

vesper sparrow

Pooecetes gramineus

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The vesper sparrow averages six inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). It has brown feathers with brown streaks on its white lower side. The white, outer, tail feathers are clearly visible when the bird flies. A white, eye ring is present. There is a rust-red patch on the leading edge of each wing.

BEHAVIORS

The vesper sparrow is a common migrant, common summer resident and rare winter resident in Illinois. It lives in shrubs, clover fields, pastures and other open habitats. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late March. Eggs are produced from May through August. The vesper sparrow nests on the ground, usually under plants, lining a hollow with grasses. Four or five eggs are deposited by the female, and she incubates them with a little help from the male for the 12- to 13-day, incubation period. Two broods of young birds are produced per year. Fall migrants begin arriving in late September. Some individuals overwinter in the state but most migrate to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The vesper sparrow eats fruits, insects and seeds. Its song is composed of two notes followed by two higher notes.

ILLINOIS RANGE



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Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

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