

eastern newt *Notophthalmus viridescens*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata

Family: Salamandridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The eastern newt averages two and one-half to four inches in length. Its body color is olive-green to yellow- or olive-brown. The belly is yellow. Scattered black specks are present on the back and belly and one or two rows of small, red dots are found along the sides. The eft is a terrestrial stage found in this species and differs from adults by lacking fins on the tail, having no sexual characteristics and by having a warty skin and darker color.

BEHAVIORS

The eastern newt may be found in the northern one-third, southern one-third and parts of central Illinois. This salamander lives in swamps, woodland ponds and ditches. It has both a terrestrial and an aquatic stage. Adults tend to be active year-round in the water. About 200 to 375 eggs are deposited by each female in spring. Eggs are attached individually to submerged vegetation and hatch in three to five weeks. Larvae transform in two to three months to the eft stage that lives on land and is often found under bark, logs or rocks. After two or three years, the eft becomes sexually mature, develops fins and its skin becomes capable of aquatic respiration. At this point, it returns to the water. The adult eastern newt eats invertebrates, particularly mollusks, insects, crayfish and worms. The eft stage feeds on snails and insects.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; swamps; temporary water supplies

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie Habitats

none

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