



American woodcock

Scolopax minor

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Aves
Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Scolopacidae

FEATURES

An adult American woodcock is 10 to 12 inches in length. Both sexes are alike in appearance. This bird has a stout, tan body with a short, thick neck. It has a long, heavy, black bill. The wings are short and rounded. The large eyes are positioned far enough back on the head that the bird can see behind itself.

BEHAVIORS

The American woodcock is a common migrant through Illinois. It is an uncommon summer resident and a rare winter resident in the state. The American woodcock lives in wet thickets, moist woods and brushy swamps. This bird primarily eats earthworms but also will feed on insects and spiders. When it takes to flight, it flies straight up before flying outward in an attempt to avoid tree limbs. This bird makes a unique, spiral, flight pattern at dusk and dawn during the breeding season. The woodcock nests on the ground in the woods. The nest is lined with plant material. Three or four tan eggs with brown and gray markings are laid. Nesting in Illinois occurs from March through June. Fall migration peaks in October and November.

HABITATS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests | <input type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> swamps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marshes | <input type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands | |

ILLINOIS STATUS

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>native</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>exotic</u> | |

ILLINOIS RANGE

Summer resident: statewide. Migrant: statewide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999. *Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.