



wood duck

Aix sponsa

Kingdom: Animalia
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
 Class: Aves
 Order: Anseriformes
 Family: Anatidae

FEATURES

The wood duck is 17 to 20 inches long. Its tail is dark, long and rectangular. The short, broad wings are black with white on the back edges. The neck is short. In the winter and spring, the male becomes brilliantly colored. His head is an iridescent purplish-green. Two white parallel lines may be seen from the base of the bill over the head to the back of the neck. The white throat extends upward to the red eyes and the base of the bill. The male's maroon chest has white markings, and his sides are gold with a black and white design. In the summer, the male is brown with white patches on the face. The bill is red and white. The female (all year) has a dark gray-brown body and head with tan sides. Her belly is white, as are her throat and the circle around each eye.

BEHAVIORS

The wood duck is a common migrant through Illinois and summer resident statewide. It is an uncommon winter resident but will stay in southern Illinois during mild winters. The wood duck lives in swamps, around rivers or around ponds (with wooded areas). This duck eats acorns, insects, corn and seeds of bald cypress, buttonbush, hick-

ories and wild millet. The call of the female is a loud "whee-e-e-e-k, whee-e-e-e-k," and the male's call is "twee, twee." This bird will nest in a tree cavity, barn, chimney or a humanmade wood duck box. Spring migrants begin appearing in Illinois in February. Nesting occurs from March through July. Six to 14 white eggs are laid per clutch. Sometimes several females lay eggs in the same nest. This process, called "dumping," may result in as many as 40 young in one nest. Soon after hatching the female (hen) coaxes the young ducks to jump down from the nest, which may be fairly high in a tree. The hen then leads the young ducks to water. The wood duck may be seen sitting on a tree limb. When flying, it bobs its head up and down. While swimming, it floats high on the surface of the water. Fall migration begins in September.

HABITATS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams |
| <input checked="" 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.