

prairie kingsnake *Lampropeltis calligaster*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Colubridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The prairie kingsnake averages 30 to 42 inches in length. It has shiny, smooth scales. The back and tail have a pattern of brown, red or green, black-edged markings. The body color is brown-gray to tan. The belly is yellow with brown blotches.

BEHAVIORS

The prairie kingsnake may be found in the southern two-thirds of Illinois. This reptile lives in prairies and open woodlands. It is active during the day in spring and fall but becomes nocturnal in the summer. It may be found hiding under rocks, logs or boards or in small mammal burrows. The prairie kingsnake, when disturbed, will vibrate the tail rapidly, hiss and strike. It kills prey by constriction. Mating occurs in spring. Males use their sense of smell to locate females. The seven to 20 eggs are deposited under rocks, logs or in sawdust piles in early summer. Eggs stick together as they are laid. Hatching occurs in August or September. This snake eats other snakes, lizards, rodents, small birds, bird eggs and turtle eggs.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge; hill prairie

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