

INDIANA DUNES BIRD REPORT: SPRING 2013

Kenneth J. Brock
Chesterton, IN

You know the spring weather was weird when March thirtieth turned out to be the warmest day since January. Spring of 2013 got underway with a stumble, as a 5 March storm dropped eleven inches of snow on Chesterton. Indeed, the entire month was cold with temperatures averaging 5.3°F below normal. April was 2°F below normal and precipitation almost 3.5 inches above average. Things warmed a bit in May when temperatures averaged 1.9° F above normal and precipitation about 1.3 inches above average.

As a result of the cold spring many species were in no hurry to move northward, indeed, most migrant passerines arrived later than normal.

Once again the May Count occurred on a cold day; the temperature struggled to reach 57°F and then plummeted when a cold front arrived at 2:00PM. Despite this unseemly weather, Porter County birders logged 173 species for the day.



This historical photograph displays the original Green Tower, for which this superb birding site was previously named. The name for the replacement tower (not shown) is **Bird Observation Platform**, which will be abbreviated B.O.P. in this document. This picture was take years ago, as evidenced by the size of the cottonwood sapling east of the tower; today that tree is taller than the original Green Tower. Image by Ken Williams.

Longshore Flights Thanks to financial support from NIMBA (Northwest Indiana Migratory Bird Association) and the Lake Michigan Coastal Program, Brendan J. Grube was again funded to conduct daily longshore flight watches at the Green Tower site, henceforth referred to as the Bird Observation Platform or B.O.P. Unfortunately, construction of the new Bird Observation Platform was delayed and

the counts had to be conducted at ground level. Despite this handicap, Brendan recorded some excellent longshore movements; indeed, seven of the twenty best counts ever recorded (based on Grube Magnitude) were logged this spring. Noteworthy aspects of the season included: 40,854 Red-winged Blackbirds on 3 April, 169 Red-throated Loons on 4 April, 346 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers on 7 April, a Black Vulture on 22 April, 7,264 Blue Jays on May Day, 1,612 Siskins on 15 May, a Swallow-tailed Kite on 18 May, and 11,373 Waxwings on 29 May. It was clearly a most impressive season. In reading the species accounts it is also worthwhile to remember that season totals of species involved in the longshore flights are elevated by the massive amounts of data that Brendan collected.

Season Highlights The season’s major fallout occurred on 10 May following the passage of a cold front. Interesting reports occurred at several lakefront locations. At the Hammond Sanctuary John C. Kendall and Jeffrey J. McCoy found 17 warbler species including a Golden-winged and 13 Ovenbirds. In the High Dunes Brendan J. Grube logged 28 Least Flycatchers, 12 Blue-headed Vireos, 13 Orange-crowned Warblers, 33 Black-throated Green Warblers, 45 Black-and-white Warblers, 24+ Northern Waterthrush, and a Clay-colored Sparrow.

Exceptional Hawk Flight: The largest post-1992 daily flight occurred on 14 April when Brendan J. Grube, Brad Bumgardner et al. logged 680 birds, including a record Northern Harrier count plus an unprecedented seven dark morph Red-taileds.

Record Daily Counts: Daily tallies of the following species provided the highest counts ever recorded on the lakefront: Red-throated Loon, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, White-rumped Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, Cliff Swallow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Palm Warbler.

Rarities: Eurasian Wigeon, Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, White-faced Ibis, Black Vulture, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Northern Goshawk, Black-necked Stilt, and Rufous Hummingbird.

Weirdest Occurrence: On 23 March the regular Saturday birding group made a routine stop at the abandoned leaseback on Beverly Drive west of Central Avenue. While most of us prepared to survey bushes along the road edges for birds Randy Pals wandered over to an Eastern Red Cedar in the front yard. Within a few moments Randy commented, “There is an incredible pile of Saw-whet pellets under this tree.” Everyone’s attention immediately focused on Randy, whose eyes slowly drifted upward and he calmly stated, “and there is the owl.” The owl was snugly concealed within 20 feet of our parking site. This discovery was amazing for two reasons. First, we had stopped at this site numerous times without ever examining the cedar. Second, Randy had spent more than a year unsuccessfully searching Google maps (and the Dunes) for suitable Saw-whet roosting sites.

The adjacent table summarizes the 2013 spring flight by bird groups using the Migration Index (MI- definition appended). These data suggest that wrens had a weak flight and that swallows, raptors, loons/grebes, and ducks occurred in unusually high numbers. The un-weighted mean of this group’s MI values is +0.15, suggesting that the overall flight was very good. Keep in mind, however, that the multiple longshore flight watches generated abnormally high seasonal counts for the species involved.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	+0.36	Flycatchers	+0.24
Loons/Grebes	+0.37	Vireos	-0.08
Hérons	-0.10	Swallows	+0.56
Raptors	+0.43	Wrens	-0.18
Shorebirds	+0.03	Thrushes	+0.19
Gulls	+0.02	Warblers	-0.09
Terns	+0.10	Sparrows	+0.24

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose:- This goose was reported in record numbers on the lakefront with 426 logged (TYM=39.4). The peak single count consisted of a flock of (200) over Lake Michigan off the Bird Observation Platform (B.O.P.) on 30 March (Brendan J. Grube & Brad Bumgardner).

DUCKS

It was a spectacular spring for ducks on the lakefront. The Harlequin was missed, but otherwise only the Long-tailed Duck was reported in below average numbers. In addition, the Eurasian Wigeon provided a bonus for the list. For the season the average MI/species was a spectacular +0.36, which is the highest value in 17 years. The White-winged Scoter, Redhead, and Ruddy Duck staged the strongest flights.

Eurasian Wigeon:- Ryan Sanderson, Kim Higdon, and Ryan Hamilton found a male at Grant St. wetland on 7 May, providing the lakefront's first record since 1981. This individual lingered through 10 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy and Doug Gerbracht) and was seen by many.



This striking male Eurasian Wigeon, discovered at the Grant Street Wetland (Gary) on 7 May, provided the lakefront's first record in 32 years. It lingered in the area for three days allowing many to view this rarity. Photo by Ryan J. Sanderson.

Blue-winged Teal:- Highlighted by a tally of (300+) at Grant St. wetland on 19 Apr (Leland Shaum et al.), the lakefront experienced a record spring flight with 872 reported (TYM=326).

Northern Shoveler:- This duck was present in excellent numbers with 821 reported (TYM=234). Leland Shaum logged the peak daily tally of (100+) at the Grant Street wetland on 19 April.

Redhead:- The (170) that Carolyn A. Marsh counted on Wolf Lake 10 March, constitutes a spring record for the lakefront. The previous spring maximum was 167.

White-winged Scoter:- Following last winter's incursion, record numbers were counted on the lakefront this spring. The seasonal count of 851 exceeds the next highest spring total by almost 400 scoters (TYM=80.7). On 23 March Barny Dunning tallied a state record (165) at Michigan City Harbor (140) and Beverly Shores (25).

Long-tailed Duck:- The spring flight was below par with only 6 birds reported (TYM=15.7). The 2013 season's last record occurred 9 April when Brendan J. Grube observed (1) during a longshore flight watch at the Bird Observation Platform or B.O.P.

LOONS-GREBES

It was a good season for this group with especially good numbers of Western Grebes, Pacific Loons, and Red-throated Loons. The group's average MI/species was a record +0.37.

Red-throated Loon:- A record Indiana count was set 4 April when Brendan J. Grube counted (169) during a longshore flight watch at the B.O.P. The previous maximum was logged at this location on 9 February 2013. For the season some 569 were tallied (TYM=75.2).

Pacific Loon:- Remarkably, three were recorded during the B.O.P. longshore flight watches. On 4 April Brendan J. Grube observed an apparent young bird on Lake Michigan off the B.O.P. It was swimming with a flock of 70 Red-throated Loons. Jeffrey J. McCoy discovered another Pacific Loon at this location

on 14 April and a third was observed on 18 May (Brendan J. Grube). Additionally, a fourth bird (molting) was seen off Beverly Shores on 19 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy & Brendan J. Grube).

Common Loon:- The lakefront experienced a below normal flight with 234 reported (TYM=306).

Western Grebe:- The wintering bird(s) at the Port of Indiana lingered until 31 March when Penny Starin observed (2) at that location.

American White Pelican:- See below table.

No	Date	Location	Observer
2	22-Apr	Ham. Sanctuary	M. Topp
3	8-May	Wolf Lake	C. Marsh
11	9-May	B.O.P.	B. Grube
8	18-May	Forsythe Park	M. Kalwasinski
1	29-May	B.O.P.	B. Grube

HERONS

The absence of Little Blue Herons and a disastrous Black-crowned Night-Heron flight, took a toll on the season's heron statistics. The average MI/species was a weak -0.10.

Snowy Egret:- John C. Kendall found (1) at Wolf Lake on 2 May. This individual lingered throughout the season.

Black-crowned Night-Heron:- The season total of 15, is the lowest spring count since 1993 (TYM=93.9). This is the second consecutive year in which greatly reduced spring numbers have been reported on the lakefront.

White-faced Ibis:- Following last spring's Glossy Ibis at Grant Street wetland, the lakefront's first White-faced was logged at this same location on 5 May (Edward M. Hopkins).

DIURNAL RAPTORS

Remarkably, lakefront birders logged 18 raptor species this spring. Highlights included Black Vulture, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Mississippi Kite, along with Northern Goshawk and Golden Eagle. The average MI/species was a phenomenal +0.43, which is the best ever (by far). The foundation of this lofty number was the best Dunes hawk flight in 21 years.

Hawk Flights As March was dominated by cold north winds, hawk flights for that month were minimal. Southerly winds in early April were discouragingly strong. On several potentially good flight days the winds approached 30 knots, which inhibited thermal development and hawk movement.

Following this discouragingly slow start, the flight accelerated in April and ultimately yielded an impressive season total of 2202 raptors, which is the best spring hawk flight since 1992 when 3774 were counted. Approximately 133.3 hours were involved in accumulating this hefty number. A whopping portion of the credit for this fine season must be attributed to the hours that Brendan J. Grube logged during his tenure as longshore flight counter.

Highlights of the spring raptor flight included the first Black Vulture and a Swallow-tailed Kite that occurred two days after the official hawk flight period ended.



After the Gary nest was destroyed last year, birders feared that the pair might leave; however, not only did they linger and build a new nest, but by 13 May two downy chicks were in the nest (visible near the right-hand adult). Photo by Michael Topp.

Black Vulture:- The lakefront's fourth record of this southern vulture was confirmed with video on 22 April at the B.O.P. (Brendan J. Grube).

Swallow-tailed Kite:- Prior to 2013, the last Swallow-tailed Kite was reported on the lakefront was in 1948. However, on 18 May, of this year, Brendan J. Grube, Brad Bumgardner, and Alex Forsythe observed this elegant raptor soaring above the dunes west of the B.O.P.

Mississippi Kite:- For the third consecutive year this kite was observed in northwestern LaPorte Co. In previous years the kites occurred just outside the Dunes area boundary; however, this year, on 17 May Lynea S. Hinchman observed (1) flying above the southern outskirts of Michigan City (within the official Dunes area boundary).

SUMMARY 2013 DUNES HAWK-WATCHES 08 March – 14 May 20-year Mean inside “()”			
Total	Species	Total	Species
1	Black Vulture (0)	562	Red-tailed (370)
339	Turkey Vulture (96)	8	Rough-legged (5)
67	Osprey (15)	0	Buteo sp. (24)
27	Bald Eagle (5)	1	Golden Eagle (1)
240	N. Harriers (64)	195	Am. Kestrel (65)
473	Sharp-shinned (269)	23	Merlin (7)
100	Cooper's (50)	14	Peregrine (4)
2	N. Goshawk (1)	0	hawk sp. (4)
62	Red-shouldered (57)	0	Swainson's (1)
89	Broad-winged (55)	2203	TOTAL (1093)

Major contributors to this year's total included:
B.J. Grube, B. Bumgardner, S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, P.B. Grube, L.S. Hinchman, J.C. Kendall, B. Konrady, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, and KJB.

Osprey:- An impressive (18) birds were logged by Brendan J. Grube during the 14 April hawk flight at the B.O.P. This is the largest number ever observed at the hawk watch.

Northern Harrier:- During the large 14 April flight at the B.O.P., Brendan J. Grube counted (90) Harriers, which is an Indiana record daily count.

Sharp-shinned Hawk:- As typically occurs during the Dunes hawk flights, the Sharpie was the second most common raptor (behind the Red-tailed). This year's 473 birds represent the largest spring flight since 836 were tallied in 1992. This total was highlighted by the (213) sharpies logged during the large 14 April flight (Brendan J. Grube). This latter tally is the state's third largest daily count.

Northern Goshawk:- An immature/subadult was seen in Dunes S.P. on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube & Brad Bumgardner) and another was seen 26 April at the B.O.P. during a longshore flight watch (Brendan J. Grube).

Red-tailed Hawk:- During the large 14 April flight at the B.O.P. an unprecedented (7) dark morphs, plus one intermediate morph (see Pete Grube's photo) were counted. On average one dark bird is seen for every 110 Red-taileds.



Along with seven dark morph Red-tailed Hawks this striking intermediate morph accompanied the impressive 14 April flight of 201 Red-taileds at the Green Tower Site. This photo was taken by Peter B. Grube.

Golden Eagle:- This eagle, which is surprisingly rare on the lakefront (TYM=0.75), was seen over Dunes S.P. on 15 April (Brendan J. Grube).

American Kestrel:- On 6 April Brendan J. Grube counted a state record (94) flying past the B.O.P. This tally surpasses the former maximum of 88 that was recorded on 7 April 1993.

Merlin:- The 52 Merlins reported this season constitutes a new high spring total for the lakefront (TYM=10.9). The peak daily total was (10), tallied by Brendan J. Grube during the 18 April longshore flight at the B.O.P.

Peregrine Falcon:- John S. Castrale reported that a female Peregrine born in Whiting spent the winter of 2012-13 in Heredia City, Costa Rica.

Sandhill Crane:- Although firm evidence is lacking, birders suspect nesting at several locations in the Great Marsh.

SHOREBIRDS

Although American Avocet, Whimbrel, and Stilt Sandpiper went unreported this spring, lakefront birders still recorded 24 shorebird species. Despite the above misses, and a disturbingly low American Golden-Plover count, a near normal average MI/species of +0.03 was attained.

American Golden-Plover:- The lakefront's season count of one, is frightfully low (TYM=16.3).

Black-necked Stilt:- A second lakefront record was established 17 May, when Jeffrey J. McCoy found two at McCool Basin. The previous occurrence consisted of two birds at Miller Beach on 7 April 1995.

Marbled Godwit:- The lakefront's first spring record since 2011 was logged 20 April when Michael Topp found (1) in a large rainwater pool on the Forsythe Park lawn.

Sanderling:- The total of 5 reported this spring is well below the TYM of 13.

White-rumped Sandpiper:- A flock of (21) landed on the B.O.P. beach on 28 May (Brendan J. Grube), providing a record count for the lakefront.

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

Long-billed Dowitcher:- This species, which is rare on the lakefront in spring, appeared at McCool Basin on 10 May, where John C. Kendall photographed (3) alternate-plumed birds.

GULLS

Among the ten gull species reported Bonaparte's Gull numbers were the weakest. For this group the average MI/species was +0.02, which is effectively zero.

Bonaparte's Gull:- For the eighth consecutive year lakefront "Bony" numbers remained well below the 20-year average; this year 62 were reported (TYM=295).

Laughing Gull:- The lakefront's only report consisted of a beautiful alternate adult that Jeffrey J. McCoy discovered perched on the Beverly Shores beach 25 May.

Iceland Gull:- The adult Kumlien's that has frequented the Hammond Marina area for the last few winters, lingered until 9 April (Amar Ayyash).

Glaucous X Great Black-backed Gull hybrid:- The recurring adult was observed at the B.O.P. beach 14 April (Jeffrey J. McCoy).

TERNs

Most encouragingly, the tern flight was above normal with an average MI/species of +0.10. Only the Common Tern numbers were down this spring.

Black Tern:- There were two occurrences of this small tern, which is rarely seen on the lakefront in spring. The first sighting occurred at the flooded Grant Street wetland where Jeffrey J. McCoy counted (4) on 10 May. Brendan J. Grube also had a flyby singleton at the B.O.P. on 15 May.

Common Tern:- Only 71 Commons were reported this spring, which is well below the TYM of 182. The peak daily tally was (38) that John C. Kendall logged at Miller Beach on 10 May.

Mourning Dove:- An exceptional count of (417) migrating birds was recorded at the B.O.P. 7 April (Brendan J. Grube). This tally is a lakefront record and the state's seventh highest count.

Long-eared Owl:- An impressive (3) were recorded at the B.O.P. site on 8 April (Brendan J. Grube & Brad Bumgardner).

N. Saw-whet Owl:- Following a long dry spell, on 23 March Randy Pals found a bird that apparently wintered in Beverly Shores. This very accessible bird, which was admired by scores of birders, had accumulated an estimated 70 pellets beneath its perch. It lingered through 13 April. Additional details are presented in the introduction.

Common Nighthawk:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best spring flight ever, with 413 nighthawks reported (TYM=53.9). The peak daily tally was (188) that Brendan J. Grube logged at the B.O.P. during the 15 May longshore flight.

Eastern Whip-poor-will:- Most encouragingly, on 18 May Brad Bumgardner, Penny Starin, Matt Kalwasinski, and Alex Forsythe counted (7): two in Dunes S.P. and five at Beverly Shores. This is the lakefront's highest count since (8) were found 22 May 1997.

Rufous Hummingbird:- On 18, 19 and 20 April an adult male visited Kim Harmon's feeder in Hammond. Identifiable photos were taken. This is the lakefront's first record of this western hummer.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:- A daily Indiana record count was set 7 April when Brendan J. Grube counted (346) flying past the B.O.P. This total greatly exceeds the state's previous maximum of (141), which consisted of dead birds found on the beach 16 April 1960, following a nighttime storm over Lake Michigan. During spring migration most Sapsuckers observed on the lakefront are in adult plumage; however, on 20 April Susan R. Bagby and Jay Kendall observed a first-cycle bird, entirely lacking any red, at State Line Woods.

FLYCATCHERS

The spring flycatcher flight was well above normal with an average MI/species of +0.24. Only the Acadian was below average (and only slightly) and Eastern Kingbird was at the top of the list.

Least Flycatcher:- Brendan J. Grube counted (28) in the High Dunes during the 10 May fallout, which constitutes Indiana's second highest daily count.

Eastern Phoebe:- During a 30 March longshore flight, Brendan J. Grube logged (34) birds migrating past the B.O.P. This is a record count for the lakefront and the second highest for the state.

Northern Shrike:- The season's latest report was logged at Miller Beach on 6 April (Michael

Topp). This date constitutes Indiana's sixth latest spring record.

VIREOS

It was a slightly above average spring for the vireos. Feeble White-eyed Vireo numbers seriously depleted this group's mean MI/species, which was reduced to +0.04.

White-eyed Vireo:- The season's total of 5, is the lakefront's lowest spring total since 1999 (TYM=12.4).

Blue-headed Vireo:- A state record daily count was set when Brendan J. Grube tallied (12) during the 10 May fallout in the High Dunes. Brendan also held the previous Indiana maximum, which was ten birds.

Blue Jay:- An Indiana record count of (7264) was recorded at the B.O.P. on 1 May (Brendan J. Grube).

SWALLOWS

The season's numerous daily counts at the B.O.P. led to extraordinarily high spring totals for all swallows. The average MI/species was an astronomical +0.56, and all six species had strongly positive MI values.



What happens to swallows when brutally cold air invades the Dunes? The above birds took shelter in the lee of a roadside curb. The photo shows a group of Barn Swallows that were huddled out of the wind along the south edge of Washington Park at Michigan City Harbor. Cars were whizzing by only three feet from these torpid swallows. KJB took this picture at mid-day on 23 May when the air temperature was 43°F and the wind was north at 25-30 knots.

Cliff Swallow:- A lakefront record count of (144) was logged at the B.O.P. longshore flight count on 9 May (Brendan J. Grube).

WRENS

It was not a good spring for the wrens, as the group's average MI/species was a basement level -0.18 and four species had negative MI values. Sedge Wrens had the poorest showing with only one bird reported (TYM=7).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet:- A tardy migrant in the Hammond Sanctuary 28 May (John C. Kendall & Carolyn Marsh), provided Indiana's second latest spring record.

THRUSHES

Aided by high Eastern Bluebird and American Robin numbers (from large flights at the B.O.P.), the average MI/species was +0.19. Only two thrushes were in the red: Gray-cheeked and Swainson's.

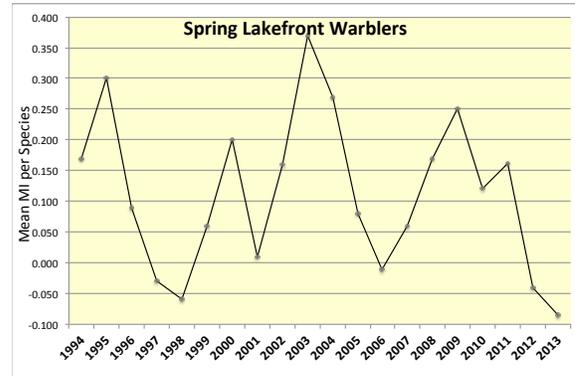
Wood Thrush:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the best spring flight in five years with 74 reported (TYM=55.7). The season's peak tally was (19) that Randy J. Pals and Patrick Krueger logged at Furnessville and State Park Boundary Road on 11 May.

Cedar Waxwing:- Brendan J. Grube logged a wonderful flight of (11,373) at the B.O.P. on 29 May. This tally is Indiana's second largest daily count behind Brendan's 2004 count of 13,800.

WARBLERS

It was a poor spring for the warblers. Of the 35 species reported, 21 had negative MI values. The average MI per species was a dismal -0.09, which is the lowest value since the MI parameter was introduced (see graph). Yellow-breasted Chat, Cerulean Warbler, and Tennessee Warbler staged the feeblest flights. The strongest performers (buoyed by large B.O.P. counts) were Palm and Yellow-rumped.

Tennessee Warbler:- Surprisingly, this normally common warbler was markedly scarce during this spring. Only 25 were reported (TYM=91.5); on a normal year a skillful birder can log more than 25 in a single day.



Orange-crowned Warbler:- During the 10 May fallout Brendan J. Grube tallied (13) individuals in the High Dunes. This is a record spring count for Indiana by a factor of two (TYM=15.3).

Nashville Warbler:- A state record count of (88), was tallied in the high dunes during the 10 May fallout (Brendan J. Grube); it more than doubles Indiana's previous maximum count.

Yellow-rumped Warbler:- The largest of which was the (1967) that Brendan J. Grube logged during the 30 April longshore flight.

Palm Warbler:- Thanks to some fine longshore flight counts a record season was logged this spring with 1160 birds reported (TYM= 380). The peak daily count was 449 at the B.O.P. on 30 April (Brendan J. Grube). The latter tally constitutes Indiana's largest single party count.

Cerulean Warbler:- The season's dismal total of 13 is the lowest since 1994 (TYM=38.2). This spring's largest daily count consisted of (4) that Susan R. Bagby logged in Dunes S.P. on 26 May.

Black and white Warbler:- The (45) that Brendan J. Grube tallied in the High Dunes during the 10 May fallout constitutes a new maximum count for the state.

Yellow-breasted Chat:- The Chat has all but abandoned the lakefront. This spring's only report consisted of (1) that Jeffrey J. McCoy found at West Beach on 17 May (TYM=3.1).



Confusing Spring Warbler: According to the literature spring warblers are decked out in fresh breeding plumage; however, this bedraggled individual apparently missed the memo. KJB photographed this bird in west Beverly Shores on 28 May 2013. Can you identify it? Answer at the end of this report.

Summer Tanager:- A male visited the residence of Derek and Sarah Nimitz at Moraine Nature Preserve on 19 April, to establish a new early date for the Dunes area. Penny Starin logged the previous earliest record (also a male) on 24 April 1992.

SPARROWS

By any measure it was an excellent spring for sparrows. Of the fifteen species reported, only five had negative MI values and the average MI/species was +0.24.

Clay-colored Sparrow:- It was a good spring for this sparrow with 13 reported (TYM=5.0).

Grasshopper Sparrow:- Single migrants, which are rare during the spring flight, occurred at the B.O.P. on 14 May (Brendan J. Grube) and at West Beach on 17 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy)



A distinct highlight of the marvelous spring sparrow flight was a plethora of Clay-colored Sparrows. Thanks to an alert by John C. Kendall, KJB was able to photograph this bird in Forsythe Park on 4 May.

Henslow's Sparrow:- Migrant Henslow's are rare on the lakefront; consequently, the singleton that Brendan J. Grube, John C. Kendall, & Brad Bumgardner found in the grassy meadow south of the B.O.P. on 15 April is noteworthy. Remarkably, (3), including two singing birds, were found at this site on 27 April, suggesting that these migrants had established territories.

Le Conte's Sparrow:- Lakefront birders enjoyed a fine flight with five birds reported (TYM=1.6). The high daily count of two, was logged at both West Beach on 14 April (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and Dunes S.P. the following day (Brendan J. Grube).

Lark Sparrow:- For the seventh consecutive spring Lark Sparrows were reported on the lakefront. This spring's peak count occurred 26 April when Brendan J. Grube's crew at the B.O.P. logged (3), which ties the lakefronts second highest count.



This handsome Lark Sparrow visited the seed pile at the B.O.P. on 26 April. It was one of a record ten birds reported on the lakefront this spring. Photo by John C. Kendall.

White-throated Sparrow:- This normally abundant sparrow was surprisingly scarce throughout the season. Only 399 were reported (TYM=846).

Smith's Longspur:- At the B.O.P. Brendan J. Grube recorded (2) on 30 April and (3) on 1 May. These combined counts constitute the largest Smith's Longspur season total ever recorded on the lakefront (TYM=0.65).

Bobolink:- A male observed during a longshore flight at the B.O.P., provided a record early arrival date for the lakefront (by one day).

Yellow-headed Blackbird:- In recent years this species has become quite difficult to find on the lakefront. Consequently, the male photographed by Matt Kalwasinski at the George Lake wetland on 20 April is noteworthy. A male was also discovered at Grant St. wetland on 4 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy) and Jeff also found two at the latter site on 9 May.

Orchard Oriole:- Lakefront birders enjoyed the strongest spring flight on record with 60 Orchard Orioles reported (TYM=18). The peak daily count of (18) was logged at the B.O.P. on 9 May (Brendan J. Grube).

WINTER FINCHES

Spring of 2013 was an exceptional season for finches. All regular species appeared in above average numbers and unusually high numbers of Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were recorded.

Purple Finch:- Although this finch seemed quite scarce, Brendan J. Grube's counts of (36) on 23 April and (28) on 30 April at the B.O.P., elevated the season total to 118 which is well above the TYM of 64.9.

Red Crossbill:- For the second consecutive spring, Red Crossbills were observed during longshore flights at the B.O.P. This year Jeffrey J. McCoy counted (2) on 4 May and Brendan J. Grube recorded groups ranging from one to nine on six occasions, giving a season total of 37 (TYM=2.3). These reports provided the lakefront's first May records since 1961.

Common Redpoll:- Following last winter's incursion, the season's final report consisted of (3) flying past the B.O.P. on 21 April (Brendan J. Grube).

Pine Siskin:- An enormous, and unprecedented, movement occurred in mid-May when Brendan J. Grube logged (863) on the 14th and a staggering (1612) the following day. The latter count is Indiana's second highest daily tally and exceeds the next largest spring count by more than 1400 Siskins. For the season 3310 Siskins were logged (TYM=228).

Evening Grosbeak:- On 19 April Brendan J. Grube observed (3) at the Engle's feeder in Beverly Shores. This is the lakefront's first April record since 2008. The birds were still present on the 21st (Joan Engle) and at least one lingered until 10 May (Jeffrey J. McCoy). The season's total was 11 (TYM=3.9).

Confusing Spring Warbler: Photos of this bird were sent to several warbler experts for analysis and all agreed that the bird is a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Brad Bumgardner offered the following astute explanation for the bird's appearance, "... I thought at first you might have photographed a recent fledgling. Looking closer, you can clearly see molt limits where the primaries and outer retrices are undergoing molt. The entire bird appears pretty sad looking, perhaps due to the heavy molt, maybe leading to a delayed migration. The molt limits alone should eliminate a juvenile YRWA from consideration. The best molt limits for ageing would be the coverts, but are not visible. However given the unmixed molt going on in the wing and tail, I would hazard this bird as a second year. The lack of black tones would lead me to female.

My guess Second Year Female Yellow-rumped Warbler.”

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.