

redhead *Aythya Americana*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/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.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

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

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none