



common kingsnake

Lampropeltis getula

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

FEATURES

Two subspecies of the kingsnake are present in Illinois: the black kingsnake and the speckled kingsnake. The black kingsnake averages 36 to 45 inches in length. It has shiny, smooth scales. The head is a little wider than the neck. Its body is black above with small white or yellowish spots that may be in a somewhat chainlike pattern. Some individuals may be almost pure black. The speckled kingsnake averages 36 to 48 inches in length. It has shiny, smooth scales. A white or yellowish spot may be found centered in each of the black or dark brown scales of the back. The spots may be close enough together to give the appearance of white bands across the back.

BEHAVIORS

The black kingsnake may be found in southeastern Illinois. This snake lives in dry, rocky hills, open woods, dry prairies and stream valleys. It is most often found under flat rocks, logs or when it is crossing roads. Mating occurs in spring. The female deposits about 13 eggs in July. Eggs tend to stick together. Eggs hatch in late August or September. The speckled kingsnake may be found in the Illinois River valley south of Peoria and in southwestern Illinois. The speckled kingsnake lives in swamps, woods and stream val-

leys, hiding under rocks, logs, ledges, vegetation and other objects. This snake is active in the day during spring and fall but becomes active at night in the heat of summer. It is believed to overwinter in small mammal burrows. Mating occurs in April or May. The female deposits six to 14 eggs in July. The eggs tend to stick together. Eggs hatch in late August or September. When disturbed, the kingsnake will vibrate the tail rapidly, hiss and strike. The kingsnake kills prey by constriction. It 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 1/2

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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