

rose-breasted grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Cardinalidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The rose-breasted grosbeak averages seven to eight and one-half inches in length. The male has black feathers on the head, back, wings and tail. He has white belly feathers and a white-feathered rump patch and some white feathers on the wings. His bill is light in color, and there is a large, red, upside-down triangle on the breast. The female has brown feathers on her upperparts with brown-streaked feathers on the belly. She has a large, light bill, white wing bars and white stripes in the center of her head and above each eye.

BEHAVIORS

The rose-breasted grosbeak is a common migrant statewide and a common summer resident in the northern two-thirds of Illinois. It winters from Mexico to Peru. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. Nesting takes place from May through July. The nest is cup-shaped and is placed from six to 26 feet above the ground in the fork of a branch of a tree or shrub. Three or four green eggs with brown marks are deposited by the female. The male and female take turns incubating during the 12- to 14-day incubation period. The birds sing while incubating. One brood per year is raised. Nests are often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird that deposits an egg that the rose-breasted grosbeak will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migration begins in August. The rose-breasted grosbeak lives in deciduous woodlands, thickets, residential areas, orchards and parks. In the fall it is often seen in hedgerows and scrubby areas. Its song is similar to that of the American robin. Its call is "chink." This bird eats insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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