



fox snake

Elaphe vulpina

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

FEATURES

The fox snake averages 36 to 54 inches in length. Its body is yellow to light brown and covered on the back with a series of dark brown to black blotches. The head is wider than the neck and is usually brown to red with no blotches. The belly is yellow with black checks. Scales with weak keels (ridges) are present along the middle of the back but are smooth elsewhere.

BEHAVIORS

The fox snake may be found in the northern one-half of Illinois. This terrestrial snake lives in farmlands, prairies, pastures and woods. It is active during the day. It may find shelter under logs, boards or in other animals' burrows. Its prey is killed by constriction. When disturbed, it may vibrate the tip of its tail and strike. Mating is believed to occur in April. Courting begins when the male chases the female for as much as 40 minutes. The female's eight to 27 eggs are deposited in soil, rotten logs, leaf litter or sawdust. Eggs stick together as they are laid. Hatching occurs in late August and September. This snake eats small mammals and birds.

HABITATS

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: northern 1/2

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.