

red-bellied snake *Storeria occipitomaculata*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Natricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The red-bellied snake averages eight to 10 inches in length. Although usually brown in color, it may be red or gray on the back. It may show four, narrow dark stripes or a light stripe along the middle of the back. The scales are keeled (ridged). The belly is plain red. Three light spots are present behind the head.

BEHAVIORS

The red-bellied snake may be found statewide in Illinois. This animal usually lives in or near open woods but occasionally is seen in wet meadows, peatlands or pastures. Most of the time this snake hides under rocks, bark or other objects, but it may occasionally be seen sunning itself. The red-bellied snake may flatten its body when disturbed and release a substance from its anal scent glands. Mating occurs from May through September. The female gives birth to from five to 25 young in late summer or early fall, the number depending on her size and age. This snake eats slugs and earthworms.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

peatlands; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge

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