red-winged blackbird

Agelaius phoeniceus

FEATURES

An adult red-winged blackbird is seven and one-half to nine and one-half inches in length. The male has black feathers except for red-feathered patches on each wing that are bordered in yellow. The female has brown body feathers with tan stripes. The bill is sharply pointed.

BEHAVIORS

The red-winged blackbird is a common migrant and summer resident in Illinois. It is a common winter resident in southern and central Illinois. This species lives in marshes, swamps, ditches, cultivated land or hayfields. It feeds on insects and seeds. Its call is "konk-la-reeee" or "o-ka-leeee." These birds form huge roosts in winter. Males begin arriving in Illinois as early as January. Females arrive later, in March and April. Nesting occurs in clover fields, ditches, marshes, cultivated fields and wood edges during May through July. The cuplike nest is built close to the ground or on the ground. Three to five light-brown to white to pale-blue eggs with black marks are laid. Cowbirds are known to parasitize red-winged blackbird nests, leaving an egg that will hatch into a young cowbird that the blackbirds will feed and care for. Fall migration begins in October.

TAXONOMY

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE

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female

provided by steveblyand/pond5.com

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Aquatic Habitats
lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; peatlands; swamps

Woodland Habitats
none

Prairie and Edge Habitats
edge

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