



## giant water bug

representative species

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Arthropoda  
Class: Insecta  
Order: Hemiptera  
Family: Belostomatidae

### FEATURES

The giant water bug undergoes incomplete metamorphosis (egg, nymph, adult). It may grow to three inches in length. The flat, oval body is brown or green. The mouthparts are for piercing and sucking. It breathes with tubes that can be extended from the abdomen to the water's surface. The front legs are adapted for grabbing prey while the hind legs are flattened as swimming paddles. The front wings are hard at the base and membranous at the tip. The hind wings are membranous and shorter than the front wings.

### BEHAVIORS

The giant water bug lives in ponds and streams. This bug is excellent at swimming and flying. It may be seen at night flying around lights. This insect can inflict a painful bite if picked up. In one group of giant water bugs, the fertilized eggs are deposited by the female on the back of the male. The male carries the eggs for about a week until they hatch. Some males have been known to care for the nymphs. In another group of giant water bugs, the female lays eggs on aquatic vegetation. The giant water bug injects enzymes into its prey to dissolve the insides, then

they suck out the contents. This method of feeding allows this insect to eat large animals like frogs, insects, tadpoles and fishes.

### HABITATS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input type="checkbox"/> swamps                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan                        | <input type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marshes                              | <input type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands                            |  |

### ILLINOIS STATUS

- |  |                                     |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic     |                                     |

### ILLINOIS RANGE

statewide

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.  
*Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.