

eastern phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Tyrannidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult eastern phoebe is six and one-half to seven inches in length. Both the male and female are similar in appearance. This bird has gray-brown body feathers and gray tail feathers. Its bill is black. The belly feathers are white.

BEHAVIORS

The eastern phoebe is a common migrant in Illinois. It is an uncommon summer and rare winter resident in the state. This bird normally winters from the southern United States near the Gulf of Mexico through central America. The eastern phoebe lives in forest edges, along streams and at bridges, bluffs and isolated buildings. This species eats primarily insects but will feed on small fishes and fruit. Its common name comes from its call of "phoe-be" or "fi-bree." The phoebe returns to Illinois in March. The nesting season occurs from late April through early July. Nests are built fairly low to the ground at bridges, bluffs and isolated buildings. Five white eggs are laid. Two broods may be raised in a year. Nests are often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird. The cowbird will lay an egg in the nest along with the phoebe eggs. The larger cowbird egg will hatch faster than the phoebe eggs, and this bird will be more aggressive in the nest, taking food from the phoebe young. Fall migration begins in August.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; upland deciduous forest

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2017. Biodiversity of Illinois.