

eastern ribbonsnake *Thamnophis sauritus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Natricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS threatened, native

FEATURES

The eastern ribbonsnake averages 18 to 26 inches in length. Its very slender body has three, yellow, longitudinal stripes on a dark background. The belly is yellow or green. The tail comprises almost one-third of the total body length. The scales are keeled (ridged).

BEHAVIORS

The eastern ribbonsnake may be found in the southern tip of Illinois. This reptile lives in and around streams, ponds and swamps that have quiet, shallow water, much vegetation and plenty of sunlight. The eastern ribbonsnake is semiaquatic, spending time on land and in water. When alarmed, it may flatten its body and release an unpleasant musk from glands at the base of its tail. The female gives birth to from three to 25 young in late summer, depending on her size and age. This snake eats salamanders, frogs and small fishes.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie Habitats

none

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