

chipping sparrow

Spizella passerina

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native



adult at nest

FEATURES

The chipping sparrow averages five and one-fourth inches in length. When in breeding colors, it has gray breast feathers, a cap of rust-colored feathers and a black line through the eye with a white line over it. The winter colors are not as bright. The immature chipping sparrow has browner feathers than the adults and has a light crown stripe and gray rump feathers.

BEHAVIORS

The chipping sparrow is a common migrant and summer resident statewide. Although it normally overwinters from the southern United States to South America, this species sometimes can be found in Illinois during winter. Spring migrants begin arriving in the state in March. Nesting takes place in the period from April through July. The nest is built in evergreens that grow near buildings or other short- to medium-height trees or vines from one to 25 feet above the ground. The nest of grasses and rootlets is shaped like a cup and lined with hair and grasses. The female builds the nest in three or four days. She lays three or four blue eggs with scattered dark marks. She incubates the eggs for the 11- to 14-day incubation period, but the male brings food to her during this time. Two broods are raised in a year. Fall migration commences in August. The chipping sparrow may be seen in areas of mowed grass, shrubs, well-spaced trees, conifers, orchards, forest edge, thickets, parks and open woods. Its song is a series of "chip" notes. It eats seeds, insects and small fruits.

ILLINOIS RANGE



© Mary Kay Rubey

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none