

brown thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Mimidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The brown thrasher has rust-red feathers on the back and wings and cream-colored feathers with rust-red stripes on the ventral (belly) side. Two, white wing bars are present. The eyes are yellow, and the bill is curved. This bird has a long tail. It is about 12 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen).

BEHAVIORS

The brown thrasher is a migrant and summer resident statewide and an uncommon winter resident in southern Illinois, decreasing northward. It lives in fence rows and thickets. Its song has phrases that are repeated twice. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in March. The breeding season occurs from April through July. The nest is made of sticks and placed low in a shrub or thorn tree. The female deposits two to six, pale-blue eggs with red-brown markings. The male and female alternate incubation duties over the 12- to 13-day incubation period. Two broods are raised per year. Nests are often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird that deposits an egg that the brown thrasher will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late September. The brown thrasher forages on the ground in leaf litter. It eats beetles in the spring and fruits, seeds and grains during the rest of the year.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2016. Biodiversity of Illinois.