

ring-necked duck *Aythya collaris*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The ring-necked duck averages 15 to 18 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The male has black back and chest feathers and a white vertical mark in front of the wing. The female has brown feathers with a white eye ring and a light face patch. Both the male and female have a white ring on the bill and a gray, wing stripe that can be seen when the bird flies. 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 ring-necked duck is a common migrant, an uncommon winter resident and a very rare summer resident in Illinois. It lives in swampy areas, shallow sloughs, overflow areas, lakes, sewage lagoons and open marshes where it is usually found in small flocks with other diving ducks. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in February. The ring-necked duck breeds in the northern United States and Canada. It nests in marshes. The adults begin to build the nest as the first egg is laid and continue to add plant material to it during the incubation period. Six to 14 eggs are laid by the female, one per day. The female alone incubates for the 25- to 29-day incubation period. Fall migrants begin arriving in September. The ring-necked duck winters in Florida, along the Gulf of Mexico coast and as far south as Panama. This bird eats aquatic plants, like coontail and pondweed, and snails.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

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

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none