

# eastern kingbird

## *Tyrannus tyrannus*

### FEATURES

The eastern kingbird averages about eight inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its back, wings and tail are black. The upper chest is gray while the lower chest is white. The white band at the tip of the tail is a good field mark for this species. A red patch is present on the top of the head, but it is rarely seen. The bill is somewhat flattened and broad with tiny bristles at the end. The legs are very short. Both male and female are similar in appearance.

### BEHAVIORS

The eastern kingbird is a common migrant and summer resident throughout Illinois. It lives in open and semi-open areas, especially pastures where its “dzee-dzee-dzee” song may be heard. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. The breeding season occurs from May through July. The nest is built at the end of a tree branch, often over water, or in a fence post or stump. Both the male and female work to construct the bulky nest of grasses and mosses. The female deposits three to six, white eggs with dark markings, and she alone incubates them for the 12- to 13-day incubation period. Fall migration starts in mid-August. The eastern kingbird winters in South America, from Colombia to northern Chile and northern Argentina. This bird eats insects, spiders and some fruits.

### TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Passeriformes  
Family: Tyrannidae

### ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

### ILLINOIS RANGE



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### **Aquatic Habitats**

none

### **Woodland Habitats**

none

### **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie