

song sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult song sparrow is five to six and three-fourths inches long. The body feathers are brown, and the belly feathers are cream-colored. There are streaks of dark brown on the chest feathers that meet in a central spot. The tail is fairly long and brown. The body, head and wing feathers have a striped appearance.

BEHAVIORS

The song sparrow is a common migrant through Illinois. It is a common summer resident in the northern and central parts of the state and an uncommon resident in southern Illinois. This sparrow is a common winter resident in southern Illinois. The song sparrow lives in thickets, woodlands, roadsides, brushy pastures, hedgerows, marshes, ditches and gardens. It eats seeds, insects and spiders. This sparrow sings most of the year with the song "sweet, sweet, sweet." It pumps its tail during flight. This bird may be found in small groups or singly. Spring migrants may be seen in March. Nesting occurs from April through August. The cuplike nest is lined with grasses and hair and built in a low shrub or bush. Three to five white eggs with red-brown marks are laid. Cowbirds are known to parasitize song sparrow nests, leaving an egg that will hatch into a young cowbird that the song sparrows will feed and care for. Fall migration begins in August.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams; marshes

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; upland deciduous forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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