

field sparrow *Spizella pusilla*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The field sparrow averages five inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its wings, back and tail are brown. The rust-red cap and pink bill are good field marks. A light, eye ring is present. The adult field sparrow has a clear breast. The young bird has streaks on the breast and not much rust coloration on the head.

BEHAVIORS

The field sparrow is a common migrant and summer resident statewide and a common winter resident in southern Illinois. It may be found in weedy and brushy areas, woodland edges, orchards, pastures, fence rows and roadside thickets. This bird may be seen close to the ground alone or in small flocks. It is known to sing all day long and into the night. The song is a series of notes that speed up into a trill. Spring migrants usually arrive in Illinois in March. The breeding season occurs from April through August. The nest is built on or near the ground. The female constructs the nest of grasses, leaves and plant stems. She deposits three to five, white or pale-blue eggs flecked with red-brown marks and incubates them alone for the 11-day incubation period. More than one brood are raised each year. Fall migration starts in September. The field sparrow eats insects, seeds and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

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

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