

Kirtland's snake

Clonophis kirtlandii

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

threatened, native

Kirtland's snake is a threatened species in Illinois. It is known from only a few scattered locations in the central and northeastern parts of the state. Its threatened status is mainly due to habitat loss from destruction and draining of prairie wetlands and reduction of earthworm populations due to pesticide use.

FEATURES

Kirtland's snake averages 14 to 18 inches in length. It has a red belly with a row of round, black spots down each side. The scales are keeled (ridged). The body is gray or brown above with four rows of black blotches that may be difficult to see.

BEHAVIORS

Kirtland's snake may be found in northeastern and central Illinois. This snake is aquatic, but it is often found on land. It lives in or near wet meadows, swamps, wooded hillsides and adjacent meadows, parks and urban areas. It can flatten its body when disturbed and hold this position for a long time. It hides under rocks, boards or in crayfish burrows during the day. Mating occurs in May. The female gives birth to four to 15 young in August or September. This snake eats earthworms, leeches, fishes and slugs.

ILLINOIS RANGE



adult



adult



ventral (belly) side





Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; shrub prairie