

summer tanager *Piranga rubra*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Cardinalidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The summer tanager averages seven to seven and three-fourths inches in length. The male is entirely red-feathered except for the light-yellow bill. Unlike the similar northern cardinal male, he does not have a head crest. The female has olive-green feathers above and yellow feathers below. The summer tanager does not have wing bars.

BEHAVIORS

The summer tanager is a common migrant and summer resident in the southern one-half of Illinois. It winters from Mexico to South America. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. Nesting takes place in June. The nest is built in a tree on a horizontal limb and placed at a height of 10 to 35 feet above the ground. It is made of leaves, grasses, bark and spider silk and lined with grasses. The female does all the nest construction. Three to five blue or green eggs with brown marks are laid by the female, and she incubates for the 11- to 12-day incubation period. The male feeds the female while she incubates. One brood is raised per year. Fall migration begins in September. The summer tanager lives in upland woods, particularly with oaks, bottomland forests, conifers and orchards. Its call is "pit-a-chuck." Its song is similar to those of the American robin and Baltimore oriole. This bird eats insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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