

red-shouldered hawk

Buteo lineatus

FEATURES

The red-shouldered hawk averages 17 to 24 inches in length. It has a large tail, broad wings and dark bands on the tail. The back feathers are dark brown. There is a rust-red feathered patch on each shoulder. The feathers on the underside of the body are rust-red as well. The immature bird has dark streaks on the chest feathers.

BEHAVIORS

The red-shouldered hawk is an uncommon migrant, summer resident and winter resident statewide. Some of these hawks are also permanent residents of Illinois. Spring migrants begin arriving by mid-March. Nesting occurs from March through May. The nest is built 20 to 60 feet above the ground. Made of sticks, it is lined with bark, sticks, leaves and feathers. It may be used again in later years. Three to five white eggs with brown marks are laid by the female. The male and female take turns incubating over the 28-day incubation period. One brood is raised per year, unless the eggs are destroyed, in which case the birds may nest again. Fall migration begins in August. This species lives in moist woodlands, woodlands along streams and swamps. Its call is “kee yar.” This bird hunts by flying out to catch or pounce on prey items. It eats reptiles, amphibians, small mammals and birds.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Accipitriformes
Family: Accipitridae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



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adult



juvenile

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none