

northern zigzag salamander

Plethodon dorsalis

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Amphibia
Order: Caudata
Family: Plethodontidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The northern zigzag salamander averages two and one-half to three and one-half inches in length. A zigzag, lobed, straight or wavy red or yellow stripe is present down the back. The belly is mottled with orange or red.

BEHAVIORS

The northern zigzag salamander lives under rocks on wooded hillsides. In dry conditions it may retreat to crevices, caves or below ground. It is nocturnal. It breeds in fall, with eggs deposited under rocks or in rock crevices. The female guards the eggs until they hatch in late summer. The newly hatched larva is attached to a yolk sac for a day or so after hatching. After this time, the gills disappear, and the hatchlings are terrestrial, which is different than in most other amphibian species. They remain terrestrial as adults. The northern zigzag salamander feeds on worms, sowbugs, centipedes, insects and spiders.



© Richard Andrews

adults

ILLINOIS RANGE



© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2021. *Biodiversity of Illinois*.

Unless otherwise noted, photos and images © Illinois Department of Natural Resources.



Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none