

American woodcock *Scolopax minor*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Scolopacidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult American woodcock is 10 to 12 inches in length. Both sexes are alike in appearance. This bird has a stout body with a short, thick neck. It has a long, heavy bill. The feathers are shades of tan and brown. 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 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

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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