

## INDIANA DUNES BIRD REPORT: SPRING 2010

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Birds occurring outside the Dunes area are marked by “\*.”

The spring flight of 2010 was generally good for passerines and was really quite superior for two rare warblers: Golden-winged and Connecticut. Among the non-songbirds it was an especially austere spring for terns, gulls, and raptors. A glimmer of encouragement occurred with the shorebirds, as they appeared in good diversity and in the best numbers of the decade.

Southern Lake Michigan enjoyed a warm spring; indeed, Chicago climatologists logged it as the third warmest on record. Precipitation was also above average.

The cold grip of March was fractured on the 30<sup>th</sup>, when balmy temperatures arrived and lingered for more than a week, bringing record warmth to the lakefront on 1 April. The first half of April was some eleven degrees above normal. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the month of April was the third warmest on record, with temperatures averaging 6.8°F above normal. Rainfall was slightly below average.

Pleasantly warm weather continued until the 8<sup>th</sup> of May when the Big May Day Count occurred. On that occasion the temperature failed to reach 50°F and winds gusted in excess of 30 mph, providing wretched birding conditions. Heavy rain swept through the Dunes area during the second week of May. A heat wave that arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> seemed to abruptly terminate spring migration. The month of May was 3°F above normal with more precipitation than average.

Rarities: Eared Grebe, \*Purple Gallinule, Marbled Godwit, Bell's Vireo, and Varied Thrush.

Longshore Flights: It was not a good spring for longshore flights. The season's best event occurred 30 April when a flight of 23 species including 114 N. Rough-winged Swallows, a record 3690 Blue Jays, 39 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and 103 Chimney Swifts, was recorded at the Dunes S.P. green tower site. The Grube Index for this flight was 14.9.

Weirdest Occurrence: Connecticut Warblers, well known for their skulking habits, are rarely seen far from dense ground cover. On 22 May Jeff McCoy flushed a male from thick vegetation at the base of a tree in Forsythe Park's carefully manicured lawns. Oddly, this individual flew up and landed at least 20 feet up in a tree, where it sang several times. This male was initially impossible to find; however, Lynea Hinchman finally spotted him and the entire group enjoyed lengthy looks. It then began actively feeding and flitting about in the tree. Any Connecticut described as flitting about more than 20 feet

above the ground would surely stimulate skeptical gazes from experienced birders; however, John Cassady and Lynea Hinchman were able to document this weirdo with photos.

The table below summarizes the 2010 spring flight by bird groups using the Migration Index (MI- definition appended). Once again values in the table reveal a striking difference between the passerine and non-passerine flights, suggesting that lakefront birders are expending more effort on songbirds than on water birds. It was an especially poor spring for terns, gulls, and raptors.

Group	MI/species	Group	MI/species
Ducks	-0.15	Flycatchers	+0.04
Loons/Grebes	+0.13	Vireos	+0.14
Hérons	+0.06	Swallows	+0.25
Raptors	-0.35	Wrens	+0.06
Shorebirds	+0.07	Thrushes	+0.03
Gulls	-0.48	Warblers	+0.12
Terns	-0.66	Sparrows	+0.04

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## **SPECIES ACCOUNTS**

The following accounts describe birds reported in the Dunes area (a.k.a. the lakefront) during the spring season 2010.

### **DUCKS**

It was not a good spring for lakefront ducks. Of the 24 species reported (Black Scoter was missed), 16 occurred in numbers below their TYMs. The average MI/species was -0.15. Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Lesser Scaup, and American Black Duck made the poorest showings. The strongest flights were staged by Ring-necked Duck and Canvasback.

American Black Duck:- It was a dismal spring for this duck with only (2) reported for the season. On 20 Mar J.K. Cassady saw both of them off Beverly Shores (TYM=17.1).

Canvasback:- This large duck staged a strong flight with 56 reported for the spring (TYM=19.2).

Ring-necked Duck:- Primarily due to good numbers on Striebel and Hitchcock Road ponds, a fine season total of 509 was logged. This is the lakefront's largest spring count since 2001 (TYM=154).

Lesser Scaup:- Frightfully scarce on the lakefront with only 66 reported (TYM=637). This is the lowest spring total since 1987.

Harlequin Duck:- The season's only report consisted of a male seen off Whihala Beach on 22 March (reported by an Illinois birder).

Surf Scoter:- A rarely seen adult male was seen with Greater Scaup at Whiting Park on 27 Mar (S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, L.S. Hinchman, John & Elaine Harley, and KJB). Another male flew past Dunes S.P. with three females on 21 Apr (J.K. Cassady & J.J. McCoy).

White-winged Scoter:- Surprisingly, an adult female appeared at Hitchcock Road Pond (LaPorte Co.) on 20 March (S.R. Bagby, J.K. Cassady, & KJB) and was still present 3 Apr. It is

quite unusual to find scoters away from Lake Michigan.

Black Scoter:- For the first spring since 2007 this scoter was not reported on the lakefront (TYM=2.6).

Long-tailed Duck:- Only one report for the season: B.J. Grube saw a female off Beverly Shores on 13 Mar (TYM = 15.7), which constituted the only report in the state.

Red-breasted Merganser:- The 1229 reported on the lakefront is the lowest spring total since 1996 (TYM=3624).

### **LOONS-GREBES**

It was a good spring for both Red-necked Grebes and Red-throated Loons on the lakefront. In contrast, Common Loon numbers were down dramatically. The average MI/species for this group was a respectable +0.13.

Red-throated Loon:- Though below the last two springs, Red-throated Loon numbers remained well above average. Some 41 were reported this spring, compared to a TYM of 26.6. The peak count was (13) off Dunes S.P. on 2 Apr (J.J. McCoy).

Common Loon:- Only 43 were reported on the lakefront this spring (TYM=281). This is the lakefront's lowest spring tally since 1996.

Pied-billed Grebe:- On 8 May S.R. Bagby and Nancy Reiter found a nest containing (2) eggs at Striebel Pond. On 11 May Bagby observed (4) eggs in the nest.

Eared Grebe:- Jamie Claus found (1) at Michigan City Harbor on 30 Mar.

Red-necked Grebe:- Two were seen swimming and flying together off Dunes S.P. on 27 Mar (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, B.J. Grube, L.S. Hinchman, R.J. Pals, & KJB). The TYM for this grebe is 0.3.

Double-crested Cormorant:- J.S. Castrale and his DNR team counted 2429 nests ("mostly eggs, some chicks") at steel companies on the East Chicago lakefront on 18 May.

American White Pelican:- C.A. Marsh reported (1) on Wolf Lake (near Forsythe Park) on 8 May.

## HERONS

Despite an exceptionally poor spring for Green Herons (see below), this group fared reasonably well with an average MI/species of +0.06. This result is primarily due to spectacular nesting reports compiled by the J.S. Castrale crew.

American Bittern:- Singletons were observed in e. Beverly Shores (calling) on 30 Apr (J.K. Cassady & J.J. McCoy) and at the Dunes S.P. green tower site (flyby) on 4 May (J.K. Cassady).

Least Bittern:- On 22 May Kevin Nevers and Tom Beeke (from Michigan) reported (3) calling simultaneously in the Beverly Shores marsh near the west end of Beverly Drive. Michael Topp added two more at the Cline Avenue Marsh on 29 May. This is the lakefront's all-time largest spring count (TYM=1.2).

Great Egret:- J.S. Castrale's 18 May survey of the East Chicago lakefront steel mills yielded an impressive count of 137 nests.

Little Blue Heron:- Two adults were seen flying in e. Beverly Shores on 10 Apr (L.S. Hinchman). This is the lakefront's third earliest record.

Cattle Egret:- The spring's only report occurred at the Cline Avenue Marsh, Highland, on 26 May (C.A. Marsh).

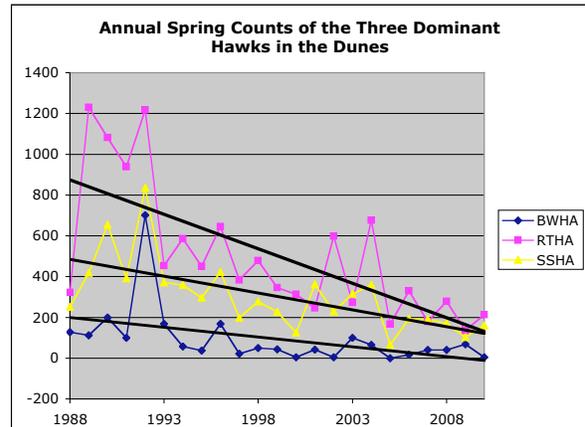
Green Heron:- The season total of 19 is the lakefront's lowest spring value since 1995 (TYM=34.4).

Black-crowned Night-Heron:- On the 18 May survey of the East Chicago lakefront rookeries, J.S. Castrale reported (127) nests, most contained eggs, but a few had chicks.

## DIURNAL RAPTORS

Since 2004 the spring hawk flight numbers have consistently fallen below the current TYM, which is 1234 birds per season. The 2010 flight was no exception, as the season count was 635 raptors (see below table). For the 2010 season some eight observers logged 44.8 hours on 21 days.

For two decades the trends of the Dunes area's three most common raptors (Broad-winged, Red-tailed, and Sharp-shinned) have been uniformly downward (see below chart). These three hawks comprise about 70% of all hawks observed in the Dunes spring hawk flights.



Concerned by these downward trends, KJB searched the web and finally located long-term (1987-2007) spring count data from Whitefish Point, MI, which lies almost due north of the Indiana Dunes. Whitefish annual spring counts are as follows:

Red-tailed Hawk- Annual counts have been cyclical with the most recent peak occurring in 1998. The Whitefish Point data do not show the consistent post-1992 decline observed in the Dunes.

Sharp-shinned Hawk- As has occurred in Dunes, the Whitefish Point trend for the Sharpie has been uniformly downward since 1989.

Broad-winged Hawk- Whitefish Point spring counts have increased slightly over the past two decades. In contrast, Dunes area counts have declined since 1992.

The comparison with Whitefish Point spring counts suggests that, except for the Sharpie, the Dunes area's declining spring raptor counts results from factors other than a population decline. A possible explanation is that our hawks have changed their spring migration path.

Mississippi Kite:- Jack and Jason Swelstad obtained identifiable photos of an adult flying over Dunes S.P. on 9 May. It is possible that two

kites were present. This is the sixth lakefront record and the third for the State Park.

Merlin:- It was an average spring flight for the lakefront with six birds reported (TYM=6.1).

**SUMMARY**  
**2010 DUNES HAWK-WATCHES**  
**09 March – 04 May**  
**20-year Mean inside “( )”**

Total	Species	Total	Species
80	Turkey Vulture (909)	214	Red-tailed (445)
7	Osprey (12)	0	Rough-legged (7)
7	Bald Eagle (4)	27	Buteo sp. (41)
15	N. Harriers (65)	0	Golden Eagle (1)
160	Sharp-shinned (282)	37	Am. Kestrel (65)
33	Cooper's (46)	6	Merlin (4)
0	N. Goshawk (1)	7	Peregrine (3)
4	Accipiter sp. (8)	1	Falcon sp. (2)
32	Red-shouldered (62)	0	Hawk sp. (10)
5	Broad-winged (87)	635	<b>TOTAL (1234)</b>

Major contributors to this year's total included: S.R. Bagby, Brad Bumgardner, J.K. Cassady, B.J. Grube, P.B. Grube, John Kendall, R.J. Pals, and KJB.

Sora:- Buoyed by a count of (11) at Cowles Bog on 3 May (Brad Bumgardner), the season total of 92 is the lakefront's largest spring count since 1997.

**\*Purple Gallinule**:- One or two frequented David Albin's backyard in LaPorte from 6 May through end of the period. This beauty was just outside the Dunes area by about five miles (as the gallinule flies). Based on difference in size the homeowner had long suspected that two birds were present; however, it was not until 3 June that Dave observed both birds simultaneously. The last sighting was on 7 June (Dave Albin).

Common Moorhen:- J.K. Cassady identified (1) in w. Beverly Shores on 17 Apr to provide the lakefront's ninth earliest record; (2) were found at the Grant St. Wetland (Gary) on 12 May (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, & KJB); and (2) additional birds were seen at the Cline Avenue Marsh (Highland) on 8 and 29 May (Michael Topp).

**SHOREBIRDS**

The lakefront experienced the best spring shorebird flight since 2000. The average MI/species was +0.07. The biggest hit came from absence of the Ruddy Turnstone (see below). Other scarce shorebirds included the Willet, Sanderling, and Snipe. The best numbers were reported for Long-billed Dowitcher, Solitary Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope.

American Golden-Plover:- A thunderstorm dropped an impressive flock of (45) into McCool Basin on 7 May (J.C. Kendall). This is the fourth largest count ever recorded on the lakefront. For the season 53 were reported (TYM=12.9), which is the lakefront's best spring total in a decade.

American Avocet:- An alternate-plumed female landed on the Dunes S.P. beach near the green tower site on 21 Apr (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, & KJB). This is the lakefront's second earliest arrival date.

Solitary Sandpiper:- A Solitary Sandpiper bonanza developed when a recently constructed ditch drained Brummitt Road Pond. On 30 Apr R.J. Pals and Patrick Krueger counted a lakefront record of (123) on the resulting mudflat. The lakefront's previous maximum tally was 100 recorded by H.L. Stoddard in 1920. The Pals-Krueger total is also the third largest count for the state. For the season 344 were tallied, which far exceeds the TYM of 50.

Willet:- Only one lakefront report. On 6 May S.R. Bagby found (1) on the Michigan City Harbor beach (TYM= 8.3).

Marbled Godwit:- On 14 May J.C. Kendall observed (1) in a mixed flock of smaller shorebirds flying over a flooded field pond in n. Porter Co. This is the first May record for the lakefront in eight years.

Ruddy Turnstone:- For the first spring since 1977, Turnstones were not reported on the lakefront (TYM=9.1).

Sanderling:- A feeble flight with only two reported, both by J.J. McCoy at Miller Beach on 15 May (TYM=12.7).

White-rumped Sandpiper:- An early arrival at McCool Basin (Porter Co.) on 5 May (J.C. Kendall), provided the lakefront's second earliest record. The bird was still present the following day (KJB).



This White-rumped Sandpiper was discovered by J.C. Kendall at McCool Basin on 5 May and photographed by K.J. Brock the following day.

Stilt Sandpiper:- A flock of (3) flew past the Dunes S.P. green tower site on 4 May (J.K. Cassady). In addition, a flock of (7) alternate plumed birds were at the Porter Co. 450W pond on 12 May (J.C. Kendall).

Long-billed Dowitcher:- Four alternate-plumed birds were at McCool Basin on 4 May (J.K. Cassady, J.C. Kendall, & KJB). For the season an unprecedented ten birds were reported (TYM=1.8).

Wilson's Snipe:- For the sixth consecutive year the lakefront's spring Snipe tally fell below the TYM of 114. This year only 25 were reported.

Wilson's Phalarope:- On 5 May a flock of (5), two males and three females (all in alternate plumage) were seen in a field pond on CR450W, in n. Porter Co. (J.C. Kendall). Another was at nearby McCool Basin on the same day (J.J. McCoy & J.C. Kendall). The season total of 10, constitutes the lakefront's best spring flight since 1984.

## GULLS

It was a very poor spring for gulls on the lakefront. The average MI/species was a basement-level -0.48. Among the nine species that are fairly regular the Lesser Black-backed and Laughing were not reported, the Bonaparte's occurred in the lowest numbers in years, and the Herring count was minuscule. The only bright spots were the appearance of a Franklin's and a near record seasonal Glaucous count.

Bonaparte's Gull:- Amazingly, only three were reported on the lakefront all season (TYM=399). This is the lakefront's lowest spring total since 1977.

Laughing Gull:- For the third spring in the last five years, the Laughing Gull was not reported on the lakefront (TYM=1.9). This gull is becoming quite rare on the lakefront.

Franklin's Gull:- On 12 May J.C. Kendall photographed (1) in a northern Porter Co. field pond.

Iceland Gull:- A fine adult was photographed at Whihala Beach on 27 Mar (J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, L.S. Hinchman, John & Elaine Harley, and KJB).



Adult Iceland Gull at Whihala Beach, in Whiting on 27 March. This fine bird, or a very similar one, spent most of the winter on the Lake County lakefront. Photo by L.S. Hinchman.

Glaucous Gull:- A season total of 22 birds was the best spring count since 23 were tallied in 1997 (TYM=10.6). The season maximum of (5) was recorded along the Lake Co. lakefront on both 17 and 19 Mar (Michael Topp).

Lesser Black-backed Gull:- Not reported on the lakefront for the first spring since 2006 (TYM=3.0).

## **TERNs**

It was a terrible spring for terns on the lakefront. All four species had negative MI values and the average MI/species was a disturbingly low -0.66.

Caspian Tern:- A well below average flight with only 577 reported (TYM=929).

Common Tern:- Disturbingly scarce with only a single flock of 12 reported by J.J. McCoy on 12 May at Whiting Park (TYM=187).

Forster's Tern:- Only 16 were reported this spring (TYM=53.2).

Black Tern:- As has occurred in most of the recent springs, this small tern was not reported on the lakefront (TYM=2.85).

Monk Parakeet:- Two were seen carrying nesting materials on E. 112<sup>th</sup> St. near the Illinois state line in Hammond on 1 May (J.J. McCoy et al.).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo:- The seven reported on the lakefront this spring doubles the TYM of 3.5.

Common Nighthawk:- Though still below the TYM (of 40.7), the 36 reported this spring is the largest lakefront total since spring 2002. The peak tally was (19) that Jean Rudd observed in west Beverly Shores on 23 May.

Whip-poor-will:- Remarkably, two were found in the traps on 1 May. J.J. McCoy discovered singletons at the Hammond Sanctuary and at Whihala Beach. The latter bird was a rufous morph.



Rufous morph Whip-poor-will at Whihala Beach on 1 May. Photo by Michael Topp.

Barred Owl:- Unusually prevalent this spring. The season total of 29 is an all-time high for the lakefront (TYM=13.1). The peak count was (4), two on each side of the river, calling in the Heron Rookery 3 Apr (S.R. Bagby, L.S. Hinchman, and R.J. Pals).

Long-eared Owl:- One was seen in the Hammond Sanctuary 31 Mar (C.A. Marsh).

Northern Saw-whet Owl:- Persistence finally paid off for R.J. Pals. Following numerous unsuccessful trips to the Tremont pinery he finally scored on 13 Mar. This bird, or a similar one, lingered in the pinery for two weeks and was seen by many observers. In addition Brad Bumgardner banded two Saw-whets in Dunes S.P. (23 and 27 Mar).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird:- Surprisingly scarce with only 25 reported for the season. This is the lakefront's lowest spring total since 2001.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:- A late migrant flew over longshore flight counters at Dunes S.P. green tower on 25 May (KJB & J.K. Cassady). This is the state's ninth latest spring date and the fifth latest for the lakefront.

## **FLYCATCHERS**

Overall it was a slightly better than normal spring for flycatchers, with an average MI/species of +0.04. The numbers of several species (e.g., Yellow-bellied, Olive-sided, and Eastern

Kingbird) were well below normal. However, these low values were more than compensated for by fine Willow and Alder flycatchers counts.

Olive-sided Flycatcher:- There was a weak flight on the lakefront with only two birds reported (TYM=3.5).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:- Disturbingly scarce with only six reported on the lakefront (TYM=13.5). This is the lakefront's lowest spring count since 1998.

Alder Flycatcher:- The eleven reported this spring is well above normal (TYM=7.1).

Willow Flycatcher:- One in the Hammond Sanctuary on 5 May (J.J. McCoy) established a new early arrival date for the lakefront. For the season some 57 were reported, a figure well above the TYM of 28.2.

Eastern Kingbird:- The 156 reported this year constitutes the lowest spring total since 2001 (TYM=240). The peak count (58) occurred during a 4 May longshore flight at the Dunes S.P. green tower site (J.K. Cassady, J.C. Kendall, and KJB).

## **VIREOS**

Remarkably, for the ninth consecutive year, spring vireo numbers were above normal. The 2010 average MI/species was +0.14. All six regular species occurred in numbers above their TYMs, and the rarely seen Bell's Vireo was a bonus.

Bell's Vireo:- For the second consecutive year this elusive vireo appeared in the Dunes. On 15 May B.J. Grube discovered (1) in the Dunes S.P. Furnessville Blowout.

## **SWALLOWS**

It was a good spring for swallows with all six species occurring in numbers above their TYMs. The average MI/species for the group was a very respectable +0.25.

Blue Jay:- The season's best day occurred 30 Apr at Dunes S.P., when an Indiana record 3690 were counted during a 4.5 hour longshore flight (J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, and KJB).

Golden-crowned Kinglet:- During a 2 Apr longshore flight J.J. McCoy counted (17) Golden-crowned Kinglets among the migrants.

## **WRENS**

Despite a low Winter Wren count, the average MI/species for this group was +0.06.

Carolina Wren:- This year's spring total of ten, is the lowest value in eight years (TYM=11.1).

Winter Wren:- Only six were reported this spring, which is the lowest total since 2005 (TYM=11.9).

Marsh Wren:- It was a good spring for this wren with 46 reported (TYM=25.7). The peak count of (8) was recorded on two occasions: 8 May at the Cline Avenue Marsh, Highland (Michael Topp) and on 12 May at the Grant Street wetland, Gary (J.J. McCoy and J.K. Cassady).

## **THRUSHES**

It was a routine spring for thrushes, with an average MI/species of +0.03. Only two species, Swainson's and Hermit, had negative MI values.

Veery:- An early migrant, seen at Cowles Bog on 27 Apr (Brad Bumgardner), tied the lakefront's fifth earliest arrival date.

Swainson's Thrush:- Only 68 were tallied this spring (TYM=89.6). The season's peak daily count was (12) at Dunes S.P. on 5 May (Brad Bumgardner).

Hermit Thrush:- The 46 reported for the season marks the lowest spring total since 2005 (TYM=65.2). The maximum daily count was (16) in the Lake Co. traps on 24 Apr (Michael Topp).

Varied Thrush:- A male was discovered at a west Beverly Shores feeder on 3 Mar (B.J. Grube). It was last reported on 7 Mar (P.B. & Nila Grube, and Bob Huguenard). This is the lakefront's first spring record since 1988.

American Pipit:- Primarily due to the weak longshore flight season, only 13, the lowest number since 2001, were reported this spring.

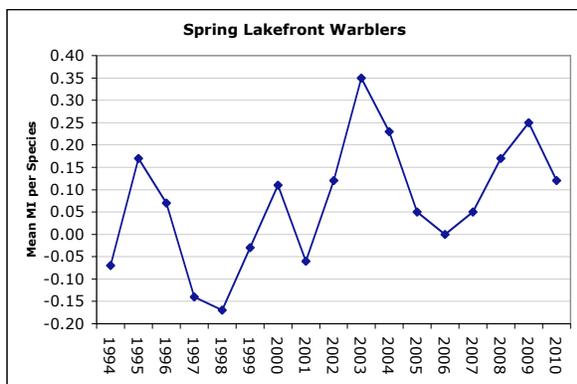
Cedar Waxwing:- Spring numbers generally come from longshore flight counts, which were not very productive this year. Only 539 were reported this year, a value dwarfed by the TYM of 2841.

## WARBLERS

The spring of 2010 was highlighted by fine Golden-winged and Connecticut Warbler flights, plus a strong supporting cast. The average MI/species was +0.12, which is down somewhat from last year's value (see below graph). Among the 36 species reported only nine had negative MI values and most of these were just slightly below normal. The overwhelming birder consensus was, "2010 brought an exceptionally enjoyable spring warbler flight." Two examples are presented below.

On 5 May a fine wave descended on Dunes S.P. yielding 27 warbler species and excellent numbers; the day's list included Golden-winged (3), Orange-crowned, Black-throated Blue, and Kentucky (Brad Bumgardner et al.).

On 15 May J.K. Cassady, S.R. Bagby, L.S. Hinchman, John Kaehr, and KJB recorded 33 warbler species along the lakefront. All of Indiana's 36 regular warblers, except Kentucky, Worm-eating, and Chat, were logged for the day.



Golden-winged Warbler:- Counts of (4) in Dunes S.P. on 11 May (Brad Bumgardner and Landon Neuman) and in the Lake Co. traps the following day (J.K. Cassady et al.) represented the best daily totals in six years. For the season lakefront birders experienced the best spring flight on record with a total of 25 birds. The previous maximum was 20 in 2003.

Black-throated Green Warbler:- A fine tally of (27) in Dunes S.P. on 11 May (Brad Bumgardner and Landon Neumann), tied the lakefront's second highest daily count.

Prairie Warbler:- On 26 May Nila and Pete Grube found a singing bird in the blowout adjacent to the Portage Lakefront Park pavilion. Jeff McCoy had predicted that this location would yield Prairie Warbler and this is the first.

Prothonotary Warbler:- A lone migrant flew past the Dunes S.P. green tower site on 1 May (Brad Bumgardner & John Kaehr).

Worm-eating Warbler:- The lakefront's seventh earliest record was discovered in the State Line Woods on 1 May (J.C. Kendall, Michael Topp, et al.).

Louisiana Waterthrush:- On 20 Apr Brad Bumgardner birded the Dunes S.P. trail 2-10 loop and logged (8) Louisiana Waterthrush and later found (2) more in the Heron Rookery, to establish a new high daily count for the Dunes area.

Kentucky Warbler:- Eric Troske identified (1) in Dunes S.P. on 2 May, providing the lakefront's fourth earliest arrival date.

Connecticut Warbler:- It was an exceptional spring for this normally difficult to find warbler. A new early arrival date for the lakefront was set 6 May when Michael Topp discovered a singing bird in Dunes S.P. The previous early record occurred 8 May 1985 at Jackson Moraine Preserve. A dozen Connecticut Warblers were reported this season, which is the lakefront's second highest spring total (behind the 14 reported in 2000).

Canada Warbler:- A 22 May count of (22) at various lakefront sites (J.K. Cassady, L.S. Hinchman, J.J. McCoy, & KJB), tied Indiana's all-time high count.

Wilson's Warbler:- On 5 May J.J. McCoy identified an early migrant in Dunes S.P., tying the fifth earliest record for the lakefront.

Yellow-breasted Chat:- Only (1) was reported on the lakefront this spring, which is the lowest

number in eight years (TYM=3.6). This species is becoming quite rare on the lakefront.

**Summer Tanager:-** A yellow-mottled first-cycle male, found (and photographed) at Forsythe Park on 1 May (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, L.S. Hinchman, John Kaehr, J.C. Kendall, & R.J. Pals), tied the lakefront's sixth earliest arrival date. Another first-cycle male briefly landed at the Dunes S.P. green tower site during a 25 May longshore flight watch (KJB & J.K. Cassady).



First-cycle male Summer Tanager at Forsythe Park on 1 May. This is one of three first-cycle birds reported on the lakefront this spring. Photo by J.C. Kendall.

## SPARROWS

The sparrow flight was near average with a mean MI/species of +0.04. Of the five species with negative MI values, only the Le Conte's was down significantly.

**Chipping Sparrow:-** A new high lakefront count of (175) was recorded during a longshore flight at the Dunes S.P. green tower site 25 Apr (B.J. Grube). The previous maximum was 125 at this same location in 2009.

**Clay-colored Sparrow:-** Michael Topp found (2) at the Hammond Marina on 30 Apr and J.C. Kendall identified one at that location on 7 May. Another occurred at this location 12 May (J.J. McCoy, J.K. Cassady, & KJB) and J.J. McCoy also found (1) in a vacant Hammond lot on 12 May.

**Lark Sparrow:-** For the fourth consecutive spring, this handsome sparrow was reported on the lakefront. One was seen at the Dunes S.P. green tower site on 1 May (J.J. McCoy).

**Henslow's Sparrow:-** Thanks to the two singing birds that S.R. Bagby found at Purdue North Central on 14 May, the lakefront was not skunked this spring (TYM=0.7).

**Le Conte's Sparrow:-** J.J. McCoy found the lakefront's only spring Le Conte's at Whihala Beach on 1 May (TYM=1.3).

**Dark-eyed Junco:-** The season's last report occurred 15 May when Michael Topp observed (1) at his Highland feeder.

**Smith's Longspur:-** Two migrants flew over long shore flight watchers at the Dunes S.P. green tower site on 4 May (J.K. Cassady & J.C. Kendall). This is only the eleventh lakefront record of this difficult to find species.

**Blue Grosbeak:-** A first record for the Hammond Sanctuary was logged 1 May when a female was identified by KJB, J.K. Cassady, J.C. Kendall,



Female Blue Grosbeak at the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary on 1 May. This is the Sanctuary's first record of this species. Photo by KJB.

L.S. Hinchman, J.J. McCoy, John Kaehr, R.J. Pals, & Michael Topp).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:-** On 1 May a female was observed in a Red-winged Blackbird flock at the Grant St. wetland in Gary (L.S. Hinchman, J.K. Cassady, J.J. McCoy, R.J. Pals, & KJB).

**Baltimore Oriole:-** Despite a marvelous effort by S.R. Bagby, the lakefront's oriole count of 178 was the lowest since 1999 (TYM=251). This feeble result likely originated from unusually poor numbers in the spring longshore flights. The largest count occurred during a 4 May longshore flight at Dunes S.P. when (73) were counted (J.K.

Cassady, J.C. Kendall, & KJB). On most years the maximum spring count is in the three-digit range.

longshore flight at Dunes S.P. (B.J. Grube).

Pine Siskin:- Unusually scarce; only seven were reported on the lakefront this spring (TYM=47.2).

## WINTER FINCHES

Purple Finch:- Average numbers were reported in the Dunes area. The maximum daily tally consisted of (16) observed during a 25 Apr

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