



prairie kingsnake

Lampropeltis calligaster

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

FEATURES

The prairie kingsnake averages 30 to 42 inches in length. It has shiny, smooth scales. The back and tail have a pattern of brown, red or green black-edged markings. The body color is brown-gray to tan. The belly is yellow with brown blotches.

BEHAVIORS

The prairie kingsnake may be found in the southern two-thirds of Illinois. This reptile lives in prairies and open woodlands. It is active during the day in spring and fall but becomes nocturnal in the summer. It may be found hiding under rocks, logs or boards or in small mammal burrows. The prairie kingsnake, when disturbed, will vibrate the tail rapidly, hiss and strike. It kills prey by constriction. Mating occurs in spring. Males use their sense of smell to locate females. The six to 13 eggs are deposited under rocks, logs or in sawdust piles in early summer. Eggs stick together as they are laid. Hatching occurs in August or September. This snake eats other snakes, lizards, rodents, small birds, bird eggs and turtle eggs.

HABITATS

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: southern 2/3

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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