



## racer

*Coluber constrictor*

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

## FEATURES

The racer averages 23 to 60 inches in length. Its color is variable, and the back may be brown, gray, olive, dull green or dull blue. The chin is white, throat yellow or white and the belly yellow-white to dark slate. Scales are smooth.

## BEHAVIORS

The racer may be found nearly statewide in Illinois, the exception being extreme northeastern Illinois. This snake lives in dry prairies, open woodlands and under rocks or brush. The racer is primarily terrestrial but will take to water to escape when threatened. It climbs trees readily and is active in the day. This snake moves very quickly, up to four miles per hour. When disturbed it vibrates its tail to make a "rattling" noise. It captures prey by throwing a loop over the body of the prey item, pressing it down. It overwinters on rocky, wooded, south-facing hillsides or in mammal burrows. Mating season occurs April through June. The male locates a female by using his sense of smell. In late June or early July the female deposits eight to 21 eggs under rocks or logs, in stumps or in abandoned mammal burrows. The eggs have small, grainy nodes on them. Hatching occurs by September. The racer eats small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

## HABITATS

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

## ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

## ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide except the northeastern 1/4

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

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