

yellow-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Cuculiformes

Family: Cuculidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The yellow-billed cuckoo averages 11 to 13 inches in length. The slim body has a long tail. There are white spots at the tips of the tail feathers. The wing feathers are colored rust-red. The belly feathers are white, and the back feathers are brown. The lower half of the bill is yellow.

BEHAVIORS

The yellow-billed cuckoo is a common migrant and summer resident statewide. It winters in South America. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late April. Nesting takes place from May through August. The nest is placed from four to 20 feet above the ground in vegetation. It is made of sticks, vines and rootlets and lined with grasses, pine needles and mosses. Three to five green-blue or yellow-green eggs are laid by the female. Eggs may be deposited in other species' nests, too. Both the male and female take turns incubating the eggs over the 14-day incubation period. Fall migration begins in September. The yellow-billed cuckoo lives in open woods, woodland edges, orchards and thickets, tending to stay in dense vegetation. It flies low to the ground. The song is a series of "ka" notes which get slower and longer at the end ("kowlp"). Sometimes called the rain crow, it has been said that its call predicts rain. This bird eats insect larvae and cicadas.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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