

INDIANA DUNES/LAKEFRONT: SUMMER REPORT 2012

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Last spring's unusually hot weather continued throughout the summer season. In Chicago, June averaged 5°F above normal and July was the third warmest on record. Indeed, the Fourth of July week brought several record-breaking 103°F days.

Lakefront totals for many woodland species were well below those of recent years, suggesting that the heat kept most birders indoors throughout the summer. The intrepid Susan R. Bagby provided a major exception to this rule, as she supplied a majority of this summer's woodland species records.

Summer 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. Species marked by "*" were observed outside the lakefront area.

Acknowledgement

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Wood Duck:- The (232) tallied by Matt Kalwasinski on 1 July (212 at the Grant St wetland, plus 12 at Cline Ave marsh, and 8 at Chase St wetland), constitutes the lakefront's second highest daily count.

Redhead:- Matt Kalwasinski identified a male at Grant Street Wetland on 13 June, which provided the lakefront's first June record since 1996. This individual was still present on 7 July (John K. Cassady) and represents the lakefront's first summer record in five years.

Red-breasted Merganser:- Two juveniles, judged to be at least a month old, were seen in the Indiana waters of Wolf Lake on 8 July (Carolyn A. Marsh). If these birds actually hatched in Indiana, this would constitute a first breeding record for the state; however, Marsh pointed out that on one occasion the birds were seen at the south end of the lake where a short channel connects Indiana portions of Wolf Lake with Illinois, leaving open the possibility that the birds might have actually hatched outside Indiana. Photos were obtained on 8 & 9 July (the Gyllenhaal brothers and Matt Kalwasinski).

Pied-billed Grebe:- A count of (10) juveniles at Grant Street Wetland on 7 July (John K. Cassady

et al.), indicated a successful breeding season at that location.

American White Pelican:- One was seen on Wolf Lake (adjacent to Forsythe Park) on both 17 and 21 July (Matt Kalwasinski et al.).

Neotropic Cormorant:- Presumably, the same bird that was seen near the Illinois state line in April, reappeared on 7 June near the Hammond Marina (Amar Ayyash).

Great Egret:- On 1 July Matt Kalwasinski set a record lakefront count with (321) at three locations (311 at Grant Street Wetland, 9 at Chase Street Wetland, and one at Cline Avenue Marsh). Matt also logged an impressive (317) at Grant Street Wetland on 6 July. The previous lakefront maximum was 203 on 11 August 2009.

Snowy Egret:- It was a good summer for this handsome wader. On the afternoon of 1 July Edward M. Hopkins counted (2) at Grant Street Wetland and two more were seen on Wolf Lake 24 July (John K. Cassady & KJB).

Little Blue Heron:- A first cycle bird was at Grant Street Wetland on 8 June (Michael Topp) and a juvenile was seen at that location on 1 July (Matt Kalwasinski) and 28 July (John K. Cassady & KJB).

Glossy Ibis:- The lakefront's first record was nailed down at the Grant Street wetland on 7 June (Matt Kalwasinski, Amanda Kalwasinski, Penny

Starin, Brad Bumgardner, & Bob Zaremba). The bird was last reported on 9 June (Leland Shaum et al.). Brad Bumgardner obtained an identifiable photo.



This breeding-plumed Glossy Ibis, at the Grant Street Wetland on 7 June, provided the lakefront's first record of this species. It was discovered by Matt Kalwasinski and subsequently seen by more than a dozen observers during its three day visit. Photo by Brad Bumgardner.

Mississippi Kite:- John K. Cassady identified a flying bird from I-94 (Porter Co) near the Indiana 49 exit on 10 July. This is the lakefront's first summer record since 2007. More significantly, the LaPorte Co kites that Lynea S. Hinchman reported last summer (slightly outside the Dunes area), returned this year. On 18 July (1) flew over and (2) more were heard calling nearby (Lynea S. Hinchman).

Common Gallinule:- This species successfully bred at Grant Street Wetland, as adults plus (6) downy chicks were seen there on 10 July (John K. Cassady & KJB) and (5) downy chicks were seen on 15 July (Matt Kalwasinski).

SHOREBIRDS

The Lakefront's shorebird flight got off on a good footing with 24 species reported during the summer. Things slowed markedly in July as the drought eliminated habitat at McCool Basin. The silver lining however, was that lower water levels at Hitchcock Road Pond provided surprisingly good habitat.

American Golden-Plover:- On 5 July a worn bird in non-breeding plumage landed on the sandbar in the Miller Beach impoundment (John K.

Cassady). This is Indiana's fifth record of summer yearlings.

Piping Plover:- A banded juvenile was photographed at Miller Beach on 31 July (John K. Cassady and KJB).



This young Piping Plover showed up at Miller Beach on the eleventh-hour of the summer season: 31 July. According to Alice Van Zoeren the leg band colors indicate that this chick hatched at Port Island (north shore of Lake Michigan) on the Upper Peninsula. Photo by John K. Cassady.

American Avocet:- See below table (TYM=3.0).

Summer 2012 Avocet Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	14-Jul	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady
3	14-Jul	Michigan City Harbor	John K. Cassady

Willet:- See below table. (TYM=78.5)

Summer 2012 Willet Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
6	3-Jul	Miller Beach	Leroy Miller
7	3-Jul	Michigan City Harbor	Leroy Miller
2	6-Jul	Miller Beach	Michael Topp
1	7-Jul	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady
1	14-Jul	Miller Beach	KJB
4	14-Jul	Michigan City Harbor	John K. Cassady
1	21-Jul	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady
3	31-Jul	Miller Beach	KJB

Whimbrel:- See below table (TYM=3.8)

Summer 2012 Whimbrel Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	14-Jul	Miller Beach	KJB
1	24-Jul	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady

Marbled Godwit:- See below table (TYM=5.1)

Summer 2012 Marbled Godwit Records			
No	Date	Location	Observer
1	7-Jul	Miller Beach	John K. Cassady
1	14-Jul	Michigan City Harbor	John K. Cassady

Ruddy Turnstone:- On 25 July John K. Cassady identified a first-cycle (year-old) bird on the impoundment mudflat at Miller Beach. This is the first report of this plumage in the state.

White-rumped Sandpiper:- Five were seen in flight at Grant Street Wetland on 9 June (Leland Shaum et al.). This the second latest spring record for the lakefront. The latest was recorded 10 June 1952.

Baird's Sandpiper:- Two adults were identified at Hitchcock Road Pond on 31 July (John K. Cassady & KJB).

Stilt Sandpiper:- An alternate plumed adult briefly landed in the USX impoundment at Miller Beach on 5 July (John K. Cassady). This is Indiana's third earliest fall migrant.

Laughing Gull:- Amar Ayyash photographed a bird off Calumet Park, IL on 28 July. The bird ultimately flew eastward toward the Hammond Marina in Indiana.

Caspian Tern:- It was another fine summer on the lakefront for this elegant bird. For the season some 814 were reported (TYM=244.8). The peak count was (105, including 8 juvs) at Miller Beach on 21 July (John K. Cassady).

Common Tern:- On the morning of 21 July an immature bird, in the rarely seen first- or second-cycle plumage (see photo), spent the morning on Miller Beach (Susan R. Bagby, John K. Cassady, Michael Topp, & KJB). The bird was banded, but despite Michael's diligent efforts to digiscope the band, it proved impossible to read.



This immature Common Tern was at Miller Beach 21 July. It was superficially similar to a juvenile, but had many worn feathers and freshly molted primaries. Most birds of this age remain on the wintering grounds so this plumage is rarely seen in Indiana. Note the unusually bold carpal bar (leading edge of the wing) and recently molted outer seven primaries. The unusually dark carpal bar suggests a year-old bird; however, orange on the base of the bill and freshly molted outer primaries are more consistent with a two-year old bird. Photo by KJB.

Black-billed Cuckoo:- Extremely scarce with only 5 birds reported in the entire state this summer (STYM=11.2). One of these five was seen in the Hammond Sanctuary on 24 July (Carolyn A. Marsh).

Eastern Whip-poor-will:- The Dunes nightjar population appears to be on the upswing, as the 10 birds tallied this season constitutes the highest summer count in more than three decades.

Alder Flycatcher:- A singing bird was in the Beverly Shores Great Marsh on 28 July (John K. Cassady). As Alders had not been heard on the lakefront since 1 June, this individual appears to have been a fall migrant.

Willow Flycatcher:- On 18 July John K. Cassady counted (23) vocal birds at Beverly Shores (plus one at Chase Street wetland). This is the lakefront's 8th largest count.

Yellow-throated Vireo:- Only 13 birds were reported on the lakefront this summer, which is the lowest count in six years.

Red-eyed Vireo:- The 40 birds reported this summer constitute the lowest total since 1988 (TYM=117.2). The season's largest count was

(18) in the Furnessville Woods on 3 June (Susan R. Bagby).

Northern Mockingbird:- This rare lakefront species apparently nested in the Miller Beach area, as birds were observed several times and on 13 July Michael Topp found two adults and a juvenile near the USX breakwall.

Yellow Warbler:- At Miller Beach a migrant was observed flying in off Lake Michigan on the mid-summer date of 5 July (John K. Cassady).

Northern Parula:- Brad Bumgardner found a singing bird in Dunes State Park on 7 June.

Black-and-white Warbler:- Not reported in the Dunes area for the first summer since 2005 (TYM=3.1).

Prothonotary Warbler:- On 3 June Susan R. Bagby observed a singing male along with a female seen carrying food into a nest cavity, in Furnessville Woods. In Dunes State Park four young in the foot bridge nest fledged on 14 June (Penny Starin).

Canada Warbler:- For the second consecutive summer this warbler was not reported anywhere in the state (STYM=4.4).

Grasshopper Sparrow:- On 18 July John K. Cassady and KJB obtained a long look at a juvenile along the Grant Street Wetland dike. This is the lakefront's first summer record since 1999.

Blue Grosbeak:- The Miller Beach birds returned this summer for the eighth consecutive year. John K. Cassady first reported the pair on 5 July.



Male Blue Grosbeak at Miller Beach on 21 July. In concert with a broad northward expansion across the Midwest, this species first appeared here in 2004, and has subsequently occurred every summer. During the initial discovery years the birds could be heard from the Lake Street parking lot; however, in recent years they have moved closer to the U.S. Steel plant. Photo by Michael Topp.

Bobolink:- An alternate male at Miller Beach on 29 June (Michael Topp), provided the lakefront's first summer record in three years.

Orchard Oriole:- The lakefront experienced an above average summer with 8 birds reported (TYM=2.9). On 24 July a handsome first-cycle male, whose breast was decorated with a flashy cinnamon stripe down the center, provided the lakefront's third latest fall record (John C. Kendall & KJB). Surprisingly, an adult male was seen in west Beverly Shores the following day (John K. Cassady).