

northern mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Mimidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern mockingbird averages nine to 11 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its feathers are gray with a white patch on each wing and white edging on the tail. The white areas are very noticeable when the bird flies. A long tail, strong legs and a bill that is slightly curved downward are also characteristic traits of the northern mockingbird.

BEHAVIORS

The northern mockingbird is a permanent resident in southern and central Illinois. It may be seen in other areas of the state but only rarely. It lives in open habitats like edges, residential areas, orchards and farm yards. It is particularly often found in multiflora rose hedges. The mockingbird is known for its songs that mimic those of other birds. The phrases in the song are repeated several times before changing to a new one. The mockingbird often sings at night as well as in the day. Many Illinois mockingbirds are permanent residents, but some do migrate. Spring migrants begin arriving in April. Eggs are produced from April through early July. The bulky nest of thorny twigs is lined with leaves, hair and plant materials and is built low in a shrub, tree or vine. Both the male and female construct the nest. Three to six, pale-blue or green-blue eggs with dark marks are deposited by the female. She alone incubates the eggs for the entire 12- to 13-day incubation period. Two broods are usually raised with a new nest built for each brood. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in August. The northern mockingbird eats insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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