

northern bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Galliformes

Family: Odontophoridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern bobwhite averages eight to 11 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This small, plump bird with rust-red feathers has a short, stubby tail. Its chest feathers have a white and rust pattern. The male has white throat feathers and a white eye stripe. In the female these areas are more cream- or tan-colored.

BEHAVIORS

The northern bobwhite is a common, permanent resident statewide. It lives in orchards, fence rows, hay fields, grassy fields and pastures. Its Illinois population is highest in southern Illinois and lowest in northeastern Illinois. Population numbers of the bobwhite may fluctuate greatly from year to year and season to season. Habitat loss has tremendously affected this bird. Eggs are produced in May and June. The nest is built in a depression of the ground and lined with grasses. Vegetation is pulled over the nest to help conceal it. Both male and female are involved in nest construction. Nine to 19, white eggs are deposited by the female. The male and female alternate incubation duties over the 23- to 24-day incubation period. The young stay together until the following spring. Bobwhites form and stay in coveys, or groups, in fall, winter and early spring. This bird eats insects, grains, seeds and fruits. Its call is a whistled "Bob-white" or "poor Bob-whoit."

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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