

white-crowned sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Passerellidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The white-crowned sparrow averages six to eight inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The adult bird has feathers on its crown with a black-and-white appearance. The light gray color on the throat feathers carries over to its upper back. The back feathers are brown, and the lower chest feathers are white. The immature bird has brown-and-white stripes on the head which are not as distinctive as those in the adult, and the bird's overall coloration is more brown than that of the adult. Both the adult and immature birds have a pink bill.

BEHAVIORS

The white-crowned sparrow is a common migrant statewide and a common winter resident in southern Illinois decreasing northward. It lives in fence rows (especially those of multiflora rose), weedy fields, thickets, brush piles and woodland edges. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late April. These birds move on to nest in Canada. Fall migrants begin arriving in late September. The white-crowned sparrow winters as far south as northern Mexico. It eats seeds, fruits and insects and will come to feeders in the winter. The song is a series of varying whistles.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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