

INDIANA DUNES BIRD REPORT: SPRING 2012

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According to the *Chicago Tribune* spring of 2012 (March through May) was the warmest on record. Throughout much of March, birders enjoyed June-like weather; from the tenth through the 22nd a series of consecutive warm days, many with record high temperatures, graced the lakefront. The average March temperature was a remarkable 15.6°F above normal. This is the warmest March ever recorded in Chicago and was even 2.8°F above April's average. April was 1.8°F above normal and precipitation was almost two inches below average. Following suit, May was 6.5°F warmer than average.

The season's migration data suggest that this unusually warm spring may have stimulated some species (e.g., and Common Goldeneye, Thayer's Gull, and American Tree Sparrow) to depart Indiana earlier than normal.

Longshore Flights: Thanks to NIMBA (Northwest Indiana Migratory Bird Association), Brendan J. Grube was employed as a bird counter for the spring season. Brendan, a highly talented birder and an aficionado of the Dunes avifauna, counted at the "Green Tower Site" in Dunes State Park; he manned this post from 6 March through 25 May. This effort yielded the finest longshore flight data ever collected on the Indiana lakefront. Seven of this season's counts had Grube Magnitudes (a measure of flight quality) that placed them among the twenty highest on record. As described below, two especially spectacular longshore flights were recorded on 2 and 3 May:

2 May Longshore Flight This flight consisted of 100 eclectic species, including: 1 American Bittern, 100 Broad-winged Hawks, 4 Merlins, 67 American Golden-Plovers, 16 Forster's Terns, 107 Eastern Kingbirds, 1 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 124 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 109 Palm Warblers, 1 Clay-colored Sparrow (singing), 3 Lark Sparrows, 5 Scarlet Tanagers, 22 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, 139 Indigo Buntings, 1 Dickcissel, 9 Orchard Orioles, 268 Baltimore Orioles, 8 Pine Siskins, and 1579 American Goldfinch. The Grube Magnitude of this remarkable flight was a record 79.04. The lakefront's previous highest Grube Magnitude was 67.85.

3 May Longshore Flight This day's tally included 86 species with the following highlights: 9 American White Pelicans, 1 Bald Eagle, 3 Merlins, 5 Solitary Sandpipers, 25 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 127 Eastern Kingbirds, 248 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, 45 American Pipits, 574 Cedar Waxwings, 13 Cape May Warblers, 1 Prothonotary Warbler, 140 Indigo Buntings, 115 Baltimore Orioles, 40 Pine Siskins, and 1718 American Goldfinch. The Grube Magnitude of this flight exceeded the previous day's record with a value of 81.74.

Early Arrivals: The following species set new early arrival dates for the lakefront: Least Sandpiper, Chimney Swift, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula (tied), Palm Warbler, and Chipping Sparrow.

Record Counts: Daily tallies of the following species provided the highest counts ever recorded on the lakefront: Gadwall, Wild Turkey, Osprey (tied), Merlin, Sandhill Crane, Alder Flycatcher, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Rarities: This spring's most unusual birds included: Eurasian X American Wigeon

hybrid, Neotropic Cormorant, Swainson's Hawk, White-winged Dove, Snowy Owl (in May!), Western Kingbird (2), and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Weirdest Occurrence: Following an uneventful day of watching the pond in his Chesterton backyard, Brad Bumgardner received a Ross' Goose photo (without a location) via the Internet. Brad recognized the site as his own backyard pond; he then stepped outside for a better view of the pond and added this rare goose to his yard list.

Spectacular May Day Hawk Flight

The dark, gray overcast on 1 May did not appear favorable for a hawk flight. Migrating diurnal raptors prefer the uplift of warm-air thermals, which do not normally develop beneath a thick, unbroken overcast. However, migrating hawks follow their own rules, which are often at odds with those of the hawk watchers. The day's final tally was the season's best (386) raptors of 13 species and included a number of firsts.

1. This is the largest May hawk flight ever logged on the lakefront; the previous best was 320 on 1 May 1992.
2. An unprecedented throng of Sharp-shinned Hawks was tallied. Throughout the day sorties of one to seven sharpies regularly passed over, all flying eastward. The day's total was a state-record 334 birds. Indiana's previous maximum was 223, counted near this same site on 19 April 1992.
3. Just before noon a westward bound immature Northern Goshawk flew past, providing Indiana's latest spring, and first ever May.
4. The icing on this unprecedented flight was a Swainson's Hawk that appeared at 11:25AM.

The table below summarizes the 2012 spring flight by bird groups using the Migration Index (MI- definition appended). It presents a mixed bag with dismal flights by Terns and Gulls along with sterling numbers for Swallows and Flycatchers. The mean of these groups is slightly positive, suggesting that the overall flight was about normal.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	-0.09	Flycatchers	+0.42
Loons/Grebes	+0.19	Vireos	+0.14
Hérons	+0.00	Swallows	+0.59
Raptors	+0.28	Wrens	-0.08
Shorebirds	-0.14	Thrushes	+0.15
Gulls	-0.34	Warblers	-0.04
Terns	-0.45	Sparrows	+0.01

Acknowledgment: Many thanks to Susan Bagby for her careful proofing of an early draft. Susan's sharp eyes greatly improved the manuscript.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose:- Michael Topp found (4) at the Grant Street wetland (Gary) on 17 March, for the lakefront's fifth latest record.

Ross's Goose:- On 21 March Penny Starin, along with Carl Swisher and Helen Thoessen, found a flock of (7) on the southern flank of Hitchcock Road Pond. This is the lakefront's largest spring record. The following morning Brendan J. Grube identified this gaggle as it flew past the Green Tower Site. On 10 April one even occurred in the Bumgardner backyard of Brad's Chesterton residence.

Cackling Goose:- Penny Starin and Carl Swisher found (1) at Hitchcock Road Pond on 13 March, providing the lakefront's ninth spring record.

DUCKS

About half of the lakefront's 25 "regular" spring ducks had negative MI values; divers and sea ducks dominated the downside. Common Goldeneye and Long-tailed Duck recorded the lowest MI values, reflecting very feeble flights. Dabblers made the strongest showing with excellent numbers for Northern Shoveler and Gadwall. Overall, the average MI/species for the ducks was -0.09.

Statewide, the dabbler flight was exceptional, with only the American Black Duck recorded in below average numbers. In contrast, diving and sea duck flights were generally poor with low numbers of most species.

Gadwall:- It was a record spring for this duck on the lakefront. The season total of 296 far exceeds the TYM of 74.6. Matt Kalwasinski tallied the peak daily count (100), which was also a record, at three N. Lake Co locations on 10 March.

Eurasian X American Wigeon:- On 13 March Penny Starin and Carl Swisher discovered a male at Hitchcock Road Pond. Later that day Brad Bumgardner, Peter B. Grube, and Brendan J. Grube studied the bird. To many field observers the bird appeared to be a perfect male Eurasian Wigeon, except for a

green patch behind the eye. However, the following day John K. Cassady obtained photos, which clearly revealed that this individual was, in fact, a hybrid. This individual remained through 16 March.



Penny Starin and Carl Swisher discovered this handsome duck at Hitchcock Road Pond on 13 March. Birders initially believed that it was an Eurasian Wigeon; however, closer examination revealed evidence of hybridization with an American Wigeon. Compare the dark eyepatch with that of the drake American Wigeon in the rear. Additionally, pure Eurasian Wigeons have gray flanks; the reddish flanks shown in this photo are typical of the American Wigeon. Photo by John K. Cassady.

American Black Duck:- On 19 May a male, paired with a female Mallard, was seen at Grant Street wetland (Jeffrey J. McCoy, m.ob).

Northern Shoveler:- The (150) that Michael Topp counted at the Grant Street wetland (Gary) on 17 March, constitutes the lakefront's fourth largest spring tally. For the season a respectable 885 Shovelers were logged. This total is a spring record for the lakefront (TYM=193).

White-winged Scoter:- A group of (3) late migrants were seen off Dunes S.P. on 14 May (Brendan J. Grube).

Black Scoter:- Michael Topp identified a female off the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary on 2 March, for the only spring report for the entire state (TYM=2.65).

Long-tailed Duck:- A single bird, seen from the Green Tower Site on 19 March (Brendan J. Grube), provided Indiana's only spring report. This is the state's lowest spring count since 1998 (TYM=15.5).

Common Goldeneye:- This handsome duck had a dismal spring, with an astonishingly low five individuals reported for the season (TYM=139). This is the lowest lakefront season total since 1987. Perhaps the warm winter encouraged them to depart early.

Hooded Merganser:- A female and 10-11 downy chicks were seen at Grant Street wetland on 19 May (John K. Cassady, Lee W. Sterrenburg et al.).

Wild Turkey:- A new lakefront high count was logged 18 March when Douglas and Lynea Hinchman counted (26) on the eastern side of Michigan City.

LOONS-GREBES

Another strong Red-throated Loon flight highlighted this group's season. The average MI/species was +0.03. Among the regular species, only the Common Loon was below average.

Red-throated Loon:- Once again this loon was reported in record numbers with a spring total of 225 (TYM=46.8). Remarkably, (5) were still present off Dunes S.P. on 14 May (Brendan J. Grube).

Common Loon:- Although numbers were down substantially statewide, lakefront birders enjoyed the best flight since 2005 with 252 birds reported (TYM=294). Note, however, that this season total is still well below the TYM.

American White Pelican:- A group of (10) was perched atop a Wolf Lake island on 2 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and the following day a flock of (9) flew past the Green Tower Site (Brendan J. Grube). On 18 May Matt Kalwasinski observed (4) flying over the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary.

Neotropic Cormorant:- On 11 April Amar Ayyash photographed (1) off Calumet Park, IL; the bird was attracted to the gull feeding he was conducting. As the bird departed, it flew eastward into Indiana, providing the state's second record. Amar relocated this bird near the Commonwealth Edison power plant on 25 April, where it was subsequently seen by Pete

& Brendan J. Grube. John K. Cassady and KJB saw it the following day. The bird lingered in this area for several days and was observed by many. This is the first lakefront and second Indiana record.



A new species for the Indiana lakefront. This Neotropic Cormorant was discovered by Amar Ayyash off Calumet Park, IL on 11 April 2012; upon departing the bird flew directly into Indiana waters. On 25 April Amar again discovered this bird perched on pilings just west of the now closed state line power plant. It lingered in this area for several days and was seen by many observers. This photo was taken by Amar Ayyash on the initial discovery day.

HERONS

The spring season for this group was highlighted by the presence of a Snowy Egret and at least three Little Blue Herons. The dark side was a precipitous plunge in Black-crowned Night-Heron numbers. These two factors effectively canceled, as the group's average MI/species was 0.00.

American Bittern:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best spring numbers in a decade with six birds reported (TYM=3.2). Single Bitterns flew past the Green Tower Site on 30 April and 2 May (Brendan J. Grube). Penny Starin flushed (1) south of the Broadway pool in Beverly Shores on 8 May. Lynea S. Hinchman's team observed (1) in Dunes S.P. on the 12 May Big May Day Count. On 19 May (2) were identified in Beverly Shores near Montana Street (Brad Bumgardner, et al.).

Least Bittern:- Muskrats have decimated the cattails at Grant Street wetland marsh; consequently, the season's only report came from the Cline Avenue Marsh where Michael Topp saw (1) on 12 May.

Snowy Egret:- Bob Zaremba discovered (1) in a Merrillville pond on 17 May; the bird was still present 19 May (Lee W. Sterrenburg, Kathy McClain, m.ob.).

Little Blue Heron:- An adult, seen on Wolf Lake 24 March (Michael Topp), constitutes the state's second earliest arrival date and only the second March record. Another adult flew past the Green Tower Site on 14 April (Brendan J. Grube). A first-cycle bird was at Grant Street wetland on 12 and 19 May (Michael Topp, Lee W. Sterrenburg, m.ob.).

Black-crowned Night-Heron:- It was an exceedingly poor spring for this species on the lakefront with only 17 reported (TYM=93.3). This is the lowest spring total in two decades.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

It was a wonderful spring for raptors with every species except Rough-legged Hawk and Golden Eagle recorded in above normal numbers. The average MI/species was an impressive +0.28. Merlins, Peregrines, and Broad-winged, staged the strongest flights. This abundance generated a fine season at the hawk watch.

Dunes area birders enjoyed the best hawk flight since 1992. Watches, many by Brendan J. Grube during his scheduled lakewatches, were conducted on 39 days with a time investment of 90 hours. Among the *regular* raptors only the Golden Eagle went unreported. Interestingly, Sharp-shinned once again replaced Red-tailed as the most numerous raptor; this has occurred in only four previous years: 2001, 2003, 2007, and 2011. Indeed, the percentage of Red-taileds in the flight was 18.2%, the lowest ever recorded (the average is 35.2%).

Mid-March brought a series of consecutive record warm days with south winds. Hawk watches were conducted on each of these days, but each count typically yielded only 20-30 birds. Combined however, these daily tallies yielded an impressive total of 504 raptors for the month. An uneventful hawk season quickly became quite exciting on 15 April when Brendan J. Grube noted Broad-winged overhead about noon. A count was

made for the next three hours (the movement lasted about 2.5 hours) and was highlighted by (96) Broad-wingeds, (15) Osprey, and (13) Merlins. The day's total was 206 raptors

SUMMARY			
2012 DUNES HAWK-WATCHES			
01 March – 15 May			
20-year Mean inside “()”			
Total	Species	Total	Species
190	Turkey Vulture (84)	335	Red-tailed (365)
50	Osprey (12)	4	Rough-legged (5)
7	Bald Eagle (4)	23	Buteo sp. (27)
84	N. Harriers (56)	0	Golden Eagle (1)
562	Sharp-shinned (264)	112	Am. Kestrel (61)
86	Cooper's (48)	39	Merlin (6)
1	N. Goshawk (1)	15	Peregrine (4)
21	Accipiter sp. (7)	2	hawk sp. (4)
86	Red-shouldered (56)	1	Swainson's (1)
219	Broad-winged (59)	1837	TOTAL (1065)
Major contributors to this year's total included: S.R. Bagby, Brad Bumgardner, J.K. Cassady, B.J. Grube, P.B. Grube, L.S. Hinchman, J.C. Kendall, Bernie Konrady, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, and KJB.			

Osprey:- Highlighting a fine spring flight the (15) birds reported at the Green Tower Site on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube) tied the lakefront's highest daily count.

Sharp-shinned Hawk:- An Indiana record count of (334) was logged at the Green Tower Site on 1 May (Brendan J. Grube, Landon Neumann, Laramie Aspegren, & KJB). This tally exceeds Indiana's next highest count by more than 100 Sharpies.

Northern Goshawk:- Ironically, the season's only report occurred in May, providing Indiana's first ever record for that month. This immature bird flew past the Green Tower Site on 1 May (Brendan J. Grube, Landon Neumann, & KJB).

Swainson's Hawk:- A light-morph bird was seen and photographed from the Green Tower Site on 1 May (Brendan J. Grube, Landon Neumann, & KJB).

Merlin:- Primarily due to Brendan J. Grube's longshore flight watches, the lakefront experienced an unprecedented Merlin flight. For the season some 44 were recorded, which

is more than double the next highest spring total and quadruples the TYM of 8.7. The 15 April flight at the Green Tower Site included a state record count of (13) Merlins (Brendan J. Grube, Brad Bumgardner, & KJB).



This distant, low quality, photograph documents the Swainson's Hawk seen at the Green Tower Site on 1 May 2012. This visitor from the West provided the seventh Swainson's Hawk record for Dunes State Park. It was a highlight of the season's largest, and most diverse, hawk flight. Photo by KJB.

Common Gallinule:- On 12 May Jeffrey J. McCoy counted (19) at the Grant Street wetland, which provided the season's highest daily count.

Sandhill Crane:- On 10 March a count of (6644) at the Dunes S.P. Green Tower Site established a new maximum tally for the lakefront (John K. Cassady, Lynea S. Hinchman, Brad Bumgardner, Brendan J. Grube, et al.). On 8 May Penny Starin discovered a pair of adults and a downy chick at the Broadway pond in BS; this is the second confirmed breeding record for Porter Co.

SHOREBIRDS

Spring of 2012 brought another below average shorebird flight to the lakefront. Of the 23 expected species, four (White-rumped Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Sanderling, and Long-billed Dowitcher) were not reported and nine species had negative MI values. The average MI/species was -0.14. On a more positive note the American Golden-Plover and Semipalmated Sandpiper both had excellent flights.

American Golden-Plover:- For the season 69 were reported, which is the best spring flight since the year 2000 (TYM=16.2). Two flew past the Green Tower Site on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube) and during the magnificent 2 May longshore flight (Brendan J. Grube et al.) counted (67) at the Green Tower Site. The latter is the lakefront's largest spring count in a dozen years.

American Avocet:- An alternate-plumed bird was discovered at Striebel Pond on 3 May (Penny Starin). This is only the ninth spring record for the lakefront (TYM=1.2).

Sanderling:- Not reported on the lakefront for the first time in 20 years (TYM=13.2).

Semipalmated Sandpiper:- The 57 birds reported this spring constitutes the highest spring total for the lakefront in four years (TYM=22.1). The peak count consisted on (20) at the Grant Street wetland on 18 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy).

Least Sandpiper:- On 1 April Penny Starin found (1) at McCool Basin, providing the lakefront's all-time earliest arrival date.

White-rumped Sandpiper:- This species was missed on the lakefront for the first spring in three years (TYM=1.25).

Pectoral Sandpiper:- The (50) observed at McCool Basin on 27 March (Penny Starin), ties the lakefront's third earliest arrival date.

Stilt Sandpiper:- For the second consecutive spring this shorebird was not reported on the lakefront (TYM=2.1).

GULLS

It was a poor spring for gulls on the lakefront. Laughing, Franklin's, and Thayer's gulls all went unreported and the average MI/species was a basement-level -0.34.

Bonaparte's Gull:- Once again lakefront numbers were frightfully low with only 14 birds reported (TYM=299).

Laughing X Ring-billed Gull hybrid:- Amar Ayyash photographed this now famous bird

near the Illinois state line on 4 March. According to Amar, 2012 marks the ninth year that this hybrid has been observed in this area.

Thayer's Gull:- Not reported on the lakefront for the second consecutive spring (TYM=4.25).

Iceland Gull:- The handsome adult Kumlien's reported at the Hammond Marina throughout the winter, lingered until 28 April (Carolyn A. Marsh), providing the state's ninth latest date.

Glaucous X Great Black-backed Gull hybrid:- This putative hybrid was seen on the beach at the Green Tower Site (Dunes S.P.) on 16 March (Jeffrey J. McCoy, Brendan J. Grube, Lee W. Sterrenburg, Kathy McClain, & KJB).

TERNs

It was a frightfully poor season for terns on the lakefront. All four regular species occurred in below average numbers; indeed the MI/species was a grim -0.45. Among these, the Common Tern flight was feeblest of the lot.

Black Tern:- Walter J. Marcisz observed a single alternate-plumed bird over Indiana waters of Wolf Lake on 24 May (TYM=2.8).

Common Tern:- This spring's lakefront total of 9, is far below the TYM of 201.

Eurasian Collared-Dove:- Brendan J. Grube observed singletons fly past the Green Tower Site on 15 and 19 March. Michael Topp photographed (1) in a Whiting yard on 5 May.

White-winged Dove:- One flew past the Green Tower Site on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube & Brad Bumgardner) to provide the lakefront's first report since 2009.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo:- The lakefront experienced another feeble spring flight with only (2) birds reported (TYM=3.35). A resounding "Whoopie" from within the sanctuary indicated that Susan R. Bagby was ecstatic about the one she sighted in the Hammond Sanctuary on 26 May.

Black-billed Cuckoo:- The season's only lakefront report was made by Brendan J.

Grube, who logged (1) at the Green Tower Site on 19 May (TYM=1.95).

Snowy Owl:- Spring of 2012 was most remarkable in that three Snowy Owls were reported on the lakefront. The first was a young bird perched on the USX debris piles at Miller Beach on 3 March (Michael Topp). On 30 April Cathy Meyer's father reported (1) near Burns Ditch in Porter Co. Also on 30 April there was an unconfirmed report of a Snowy at the Chesterton Bone Clinic near the intersection of Indiana 49 and I-90. Then on 6 May Jim Bonfield, manager of the Duneland Schools Bus Barn, discovered a Snowy perched in a deciduous tree behind the bus barn (a Bonfield photo was published in the *Chesterton Tribune*), which is located almost directly across route 49 from the Bone Clinic; this was almost certainly the same individual reported at the clinic on 30 April. This bird, which keyed out as an adult female, perched in the same tree throughout its stay. It was last seen about noon on 15 May (*fide* Jim Bonfield).



Following last winter's record invasion, several of these Arctic visitors lingered into spring. This adult female Snowy Owl remained behind the Duneland Schools bus barn (Chesterton) from about 6 May through 15 May. She was discovered by Jim Bonfield (manager of the bus barn) on 6 May and was seen daily perched in the same tree for the next ten days. Note the irony of this owl of the treeless Arctic perched in a fully leafed deciduous tree. This photo was taken on 8 May by KJB.

Short-eared Owl:- Singletons were seen at the Green Tower Site on 14 March, 20 March, 7 April, and 16 April (Brendan J. Grube).

Long-eared Owl:- Peter B. Grube

photographed (1) at the West Beach pinery on 20 March. On 28 March Brendan J. Grube discovered a perched bird in the grove across the parking lot from the Green Tower Site, providing the first record for Dune S.P. in four years.

Eastern Whip-poor-will:- It was a great spring for this nightjar. The season began with a singing bird, heard 12 April in Dunes S.P. (Brad Bumgardner), which provided the lakefront's second earliest arrival date (preceded only by the 10 March 1933 report by D.H. Boyd). The 18 birds reported this spring constitute the lakefront's highest spring total since 1986 (TYM=7.9) and suggest that the Dunes population might be rebounding.

Chimney Swift:- Brendan J. Grube identified (1) during the 27 March Green Tower lakewatch. This is the lakefront's earliest arrival date by eleven days.

FLYCATCHERS

It was a fabulous spring for flycatchers as every species except the Yellow-bellied had positive MI values. Additionally, Western Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher were added to the seasonal list. The final result was an average MI/species of +0.42, which is a truly astonishing value. Topping the list, in terms of numbers, was the Alder Flycatcher.

Olive-sided Flycatcher:- On 5 May John K. Cassady's sharp ears picked the rarely heard song of an Olive-sided in Beverly Shores. Lynea Hinchman, Randy Pals, and KJB also heard the bird. This is the lakefront's second earliest record.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:- Only eight were logged for the season, a value that is well below the TYM of 14.3.

Alder Flycatcher:- A record Indiana daily count of (21) was logged on 26 May (John K. Cassady, Susan R. Bagby, Lynea S. Hinchman, et al.). Twenty of these singing birds were heard along Beverly Drive in Beverly Shores.

Western Kingbird:- An unprecedented two birds were recorded in the Dunes this spring (TYM=0.2). The first flew past the Green

Tower Site on 30 April, pausing briefly for a photo (Brendan J. Grube & Brad Bumgardner). This bird provided Indiana's first April record. Another flew past the same site on 23 May at 6:00AM (Brendan J. Grube).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:- During a 2 May longshore flight watch at the Dunes S.P. Green Tower Site, Brendan J. Grube observed (1) flying westward along the beach (TYM=0.15). This is the lakefront's fifth record.

Northern Shrike:- The spring's only report consisted of an immature in western Beverly Shores on 3 March (Susan R. Bagby, John K. Cassady, Randall J. Pals et al.).

VIREOS

This group executed a fine spring flight with every species except the Yellow-throated in positive territory. The groups average MI/species was +0.14.

Yellow-throated Vireo:- The 45 logged this spring is slightly below the TYM of 48.5.

Red-eyed Vireo:- Susan R. Bagby established a new early arrival date (by two days) for the lakefront on 19 April when she found (1) in Dunes S.P.

SWALLOWS

Daily counts at the Green Tower Site resulted in the highest swallow counts ever, with the numbers of every species far above normal. The average MI/species was +0.59.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:- Prior to 2012 Indiana's highest gnatcatcher count was 112. During this year's longshore flights, Brendan J. Grube tallied (124) on 2 May and (248) on the following day, obliterating the previous state maximum.

WRENS

The lakefront's wren flight was mixed, with poor numbers of Winter and Carolina, and above normal numbers of the others. The average MI/species was the near-zero value of -0.08.

Winter Wren:- This furtive wren was quite scarce; the three birds reported constitute the lowest lakefront spring total since 1998 (TYM=12.4).

THRUSHES

Bluebird and Robin counts dominated the overall numbers of this group; as these two species are among the more common birds in the longshore flight throngs. *Catharus* thrushes did not fare so well, as only the Gray-cheeked appeared in (slightly) above normal numbers. The group's average MI/species was +0.15.

Veery:- This ethereal songster appeared in below average numbers with only 47 tallied (TYM=60.2). On 19 April Susan R. Bagby found an early Veery in Dunes S.P., providing the lakefront's second earliest arrival date.

Hermit Thrush:- Decidedly scarce this spring, with only 46 reported, compared to a TYM of 65.

Wood Thrush:- Numbers were down again this spring; only 40 were reported on the lakefront (TYM=54.7).

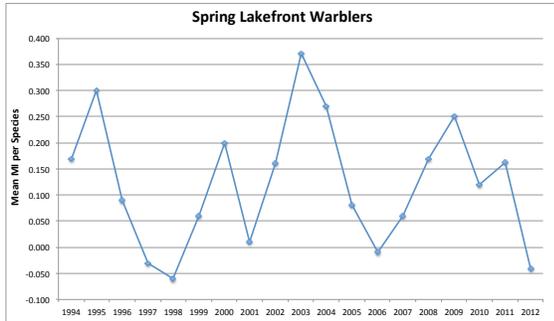
American Robin:- The (7342) counted at the Green Tower Site on 11 March (Brendan J. Grube), constituted Indiana's third largest daily tally.

American Pipit:- This species was recorded on 24 different days at the Green Tower Site with a peak count of (86) on 17 March (Brendan J. Grube). The season total (446) exceeded four times the TYM of 90.

Cedar Waxwing:- A longshore flight of (6609) at the Green Tower Site on 20 May (Brendan J. Grube), provided the state's second largest daily count.

WARBLERS

Many lakefront birders were disappointed with the warbler flight; the expectation of a nice wave just never materialized. The statistics support this contention, as the average MI/species of -0.04 is the lowest value since 1998 (see graph).



Of the Thirty-four species reported, 17 had negative MI values; additionally, both the Worm-eating and Chat were entirely absent from the spring list. On the positive side, the Pine Warbler made a very strong showing with 74 reported (TYM=23.3).

Northern Parula:- A singing bird at the Dunes S.P. bridge on 14 April (Brad Bumgardner) tied the lakefront’s earliest arrival date.

Pine Warbler:- On 26 April (2 birds) and 28 April (3 identical birds) great views of the rarely seen first-cycle female plumage were enjoyed at the George Lake Woodlot (Susan R. Bagby, Lynea S. Hinchman, John C Kendall, & KJB). See Cassady photo.



Remarkably, two Pine warblers showing this dull first-cycle female plumage were at the George Lake Woodlot on 26 April and three were together there two days later. Only rarely is this drab plumage seen during the spring flight. This photograph was taken 28 April by John K. Cassady.

Prairie Warbler:- A singing male that Brendan J. Grube et al. observed at the Green Tower Site on 19 April provided the lakefront’s third

earliest arrival date. A fine Brad Bumgardner photo documented this individual.

Palm Warbler:- This warbler executed a fine flight, with 799 reported (TYM=325). One photographed at the Green Tower Site on 19 March (Brad Bumgardner and Brendan J. Grube) established a new early arrival date for the lakefront.

Kentucky Warbler:- This warbler is quite rare on the lakefront; consequently, the one identified by Bernie Konrady and his May Count team in Portage on 12 May is noteworthy.



When referring to birds of the deep woods Roger Peterson frequently employed the phrase “heard more often than seen.” That term aptly applies to the Hooded Warbler as its ringing song comes from a bird that is rarely visible. This striking male was photographed by Michael Topp in Dunes State Park on 17 May.

SPARROWS

All of the expected sparrows except Le Conte’s, were recorded, plus unexpected reports of Grasshopper and Henslow’s. The average MI/species was +0.01. Seventeen sparrow species were reported this spring. American Tree Sparrow staged the weakest flight with only 31 reported (TYM=84.3). In view of the mild winter, most Tree Sparrows apparently headed north in late winter. The most impressive numbers were logged for Lark Sparrow.

Chipping Sparrow:- One that Brad Bumgardner observed at the Dunes S.P. feeders 2 March provided a new early arrival date for the lakefront.

Lark Sparrow:- It was a fine spring for this species with six reported (TYM=1.4). Remarkably, this rare sparrow appeared on three different days at the Green Tower Site. The largest count was the (3) tallied during the 2 May longshore flight at the Green Tower Site (Brendan J. Grube).

Lapland Longspur:- Primarily due to counts at the Green Tower Site lakewatch, the lakefront enjoyed a fine season, with 667 Laplands (TYM=265). The peak flight there was (147) on 14 March, but a tardy single migrant was recorded on 6 May (Brendan J. Grube).

Smith's Longspur:- Brendan J. Grube identified (1) flying past the Green Tower on 15 April. This marks the fourth consecutive year in which this longspur has been recorded at this site.

Yellow-headed Blackbird:- Edward M. Hopkins reported (1) in Hammond on 3 May, for the lakefront's only spring report (TYM=3.7).

Baltimore Oriole:- Numerous counts during scheduled lakewatches at the Green Tower Site resulted in a record spring total of 1040 birds (TYM=338). The peak daily tally was (268) at the Green Tower Site on 2 May (Brendan J. Grube), which is Indiana's second highest count.

WINTER FINCHES

Although winter numbers were unimpressive, a better than average spring flights occurred for the finches.

Explanation of abbreviation 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 increased markedly over the past decade. This means that negative MI's should be examined closely as they may reflect significant declines.

Purple Finch:- Thanks to numerous flybys at the Green Tower Site, the season total was 159 (the highest in three years), which is more than double the TYM of 60.7.

Red Crossbill:- This species is quite rare on the lakefront in spring; indeed, the birds reported below constitute the first spring Red Crossbills since 1994 (TYM=0.45). A female or immature male flew past the Green Tower Site on 16 March (Brendan J. Grube, Jeffrey J. McCoy, & Lee W. Sterrenburg) and (2) were observed there the following day (Brendan J. Grube, John K. Cassady, John C. Kendall, Lynea S. Hinchman, et al.).

Common Redpoll:- Thanks to Brendan J. Grube's longshore flight watches, some 104 Redpolls were logged this spring. This is the highest spring total since 1994 (TYM=25.8). A late singleton flew past the Green Tower Site flight watch on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube), providing Indiana's fifth latest spring report.

Pine Siskin:- Despite extremely low winter numbers, the spring flight was impressive with 163 reported (TYM=62.35). A good portion of these birds were tallied at the Green Tower Site during Brendan J. Grube's longshore flight watches. The season's largest count was (40), also at the latter site, on 3 May (Brendan J. Grube).