

black-and-white warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Parulidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The black-and-white warbler averages four and one-half to five and one-half inches in length. Its common name comes from the black and white lengthwise stripes that can be seen on its back, head and belly. The male has a black throat patch that is absent in the female. The female is lighter underneath than the male.

BEHAVIORS

The black-and-white warbler is a common migrant statewide and a rare summer resident in the southern one-half of Illinois. It winters from the southern United States to Columbia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Migrating in spring, it arrives in Illinois by late March or early April. It nests on the ground near the base of a tree or rock or hidden under a log or vegetation on or near the ground. The nest is usually covered by a pile of leaves and is built of leaves and lined with grasses, bark and hair. The female builds the nest. Four to five white eggs that are speckled with brown are laid in the nest. The female alone incubates for the 11- to 12-day incubation period. One brood per year is raised. Nests are often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird that deposits an egg that the black-and-white warbler will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migration begins in July. This bird creeps along branches and trunks from mid-height to low in the trees of woodlands, especially those in ravines and on hillsides. Its song is a series of high “wee-see” notes that may be heard as it sings in the spring and sometimes in the fall, too. This warbler eats insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie Habitats

none

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