

northern shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern shoveler is 17 to 20 inches in length. It has a large, flat, rounded bill (like a spatula) for gathering food. The legs are orange. The male's bill is black, while the female's bill is olive with black spots. In breeding plumage, the male has black and white body feathers with red belly and side feathers, white chest feathers, green-black head feathers and gray-blue coloring on the front edge of his wings. The female has brown-speckled body feathers and has the same gray-blue patch on the front of the wings as the male.

BEHAVIORS

The northern shoveler is a common migrant through Illinois and a rare summer and winter resident in the state. It winters in the coastal regions of the Gulf of Mexico, in the West Indies and in Central America. The northern shoveler lives in and around marshes, shallow lakes, ponds, flooded fields and sloughs. The northern shoveler eats aquatic insects, snails, zooplankton and seeds of buttonbush, corn and millet. The male's call is "took, took, took." Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in February. Shovelers that nest in Illinois lay eggs in May or June. Fall migration begins in August.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; temporary water supplies; marshes; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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