

Mississippi green watersnake *Nerodia cyclopion*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Natricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS threatened, native

FEATURES

The Mississippi green watersnake averages 30 to 45 inches in length. A row of scales is present between the eye and the lip scales. The back is green or brown with dim, black crossbars. The belly has light spots on a gray or brown background. Scales are keeled (ridged). The female is larger than the male.

BEHAVIORS

The Mississippi green watersnake lives in cypress swamps and river sloughs. This snake is aquatic but is often seen basking on logs or brush. It is active during the day, hunting for food in late evening. In the hottest summer temperatures, it becomes active at night. It may flatten its body when disturbed and/or release large amounts of bad-smelling musk from glands at the base of the tail. Mating occurs in the spring. Eggs are retained inside the female, where they develop. Young are born alive in August or September, the number of young varying with the age and size of the female snake. This animal eats fishes and amphibians.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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