

American wigeon *Mareca Americana*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The American wigeon is 18 to 22 inches long. The top of the male's head has white feathers. Both the male and female have white belly feathers, gray head feathers with black flecks and gray-blue legs and feet. The wings are narrow, and the tail is long and wedgelike. The small, light blue bill has a black tip. The male has a distinctive white patch on his shoulder. A green line may be seen from the eye to the back of the head. The male has pink-brown chest feathers with black highlights. The female has red-brown body feathers with a gray wing patch.

BEHAVIORS

The American wigeon is a common migrant through Illinois. It sometimes winters in southern and central Illinois but usually travels to the southern United States and northern Mexico. This bird is a rare summer resident. The American wigeon lives in and around marshes, lakes, ponds, flooded fields or open fields. This duck feeds on aquatic insects and the leaves and stems of aquatic vegetation. It flies quickly and is one of the earliest ducks to migrate. It has been seen migrating through Illinois in January and February on its way north and moving south again as early as July. The call is "whee whee whew." The American wigeon nests from the north central United States through Canada to Alaska.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; temporary water supplies; marshes

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2017. Biodiversity of Illinois.