

broad-winged hawk *Buteo platyterus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The broad-winged hawk averages about 14 to 19 inches in length, roughly the same size as a crow. This hawk has alternating dark and white tail bands that are about equal in width. The immature bird has more and thinner tail banding than the adults. The underside of the wings is white.

BEHAVIORS

The broad-winged hawk is a common migrant and uncommon summer resident statewide in Illinois. It migrates south to as far as southern Brazil during migration. These birds form “kettles” when migrating. Flying in large flocks of hundreds of birds, they soar in circles on thermal currents that are created as sunlight warms the air, and it rises. This migratory behavior may be seen in Illinois usually in mid-April and mid-September. The birds tend to follow river valleys, with the Illinois River valley probably offering the best opportunity to see them. Nesting takes place in April and May, in heavily wooded areas, mainly in northern and southern Illinois and along the Illinois River. The nest is built in the crotch of a tree from 24 to 40 feet above the ground. Sticks and dead leaves are used to construct the nest, and it is lined with bark. Two or three white eggs with brown markings are deposited by the female, who is mainly responsible for incubating the eggs over the 30-day or more incubation period. Fall migration begins in August. The broad-winged hawk may be seen in forests and city parks. It makes a call that sounds like that of the eastern wood pewee (“pweeeeeee”). This hawk eats mice, squirrels, chipmunks, birds, snakes, frogs, crayfish and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

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

Prairie Habitats

None

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