



zigzag salamander

Plethodon dorsalis

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

FEATURES

The zigzag salamander averages two and one-half to three and one-half inches in length. It is a red-backed or uniformly dark salamander. A zigzag, lobed, straight or wavy red or yellow stripe is present down the back. The belly is mottled with orange or red.

BEHAVIORS

The zigzag salamander may be found in the southern tip of Illinois. It lives under rocks on wooded hillsides. In dry conditions it may retreat to crevices, caves or under ground. This salamander is nocturnal. It breeds in fall, with eggs deposited under rocks or in rock crevices. The female guards the eggs until hatching, which happens 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 the hatchlings are terrestrial, which is different than in most other amphibian species. They remain terrestrial as adults. The zigzag salamander feeds on worms, sowbugs, centipedes, insects and spiders.

HABITATS

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: southern tip

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2006.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.