



## redback salamander

*Plethodon cinereus*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Amphibia  
Order: Caudata  
Family: Plethodontidae

### FEATURES

The redback salamander averages two and one-fourth to four inches in length. It has a long tail. Its belly has a "salt and pepper" look. There are two color variations in this animal: the redback has a straight, rust-colored stripe down the back and tail (stripe may be orange, yellow or light gray) while the leadback has a black or brown appearance on the back. The stripe narrows as it reaches the tip of the tail. The body is long and slender with thin legs.

### BEHAVIORS

The redback salamander may be found along the east central Illinois border and in northeastern Illinois. It lives in moist woodlands under rocks or rotten logs or in rotten stumps. When conditions are dry, it moves under ground. This salamander is nocturnal. Breeding occurs in fall, with eggs deposited in rotten logs or under bark. Hatching occurs in late summer. The newly hatched larva is attached to a yolk sac for a day or so after hatching. After this time, the gills disappear, and hatchlings are terrestrial, which is different than in most other amphibian species. They remain terrestrial as adults. The redback salamander feeds on worms, sowbugs, centipedes and spiders.

### HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

### ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

### ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: northeast + east central border

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.