

## common loon

*Gavia immer*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Gaviiformes
Family:	Gaviidae

### ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

### FEATURES

The common loon averages 28 to 36 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). It has a strong, stout, pointed bill. In summer, the bird has a black-and-white checkered back, a black bill, a black head and neck, a white chest and an incomplete white neck ring. The eye is bright red. In winter, the loon is dark gray on the back, tail, upper head and upper neck with white on the chest, lower head and lower neck. The bill in winter is lighter than in summer.

### BEHAVIORS

The common loon is a common migrant, rare winter resident and nonbreeding summer resident in Illinois. It may be seen on large lakes, ponds and rivers, swimming low in the water. This bird usually migrates at night. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late March. The common loon nests in the northern United States and Canada. The nest is placed close to the water's edge. The nest at first is a very small pile of plant debris, but nest construction continues by both sexes throughout incubation until a substantial pile of vegetation exists. One or two, green or green-brown eggs with dark spots are deposited by the female. Both the male and the female share incubation duties over the 29-day incubation period. Fall migrants begin returning to Illinois in October. The common loon eats fishes. It makes distinctive wailing, yodeling or laughing sounds.

## ILLINOIS RANGE



adult on nest

## **Aquatic Habitats**

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; Lake Michigan; rivers and streams

## **Woodland Habitats**

none

## **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none