

canvasback *Aythya valisineria*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The canvasback is a diving duck that averages 20 to 24 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its sloping profile is an obvious character that can aid in identification. The male has white back feathers, rust-red head and neck feathers and black chest feathers. The female is more dull gray overall but with the same general shading pattern as the male. Three of the toes are webbed to help with swimming. The bill is flattened and has a toothlike fringe on its edge to help strain food from the water.

BEHAVIORS

The canvasback is a common migrant, uncommon winter resident and rare summer resident in Illinois. This duck is found throughout Illinois but is most numerous along the Mississippi River. It may be seen on large rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes and sewage lagoons. The male produces a low, croaking sound while the female makes a “quack.” Spring migrants may begin arriving in Illinois from the south as early as January. Fall migration begins in October. The canvasback will winter in Illinois if open water and food are available. Canvasback flocks fly in a “v” or in a straight line. This duck eats aquatic plants, midge larvae and mayfly larvae.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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