

American goshawk

Astur atricapillus

FEATURES

The northern goshawk averages 20 to 26 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This large hawk has a long tail and rounded wings. Its crown and cheek feathers are gray-black. A white stripe is present over the eye. The back and wing feathers are gray, while the feathers on the lower side of the body are white with thin bars. The tail has faint bands. An immature goshawk has brown feathers on the upper body, zigzag bands on the tail, a white stripe over the eye and a white lower side with brown streaks.

BEHAVIORS

The northern goshawk is an occasional migrant and winter resident in northern Illinois. It tends to migrate into Illinois on a regular basis that coincides with declining prey further north. It may be seen in forests, open areas and city parks. This bird prefers to roost in conifer trees. In the fall, it begins arriving in September. Spring migration mostly occurs in March and April. The goshawk flies just above treetop level when migrating. It nests as close to Illinois as Wisconsin but generally travels much further north. The nest composed of sticks is built in a tall tree, and the same nest may be used in more than one year. Three or four, pale blue or dull white eggs are deposited by the female, and she does most of the incubation over the 30-day incubation period. The northern goshawk eats rabbits, pheasants, waterfowl and other birds. Its call is “kak, kak, kak” or “kuk, kuk, kuk.”

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



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juvenile with prey



adult

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge