

## red phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Scolopacidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

### FEATURES

The red phalarope is about eight and one-fourth to eight and one-half inches long (bill tip to tail tip in preserved specimen). Its bill is shaped like a needle. The female is more brightly colored than the male. In breeding coloration, the female has orange-red feathers on the ventral side and neck as well as a white patch on each side of the face. Her bill is mainly yellow. The breeding male has a similar pattern but is duller. In nonbreeding coloration, both sexes have gray feathers on the back, white feathers on the ventral side and a black bill with a pale base. Phalaropes have lobed toes that allow them to swim as well as wade in water.

### BEHAVIORS

This species is more likely to be seen swimming than the other species of phalaropes. It is often seen far away from shore on the ocean. It feeds by spinning in the water and picking food, mainly plankton, insects and other small invertebrates, from the water. Spring migrants are very rare in the state but may appear in April. Fall migrants begin arriving in Illinois in September. These birds are seen as individuals, not in flocks. This species winters on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

temporary water supplies; lakes, ponds, reservoirs; Lake Michigan

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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