

hooded merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult hooded merganser is 16 to 19 inches long. It has a long, thin bill with toothed edges. The male has a fan-shaped crest on the head and black and white markings on the chest feathers. The brown wing feathers have white patches. The female's body feathers are brown with gray feathers on the sides.

BEHAVIORS

The hooded merganser is an uncommon migrant through Illinois but may winter in the southern half of the state. It is occasionally a summer resident. This bird winters in the southeastern United States. The hooded merganser lives in and near lakes, sloughs, ponds and rivers. This species eats aquatic insects, crustaceans (crayfish, shrimp) and small fishes. Its toothed bill is well-adapted for grasping fishes. These birds fly low and fast over a body of water and are usually found in pairs. Birds begin returning from the south in January. Most hooded mergansers breed in the northern Great Lakes region. A few nest in Illinois. The nest is placed in a hollow tree, usually in a bottomland forest or swamp. Fall migration begins in October and peaks in November.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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