



their sense of smell. In late summer, the female gives birth to between eight and 50 young, depending on her size and age. This snake eats fishes and amphibians.

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 checked="" 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.

northern water snake

Nerodia sipedon

Kingdom: Animalia
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
 Class: Reptilia
 Order: Squamata
 Family: Colubridae

FEATURES

Two subspecies of the northern water snake exist in Illinois: the northern water snake and the midland water snake. The northern water snake averages 24 to 42 inches in length. It has reddish-brown to black markings on the back which are bandlike toward the head and become alternating blotches toward the tail. Some adults show no pattern at all. The red or brown markings on the belly extend to the tip of the tail. The body color may be gray to dark brown. Scales are keeled (ridged). The midland water snake averages 22 to 40 inches in length. The markings on the back are similar to those of the northern water snake, but there are fewer of them and they are farther apart. The belly markings tend to be in pairs. The scales are keeled (ridged), and the body color is brown or gray.

BEHAVIORS

The northern water snake lives in streams, ponds, lakes and marshes. This snake is active during the day in spring and fall. It becomes nocturnal in summer. It may flatten its body when disturbed and/or release large amounts of nasty-smelling musk from glands at the base of the tail. Mating occurs in the spring. Males locate females by using