

northern shrike

Lanius borealis

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Laniidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The northern shrike averages nine to 10 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). Its bill is hooked at the tip. The head, back and upper wing feathers are gray while the tail and lower wing feathers are black. A black patch is present from the bill to past the eye. The feathers on the lower side of the bird are light gray to buff and faintly barred. The base of the lower portion of the bill is lighter in color than the rest of the bill. The immature shrike is gray-brown and has more prominent bars on the lower side than those of the adult.

BEHAVIORS

The northern shrike is an uncommon winter resident in northern Illinois and a very rare winter resident in the remainder of the state. In Illinois it may be seen in open woodlands and in fence rows. This bird spends the summers in deciduous and coniferous woodlands further north than Illinois. Fall migration into Illinois begins in October and November. Spring migrants depart in March. The northern shrike eats mice and small birds. This bird is known for impaling its prey items on thorns or barbed wire.

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adult at nest with young

ILLINOIS RANGE



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adult

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge