

# redhead

## *Aythya americana*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Anseriformes  
Family: Anatidae

### ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

### FEATURES

The redhead averages 18 to 23 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The male has gray back feathers, rust-red head feathers and black chest feathers. The female has brown feathers with a small, light patch near the bill. Both the male and female have a blue bill with a dark spot at the tip and a gray wing stripe that can be seen during flight. Three of the toes are webbed to help with swimming. The bill is flattened and has a toothlike fringe on its edge to help strain food from the water.

### BEHAVIORS

The redhead is a common migrant, an occasional winter resident and a rare summer resident throughout Illinois. It lives on large rivers, marshes, ponds and lakes. This duck is usually seen in small flocks with other diving ducks. Spring migrants start appearing in Illinois in March. The redhead may nest in marshy habitats in northern Illinois. Most fall migrants arrive in October. This duck winters along the Florida panhandle. The redhead eats aquatic plants, like pondweed and coontail, and midge larvae. The male makes a hard “meow” call while the female makes a “squak” sound.

### ILLINOIS RANGE



Migrating



Summer



Winter





## **Aquatic Habitats**

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; marshes; rivers and streams; swamps

## **Woodland Habitats**

none

## **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none