



northern flicker

Colaptes auratus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Piciformes
Family: Picidae

FEATURES

The northern flicker averages about 12 to 14 inches in length. It has a large, white, rump patch that can be seen when this bird flies. Its back is brown with dark bars. There is a black patch on the upper chest, and a red patch on the back of the head. The male has a black mark below each eye.

BEHAVIORS

The northern flicker is a common migrant, summer resident and winter resident statewide in Illinois. Those flickers that migrate from Illinois in the fall overwinter in the southern United States. Migration occurs during the day and at night. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in March. Nesting occurs from April through May. The nest may be placed in trees scattered in grasslands, forest edges or residential areas. A cavity is excavated by the male and female over a one to two week period in a live tree, dead tree, snag, fence post or on the side of a building. This bird will use a nest box if one is available. The nest is built from two to 60 feet above the ground. Five to 12 white eggs are laid by the female. Eggs are incubated by the male and female during the day, and only by the male at night, over an 11- to 12-day period. Fall migration begins in July. The northern flicker

lives in cornfields, shrubs, open forests, orchards, pastures and towns. Its song is a repeated "wick wick wick" while the call notes are "klee-yer" and "flick-a." This bird spends much time on the ground, searching for ants. It will also eat beetles, blackberries, poison ivy berries and wild black cherries.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident:

Summer resident: statewide

Migrant: statewide

Winter Resident: statewide

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.