

willow flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Tyrannidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The willow flycatcher is five and three-fourths inches long (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This species and the alder flycatcher are very similar in appearance. The sounds they make and the habitat where they are seen can help in identification. The willow flycatcher makes a sound like fitz-bew while the alder flycatcher makes a fee-BE-o sound. The willow flycatcher is browner and paler than the alder flycatcher and usually does not show an eye ring. There are two wing bars. Feathers on the back and head are gray-brown with some of this coloration on feathers on the sides of the belly, too.

BEHAVIORS

The willow flycatcher is usually found in drier habitats than the similar alder flycatcher, although there is some overlap. Thickets and brushy fields are its typical habitats. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in May. The species does nest in the state. The nest is built from three to 25 feet above ground in a small tree. The nest is cup-shaped and contains three to four eggs per clutch. The brown-headed cowbird often parasitizes willow flycatcher nests. Fall migrants begin returning to Illinois in July. This species overwinters from central Mexico to Panama. It eats insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; swamps; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitat

bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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