



diamondback water snake

Nerodia rhombifer

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

FEATURES

The diamondback water snake averages 30 to 48 inches in length. Its back has a pattern of dark, chainlike markings on a background of lighter brown or dirty yellow. The yellow belly is marked with black or brown spots. The scales are keeled (ridged).

BEHAVIORS

The diamondback water snake may be found in the southern one-third of Illinois and the Mississippi and Illinois river valleys in the state. This snake lives in lakes, rivers, ditches, ponds, sloughs and swamps. The diamondback water snake is aquatic but may be seen basking in the sunshine on limbs over water. It is essentially nocturnal in the hot summer months, but individuals may be active during the day in spring and fall. This snake may flatten its body when disturbed and/or release large amounts of nasty-smelling musk from glands at the base of the tail. Mating occurs in spring. About 14 to 60 young per female are born in late summer or early fall, the number of young directly related to the size and age of the female. This animal eats fishes and amphibians.

HABITATS

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: Mississippi and Illinois rivers + southern 1/3

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

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