

white-throated sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The white-throated sparrow averages six and one-half to seven inches in length. Its gray breast feathers and white-feathered throat patch on an otherwise brown-feathered body are conspicuous. There is a small, yellow-feathered spot between the eye and bill. Two forms of the bird exist: some have black and white head stripes, while others have brown and tan head stripes. The bill is dark on all forms.

BEHAVIORS

The white-throated sparrow is a common migrant in Illinois. It winters statewide but is more often found in the southern one-half of the state. Migrants begin moving northward in spring in March. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in September. The white-throated sparrow lives in thickets, brush and the undergrowth of woodlands. It nests in Canada and the northeastern United States. Its song is composed of several whistles. It also makes “tseet” and “chink” notes. A black and white head-striped form mates with a brown and tan head-striped form. The nest is placed on or close to the ground, usually hidden by vegetation. The female builds the nest of grasses, pine needles, twigs, bark and mosses and lines it with grasses and hair. Three to five green-white, blue-white or gray eggs with brown markings are deposited by the female. She alone incubates for the 12- to 14-day period. Usually only one brood is raised. This bird winters south to the Gulf of Mexico. It eats seeds, insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

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

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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