

snow bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Calcariidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The snow bunting averages six to seven inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). In winter, this bird may show some brown, but the feathers are mostly white. The white areas on the wings are easily seen when it is flying. The male in summer has black back feathers, white head feathers and underparts and a large, white patch on each wing.

BEHAVIORS

The snow bunting is a common migrant and winter resident in Illinois decreasing southward in the state. It lives in fields, lake edges, roadsides and feedlots or pastures where manure is present or has been spread. The snow bunting may migrate north very early (January) or much later (April). It breeds in the Arctic. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late September. This bird eats seeds, insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

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

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