

downy woodpecker

Dryobates pubescens

FEATURES

At six and one-half inches in length, the downy woodpecker is the smallest woodpecker in Illinois. Its bill is small, too. It has white back feathers, white belly feathers, white feather stripes on the head and white spots on the wings. Other areas of the body have black feathers except for a small, red patch on the back of the male's head.

BEHAVIORS

The downy woodpecker is a common, permanent resident statewide in Illinois. Nesting takes place from March through June. The nest is placed in a hole in a live or dead tree or stump or in fence posts at a height of from three to 50 feet above the ground. It often selects a willow or elm in which to nest but will use other trees if they are dead or have dead limbs. Both the male and the female excavate the nest cavity, but the female does most of the work. Three to six white eggs are laid by the female. The male and female alternate incubation duties during the day, but the male incubates at night. The incubation period lasts 12 days. The downy woodpecker lives in woodlands, woodland edges, weed patches, cornfields and orchards. Its song is a fast series of notes that descend in pitch. The call is "pick." It eats insects, corn and poison ivy berries.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Piciformes
Family: Picidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE





adult male



female

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands;
upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none