

northern pintail *Anas acuta*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern pintail averages 26 to 30 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The male has a long, thin neck and a long, sharply pointed tail. He has a dark brown head feathers and black and white feathers on the back and sides. A white area on the front of the neck extends in a thin strip into the brown part of the head. The female has a short, pointed tail and brown feathers dappled with darker brown.

BEHAVIORS

The northern pintail is a common migrant, an uncommon winter resident and a rare summer resident in Illinois. It lives in prairies, marshes, ponds and lakes. Spring migrants begin arriving in February. It travels further north to nest in the northern United States and Canada. Fall migrants may begin arriving in July. The pintail winters from the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico and South Carolina to northern South America. This duck eats seeds, grasses, aquatic insects and aquatic plants. The male makes a “prrip, prrip” whistle, while the female gives a “quack” sound.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

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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