

golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The golden eagle averages 30 to 40 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The adult is dark brown all over with lighter brown at the base of the tail and a gold patch on the back of the neck. The immature bird shows a white flash in the wings and a white tail with a dark band at the tip. The wingspan is about seven feet. This bird of prey (meat eater) has a hooked beak to help tear its food apart.

BEHAVIORS

The golden eagle is a rare migrant and winter resident in Illinois. It may be seen most often along the Mississippi River and at wildlife refuges in southern Illinois, although it can be seen in other parts of the state. In flight, this bird glides on flat wings. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late October. Spring migration occurs in March. The golden eagle is diurnal (active during the day). It rarely makes a sound but sometimes whistled notes or “kya” can be heard. The golden eagle eats mammals and wounded waterfowl.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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