	Bob Decker
1	21-Oct	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady
1	03-Nov	Miller Beach	John C. Kendall
3	20-Nov	Miller Beach	Eric Ripma

Western Grebe:- Not reported for the first autumn in five years (TYM=1.95).

American White Pelican:- The lakefront's seventh November record was logged on the 5th when John K. Cassady, Randy J. Pals, and KJB observed a flyby at Portage Lakefront Park.

Perhaps this same individual was seen swimming and fishing off Beverly Shores on 7 November (David Capp).

BITTERNS, HERONS & EGRETS

Except for the absence of Little Blue and Cattle egrets (not reported), it was an excellent autumn for this group. Every species except those mentioned above and the Green Heron, were reported in excellent numbers.

American Bittern:- The season's first report consisted of a singleton that Brad Bumgardner flushed from the cattails at McCool Basin on 27 September (TYM=0.65). Non-birders photographed another in Dunes S.P. on 2 November (*vide* Brad Bumgardner), providing the lakefront's second latest record.

Snowy Egret:- The 129th Street bird was last reported on 16 September (Michael A. Topp), providing the lakefront's third latest record.

Green Heron:- Although the 26 reported on the lakefront this fall is only slightly below the TYM of 28.9, it is the lowest season total since 2005 (last autumn's total was 40).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:- The lakefront's first report since 2014 occurred on 11 October when Carolyn A. Marsh found a first-cycle bird at the 129th Street wetland in Hammond.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

It was a fine season for raptors with every species near or above average. Unusually strong flights were recorded for Bald Eagles and Merlins.

Bald Eagle:- The 27 tallied this autumn tied the record set last year (TYM=8.0). The season's best count consisted of (2) that were seen during a 27 October lakewatch at Miller Beach (John K. Cassady et al.).

Merlin:- The 22 reported this fall provided an autumn record (TYM=8.4). The season began when Michael A. Topp logged the fourth earliest record at Miller Beach on 11 August. The season's peak tally consisted of (3) that were seen during the 27 October lakewatch at Miller Beach (Jeffrey J. McCoy et al.).

Yellow Rail:- Perhaps the season's best find was a Yellow Rail that Brad Bumgardner, Matthew Beatty, and Kristin Stratton flushed from little bluestem at West Beach on 6 October. Oddly, the bird was in the dry grass some 100 feet from Long Lake (any port in a storm for migrating birds). This is the lakefront's first report of a live bird (a dead Yellow Rail was found in the Hammond Sanctuary parking lot on 6 October 2012) since three were reported at Inland Marsh on 22 April 1988.

Sora:- Acutely scarce this fall with only a single bird reported (Aidan Rominger, East Chicago on 8 October). This is the lakefront's lowest autumn total since 2005 (TYM=8.35).

SHOREBIRDS

Mudflat habitat was in short supply again this autumn; consequently, several species were recorded in below average numbers. The following were in acutely short supply: Wilson's Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Dunlin. Species much more common than normal included: Upland Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Black-bellied Plover:- This was the fourth consecutive autumn in which below average numbers were reported on the lakefront. This fall 45 were logged (TYM=54.4).

American Golden-Plover:- Ryan J. Sanderson observed (9) migrants flying westerly along the Lake Michigan shoreline on 26 September. Ryan's tally constitutes the lakefront's largest fall count in a decade.

Piping Plover:- The first three of the August birds were all banded juveniles that hatched on the Manitou Islands of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. See table (Season total=4; TYM= 3.1).

Piping Plover Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	8-Aug	Miller Beach	R. Sanderson
1	9-Aug	Miller Beach	M. Kalwasinski
1	13-Aug	Miller Beach	R. Sanderson
1	26-Aug	Miller Beach	J. Kendall

American Avocet:- The 13 August birds were perched on a breakwater far beyond the USS

breakwall. John K. Cassady and Jeffrey J. McCoy identified them from the Lake Street lot (3 miles away according to *Google Earth*). Don Gorney later confirmed the identification when the birds took flight. Talk about world-class birding. See table (Season total=13; TYM=15.3).

Avocet Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
3	3-Aug	Miller Beach	M. Beatty
3	13-Aug	Miller Beach	J. Cassady
3	25-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	B. Grube
4	10-Sep	Miller Beach	L. Neumann

Greater Yellowlegs:- A record fall total of 49 were reported this season (TYM=17.3). The peak count was (14) that John C. Kendall logged at Miller Beach on 20 August.

Willet:- See table (Season total=67; TYM=76.4).

Willet Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
9	3-Aug	Miller Beach	M. Beatty
1	5-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	KJB
1	10-Aug	Miller Beach	L. Neumann
1	11-Aug	Miller Beach	M.A. Topp
2	12-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	B. Decker
32	12-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	B. Decker
10	13-Aug	Miller Beach	D. Gorney
5	16-Aug	Miller Beach	KJB
1	20-Aug	Miller Beach	J.K. Cassady
1	24-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	B.J. Grube
2	26-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	J.J. McCoy
1	30-Aug	Miller Beach	L. Neumann
1	10-Sep	Miller Beach	Leland Shaum

Upland Sandpiper:- A rare event for the lakefront occurred 24 August when Brendan J. Grube observed (1) land on the beach at Michigan City Harbor. This is only the lakefront's fourth modern autumn record for this inland shorebird.

Whimbrel:- See table (Season total=3; TYM=7.8).

Whimbrel Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	1-Aug	Miller Beach	M. Kalwasinski
1	12-Aug	Michigan City Harbor	B. Decker
1	19-Aug	Miller Beach	M.A. Topp

Hudsonian Godwit:- A flock of (14) was found standing on Miller Beach at dawn on 13 August (Jeffrey J. McCoy, Mike Bourdon et al.). This tally constitutes Indiana's ninth largest count.



Hudsonian Godwits are quite rare on the lakefront and are almost never seen on the beaches. Consequently, this delightful flock of 14, found and photographed by Mike Bourdon on 13 August at Miller Beach, was a special treat for a handful of lucky birders.

Marbled Godwit:- Bob Decker found (1) on the Michigan City Harbor beach on 12 August for the lakefront's only autumn report (TYM=1.9).

Red Knot:- Lakefront birder enjoyed the best autumn flight since 2007, with 10 individuals reported (TYM=6.95). The peak count occurred on 20 August when a flock of (3) juveniles landed at Miller Beach (Michael A. Topp, John C. Kendall, et al.). Four hours later a singleton flew past this same group of birders.

Baird's Sandpiper:- An exceptionally weak flight of six birds was recorded on the lakefront (TYM=16.9), indeed, this is the poorest autumn total since 2006.

Dunlin:- Most autumns bring large migrating flocks that are observed at lakewatches. That occurred only once this fall; consequently, numbers were far below normal with only 73 reported (TYM=335). The sole exception occurred 29 October when Michael A. Topp observed a flock of (55) flying past Miller.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best flight since 1999 with 9 "Buffys" reported (TYM=3.75). The peak count was (4) at Michigan City Harbor on 25 August (Brendan J. Grube).



The plumage of this striking "peep" appears perfect for a fresh juvenile Least Sandpiper. However, dark legs, and especially the semipalmations, indicate that it is indeed a Semipalmated Sandpiper. It was photographed at Miller Beach on 22 August 2016 by Michael A. Topp.

Wilson's Snipe:- Surprisingly scarce this fall with only four reported (TYM=22.1), the lowest count since 2009.

Short-billed Dowitcher:- On 21 August a flock of 16 migrating Short-billed Dowitchers were spotted coming in off Lake Michigan (Nick Kiehl and Ryan Sanderson). This tally is the lakefront's largest autumn count in 13 years.

GULLS

The combination of warm weather and limited frontal activity did not bode well for a good gull flight. Two expected species, Sabine's and Thayer's, were not reported. Of the dozen species reported five were observed in below average numbers. Leading this group was Franklin's Gull only 8 reported (TYM=116). The saving grace was the appearance of a single (most likely) adult California Gull that was observed at Michigan City Harbor several times during the season.

Black-legged Kittiwake:- Two singletons were reported, both at Miller Beach (TYM= 9.85). Jeffrey J. McCoy spotted the first on 11 November and Eric Ripma found the second on 20 November.

Laughing Gull:- A first-cycle bird was photographed at Michigan City Harbor on 16 September (Caleb Putnam & Aaron Boone).

Little Gull:- Two were reported for the season (TYM=2.6). Jeffrey J. McCoy found an adult in a “Bony” flock off Dunes S.P. on 29 October and John K. Cassady picked a first-cycle out of a flyby “Bony” flock at Miller Beach on 19 November.

California Gull:- An adult, which spent 31 August perched within the Michigan City Harbor gull flock (Brendan J. Grube, many observers), provided Indiana’s first August record. Ryan Sanderson, Matthew Beatty, Eric Michael, et al., also reported likely this same adult at Michigan City Harbor on 24 October. Amar Ayyash also identified an adult at the latter site on 20 November.



The California Gull is usually a rare visitor in November; however, Brendan Grube nailed this individual at Michigan City Harbor on 31 August, providing Indiana’s first record for the eighth month. To the delight of many birders this gull remained in the area (with occasional visits to New Buffalo) into November. KJB photo taken on the discovery day.

Herring Gull:- On 15 September Amar Ayyash photographed an 18th cycle adult at Michigan City Harbor that had been banded as a flightless chick on 17 June 1999 on East Chambers Island, Wisconsin. This suggests that Lake Michigan supports a flourishing population of *Larus argentatus smithsonianus*.

Kelp X Herring Gull hybrid (the so-called Chandeleur Gull):- This adult returned to Michigan City Harbor on 9 October (Eric

Michael) and remained through the season. It has now been recorded annually on the lakefront since 2010.

TERNs

Once again the autumn tern flight was weak. All species except for Caspian were reported in below average number: the Black and Common numbers were exceptionally low.

Black Tern:- For the third consecutive year Black Tern numbers were well below the TYM. This season’s total was 294 and the TYM is 716. The (91) that John K. Cassady & Lynn H. Vernon counted at Miller Beach on 10 September constituted the season’s maximum count.

Common Tern:- It was another feeble flight for this tern with the lowest season total in four years. Only 1290 were reported (TYM=3125). The season’s peak tally consisted of the (458) birds that John K. Cassady & Lynn H. Vernon counted at Miller Beach on 10 September.

JAEGERS

It was a slightly above average season for jaegers on Lake Michigan with 59 reported (TYM=50.3). A milestone occurred on August 31st: It was the first time ever that a double-digit jaeger count was made during the eighth month. This tally included ten birds, including an adult Long-tailed, at Miller Beach (Jeffrey J. McCoy et al.) plus another five at Michigan City Harbor (Jeffrey J. McCoy).

Annual Jaeger Counts									
	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Aug	4	12	1	2	3	9	3*	0	17
Sep	34	2	17	50	36	20	37	11	20
Oct	3	2	3	7	3	13	32	4	15
Nov	12	1	10	10	0	1	2	2	7
	53	17	31	69	42	43	74	17	59

Parasitic Jaeger:- See table (Season total=39; TYM=21.0). Most unusual was a flock of (11) light-morph adults at Miller Beach on 20 October (Don Gorney, John C. Kendall, & Becky Heck). This is the largest flock of adults ever reported (juveniles are far more common).

Fall Parasitic Jaegers				
Date	#	loc	obs	age
30-Aug	1	Miller Beach	L. Neumann	imm.
31-Aug	1	Miller Beach	Jeff McCoy	Juv.
31-Aug	1	Miller Beach	John Cassady	sub.
31-Aug	4	Mich City H.	Jeff McCoy	juv
1-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Brad Bumgardner	juv
3-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Ryan Sanderson	juv
3-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Ryan Sanderson	Adu.
8-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Bob Decker	juv
10-Sep	1	Miller Beach	John Cassady	Juv.
10-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Aidan Rominger	Sub.
13-Sep	1	Miller Beach	L. Neumann	juv
14-Sep	2	Miller Beach	Jeff McCoy	juv
24-Sep	1	Miller Beach	John Cassady	?
29-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Calub Putnam	Adu.
29-Sep	1	Miller Beach	Calub Putnam	Sub.
20-Oct	11	Miller Beach	Don Gorney	Adu.
21-Oct	1	Miller Beach	John Cassady	Juv.
30-Oct	1	Miller Beach	Jeff McCoy	juv
3-Nov	2	Miller Beach	John Kendall	Juvs.
5-Nov	1	Mich City H.	Matthew Beatty	?
11-Nov	2	Miller Beach	Leland Shaum	Juv
11-Nov	1	Miller Beach	Randy Pals	Adu.
20-Nov	1	Miller Beach	Eric Ripma	Sub.

Long-tailed Jaeger:- For the 18th consecutive year this jaeger was reported on the Indiana lakefront (TYM=2.3). An adult was seen flying with a juvenile Parasitic off Miller Beach on 31 August (Jeffrey J. McCoy, John K. Cassady, et al.).

Short-eared Owl:- The season's first Short-eared came in off the lake at Michigan City Harbor on 31 October (Peter E. Scott).

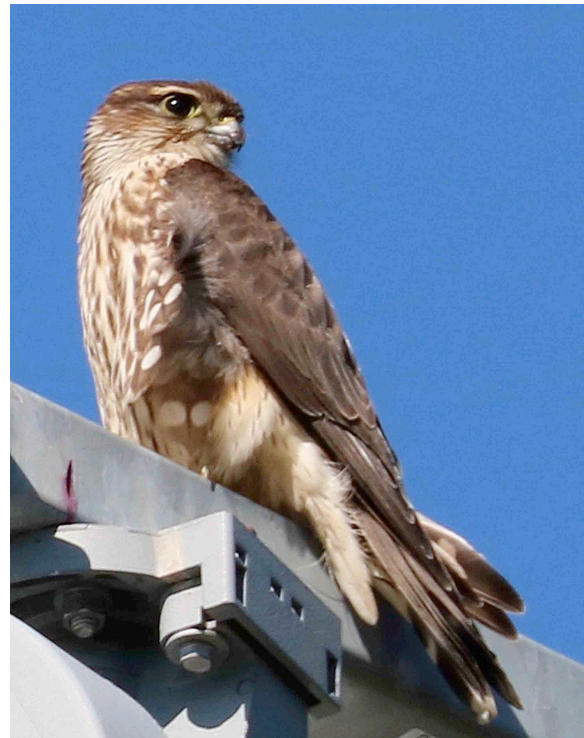
Northern Saw-whet Owl:- Brad Bumgartner's banding team had a record season at Dunes S.P. where they banded, or observed, a record 121 Saw-whets. The season's highlight occurred 6 November when they logged (15) owls, which is a new daily maximum for the lakefront.

FLYCATCHERS

Despite low numbers for the "Traill's group" (no Alders and only one Willow), the overall flycatcher flight was near average.

Olive-sided Flycatcher:- A record flight occurred this autumn with 18 birds reported (TYM=5.7). The previous maximum consisted of 10 birds that were logged during the 2006 fall flight. This year's peak count of (2) was logged twice, both

in Beverly Shores: on 18 August (Brendan J. Grube) and on 3 September (John K. Cassady et al.).



This accommodating Merlin, perched atop a floodlight at the Forsythe Park ball diamond, provided a wonderful subject for photography. Lynn H. Vernon took this excellent shot.

Willow Flycatcher:- The season's only report consisted of a singleton that Kimberly Ehn logged in central Beverly Shores (TYM=4.7).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:- This year's fall flight tied the 2015 record count of 11 (TYM=7.1). The peak daily tally was (2) that Jeffrey J. McCoy logged at the Hammond Sanctuary on 17 September. Leland Shaum, Howard Kauffman, and Neal Miller found a late Yellow-bellied at the Hammond Sanctuary on 14 October. This all-time late lakefront record was also the state's third latest record.

Northern Shrike:- Although the number of shrikes reported was near average (4 compared to a TYM of 4.35), the distribution was far from normal. Zero reports came from Beverly Shores, where the last Northern Shrike was seen 27 November 2015. Instead, singletons were found at Cowles Bog on 7 November (Kristin

Stratton), the Bass Pro Shop (Eddy Hicks on 24 November), at Ogden Dunes (Mike Bourdon on 25 November), and at Cowles Bog on 26 November (Randy J. Pals & Cathy Meyer).

VIREOS

This group fared quite well with above normal numbers for every species except Red-eyed.

Red-eyed Vireo:- This species was scarce on the lakefront with only 69 logged (TYN=95.5).

SWALLOWS

It was a very good season for swallows, as every species except Northern Rough-winged was reported in well above normal numbers.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow:- This swallow was surprisingly scarce on the lakefront with only 4 reported (TYM=12.1), yielding the poorest autumn flight since 2006.

Cave Swallow:- On 18 November Jeffrey J. McCoy identified (2) flying westward past Michigan City Harbor. This date ties Indiana's latest record, which was logged at this location last November (Brendan J. Grube). Indiana now has nine Cave Swallow records (involving 36 individuals): all have occurred within the tight 11-day window from 8 to 18 November.

Red-breasted Nuthatch:- Following a three-year near absence, Red-breasteds returned in force this autumn. Lakefront birders reported 218 for the season, which is the all-time best fall total (TYM=74.5). Brad Bumgardner logged the season's maximum daily count of (13) at Dunes S.P. on 3 September.

WRENS

The wren flight was well above average. Only the Carolina Wren numbers were down markedly.

Carolina Wren:- Surprisingly low numbers were reported again this autumn, marking the third consecutive year in which fall totals were below the TYM. Only 10 were reported (TYM=18.2). This low season total is especially puzzling because the statewide autumn total was a record high.

Winter Wren:- Michael A. Topp tallied (16) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 19 October, which

is the lakefront's largest daily count in seven years.

THRUSHES

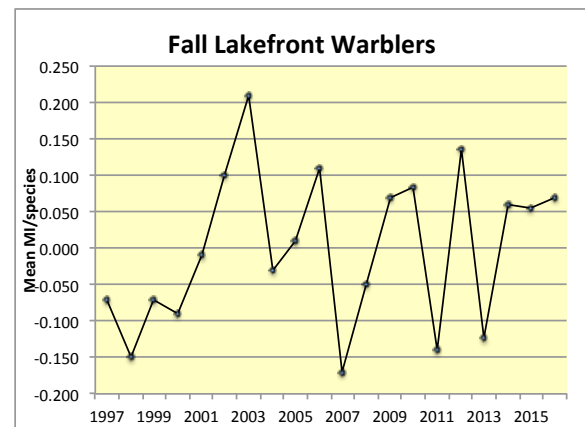
Overall, the thrush flight was above normal, but the Wood Thrush occurred in best numbers in eleven years.

Townsend's Solitaire:- Nick Kiehl and Landon Neumann found the season's first solitaire at Ogden Dunes on 30 October, which provided Indiana's fifth earliest record. Unlike previous years, this individual did not remain through the winter; indeed, it was last reported on 3 November (Matthew Beatty).

Wood Thrush:- Encouragingly, the season total for this thrush was 18, which is the highest in more than a decade (TYM=8.1). The peak count of (4) was logged at Beverly Shores on 6 August when three singing birds were heard; the fourth was heard singing at the Visitor Center during the morning rendezvous (John K. Cassady, Randy J. Pals, & Lynn H. Vernon).

WARBLERS

The lakefront's 2016 warbler flight was near average with 30 species recorded. The below graph reveals that since 2013 autumn warbler flights have leveled off in terms of the mean migration index per species. Other than the Cerulean (not reported), the Blue-winged and Northern Waterthrush executed the poorest flights. On the positive side Pine, Connecticut, Bay-breasted and Black-throated Blue, were all logged in record numbers.



Northern Waterthrush:- Shockingly low numbers were reported this fall. Despite heavy birding effort only 6 were tallied for the season, which is the lakefront's lowest count since 2002 (TYM=14.5).



Birders familiar with the frustrations of warbler photography will appreciate this picture. John K. Cassady shot this first-cycle female Northern Parula in the Hammond Sanctuary on 8 October.

Connecticut Warbler:- A record 11 birds were reported this fall (TYM=4.6); the previous maximum of eight was reported in 2001. The only multiple-bird report consisted of (2) that John C. Kendall logged at the Hammond Sanctuary on 9 September. Of the eleven birds reported all but two were at the Hammond Sanctuary.

Mourning Warbler:- The fall flight was surprisingly good compared to recent years with 11 reported (TYM=7.5). The peak daily count was (2) that Michael A. Topp identified at the Hammond Sanctuary on 9 September.

Bay-breasted Warbler:- It was a record autumn for this warbler with 69 reported (TYM=27.5). On 17 September Matt S. Kalwasinski logged the peak daily count of (7), at four northern Lake County sites.

Black-throated Blue Warbler:- A new autumn total was attained this fall with 37 reported (TYM=17.0). John C. Kendall logged the peak daily tally of (3) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 2 September.

Pine Warbler:- The 23 logged this autumn constitute a lakefront record (TYM= 6.75). Jeffrey Timmons logged (3) in the Hammond Sanctuary for the season's peak tally.

Black-throated Green Warbler:- Lakefront birders logged a record flight with 123 reported (TYM=53.9). The peak tally occurred 24 September when Jeffrey J. McCoy et al. counted (9) in Whiting Park and the Hammond Sanctuary.

SPARROWS

Harris' Sparrow went unreported this season: Otherwise sparrows fared reasonably well. Only five of the 18 species reported were below average numbers; the lowest of these was the Fox Sparrow. Thanks to the new habitat available at Reynolds Creek G.H.A., it was a record autumn for both Grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows.

Grasshopper Sparrow:- The four singing birds at Reynolds Creek G.H.A. on 6 August (John K. Cassady et al.) contributed to a record season total of six (TYM= 0.50).

Henslow's Sparrow:- Kristin Stratton heard (3) singing birds at Reynolds Creek G.H.A. on 21 August and Michael A. Topp found a singleton at the Hammond Sanctuary on 29 September. These four provided a record autumn total (TYM=1.00).

Le Conte's Sparrow:- Lakefront birders enjoyed a fine autumn flight with six reported (TYM=3.9). The peak count was (2) at West Beach on 14 October (Leland Shaum, Howard Kauffman, & Neal Miller).



Le Conte's Sparrow is always a birder favorite and this crisp shot captures it superbly. It was taken by Leland Shaum on 14 October 2016 at West Beach.

Nelson's Sparrow:- This elusive sparrow executed an above average flight on the lakefront; a total of nine (all singletons) were reported (TYM=4.75).



Always a delight to see: Aidan Rominger photographed this natty Nelson's Sparrow in the West Beach "Le Conte's" little bluestem patch on 1 October 2016.

Fox Sparrow:- Unusually low numbers were encountered on the lakefront this autumn, with only 30 reported (TYM=56.2). This is the lowest fall total since 2006. Michael A. Topp logged the peak daily count with (4) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 19 October.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best flight in four years with 54 reported (TYM=34.2). Brad Bumgardner logged the peak daily count of (9) at Beverly Shores on 22 September.

Dickcissel:- Janice Rodriguez reported (2) at Reynolds Creek G.H.A. on 11 August, denoting the fourth consecutive autumn in which this prairie species has been recorded on the lakefront (TYM=0.8).

Yellow-headed Blackbird:- The season's only report occurred 10 September when Carolyn A. Marsh observed a male in a Starling flock at the 129th Street wetland in Hammond.

Rusty Blackbird:- Matthew Beatty encountered a flock of (140) in east Beverly Shores on 17 November. This tally constitutes the lakefront's largest count since 150 were reported in Dunes S.P. back on 5 November 1977.

Orchard Oriole:- A female, reported in eastern Beverly Shores on 27 August (John K. Cassady), provided the lakefront's second latest fall record.

WINTER FINCHES

Not surprisingly it was a poor autumn for winter finches. The singular highlight was John C. Kendall's Pine Grosbeak. Indeed, every other species except the American Goldfinch was reported in below normal numbers.

Pine Grosbeak:- Indiana's first fall record since 1997 was logged at the Ogden Dunes pinery on 22 November. The bird's call notes were first detected and this female or immature male was briefly observed (John C. Kendall).

Purple Finch:- Lakefront birders experienced a feeble flight with only 13 reported (TYM=54.8). Michael A. Topp logged the high count of (2) at the Hammond Sanctuary on 22 October.

Red Crossbill:- Singletons were identified at West Beach on 3 November (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and at the Ogden Dunes pinery on 25 November (Ryan J. Sanderson). These were the season's only reports (TYM=11.9).

Common Redpoll:- John C. Kendall observed a singleton twice at Ogden Dunes (15 and 22 November) for the season's only reports (TYM=38.8).

Pine Siskin:- Frighteningly scarce with only five reported (TYM=235).

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.

Pals Flight Magnitude provides a method of measuring the quality of longshore flights. It generates a number based on both the number of birds tallied and the quality of the birds. For additional information contact the author.