

eastern kingsnake

Lampropeltis getula

FEATURES

Two subspecies of this snake are found 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 yellow 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 yellow 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 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. This snake kills prey by constriction. When disturbed, it will vibrate the tail rapidly, hiss and strike. Mating occurs in spring. The female deposits about 13 eggs in July. Eggs tend to stick together. Eggs hatch in late August or September. This snake will eat other snakes, lizards, rodents, small birds, bird eggs and turtle eggs. The speckled kingsnake lives in swamps, woods and stream valleys, hiding under rocks, logs, ledges, vegetation and other objects. It 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. The speckled kingsnake kills prey by constriction. When disturbed, it will vibrate the tail rapidly, hiss and strike. 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. This snake eats other snakes, lizards, rodents, small birds, bird eggs and turtle eggs. In Illinois, it lives in the southern one-half of the state..

TAXONOMY

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE





Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none