

lesser scaup *Aythya affinis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The lesser scaup averages 15 to 18 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This bird has a white stripe of feathers on the back edge of the wing that is visible when it flies. The male scaup has a blue bill, purple head feathers, black chest feathers and black tail feathers. All other areas on the male have light gray feathers with small, dark bars. The female has dark brown feathers with a white area between the bill and the eye.

BEHAVIORS

The lesser scaup is a common migrant, an uncommon winter resident and a rare summer resident in Illinois. This diving duck may be seen on lakes, ponds and sewage lagoons during migration. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late March and April. The males move through before the females. Summers are spent in Canada and Alaska. Fall migration through Illinois starts in September. The lesser scaup winters in Florida and Louisiana. A few of these birds may winter in Illinois if open water is present. The scaup eats snails, mussels, mayflies and aquatic plants. It makes a “quack” or “scaup” sound.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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