

eastern bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Turdidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The eastern bluebird averages seven inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The male is a powder-blue bird with a red-orange breast. The female's coloration is similar to that of the male but with much duller shades. The immature has a spotted breast, no orange and is mostly gray, although there will be some blue on it somewhere. Large eyes and a slender beak are characteristic traits of the bluebird.

BEHAVIORS

The eastern bluebird is a common migrant and summer resident statewide in Illinois and a common winter resident in southern Illinois. The bluebird is a rural species in Illinois now although at one time it was common everywhere. It may be found in pastures, open woodlands, orchards and along roads. Its song is three or four gurgling notes. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in February. The breeding season lasts from mid-April through August. Many bluebirds nest in humanmade boxes, but they naturally nest in a tree cavity or old woodpecker hole. The nest of grasses is built by the female in four or five days. She lays four or five, light blue or white eggs and incubates them alone for the 13- to 15-day incubation period. Two broods per year are usually produced. Fall migration begins in late September. Some bluebirds winter as far south as eastern Mexico. The eastern bluebird eats insects in summer and fruits in winter.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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