

## black-billed cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Cuculiformes

Family: Cuculidae

ILLINOIS STATUS threatened, native

### FEATURES

The black-billed cuckoo averages 11 to 12 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This long, slim bird has brown back feathers and white breast feathers. The bill is entirely black. A red eye ring may be seen on the adult, but it is absent in young cuckoos. Small, white spots are present on the tail. The male and female are similar in appearance.

### BEHAVIORS

The black-billed cuckoo is a common migrant throughout Illinois and an uncommon summer resident in northern Illinois, decreasing southward in the state. It lives in forests, orchards and woodland edges. Its call of “cucucu” may sometimes be produced at night, although it usually sings in the day. Spring migrants generally begin arriving in Illinois in May. The breeding season occurs from May through August. The nest is built in a tree from two to 20 feet above the ground. The nest is composed of sticks and lined with soft plant materials. Two to five, blue eggs are deposited by the female at one- to three-day intervals. Incubation duties are shared by both sexes over the 14-day incubation period. The black-billed cuckoo may lay eggs in the nests of yellow-billed cuckoos and those of a few other bird species. This nest parasite leaves an egg for the other birds to hatch and raise. The yellow-billed cuckoo may also lay eggs in a black-billed cuckoo’s nest. Fall migrants usually begin arriving in Illinois from the north in August. The black-billed cuckoo feeds mainly on insects.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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