



turkey vulture

Cathartes aura

Kingdom: Animalia
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
 Class: Aves
 Order: Falconiformes
 Family: Cathartidae

FEATURES

An adult turkey vulture is 26 to 32 inches long. This bird has a bare, red head and red feet. The underside of the wing is black near the body and gray at the outer edge. This bird has a very small head for its body size. The wingspan of a turkey vulture is nearly six feet.

BEHAVIORS

The turkey vulture is a common migrant through Illinois, a summer resident and an occasional winter resident in the southern two-thirds of the state. It may be seen perching on dead trees or feeding on the ground. It is associated with woods but needs open areas to search for food. It is commonly seen in hilly areas with bluffs. It spends most of its time soaring in the sky. The turkey vulture feeds mostly on dead organisms. Its wings form a shallow "V" during flight. This bird soars high in the sky in a wide circle pattern as it searches for food. When the turkey vulture is on the ground, it wobbles when it walks. A defensive measure used by this bird is vomiting. Migrating turkey vultures

begin arriving in Illinois in February. This bird nests in hollow sycamores and other trees, old barns, hollow stumps and rock crevices. Two eggs, white with brown spots, are laid in the nest in late spring. Fall migration peaks in October.

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"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic | |

ILLINOIS RANGE

Summer resident: statewide. Migrant: statewide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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