

Scarletsnake *Cemophora coccinea*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Colubridae

ILLINOIS STATUS uncommon, native

FEATURES

The scarletsnake has orange or red bands along its back bordered by thin, black bands on a white, cream or light-yellow ground color. Its head is pointed, and its snout is red to orange. The belly is white or cream-colored with no spots. The dorsal scales are smooth, and the anal plate is not divided. Males have a longer tail and more dorsal bands than females. The total body length is 14 to 24 inches.

BEHAVIORS

The scarletsnake lives in areas of loose or sandy soil in forests and spends most of its time below ground except on warm nights or after heavy summer rains. It is active from late April through October. It eats lizards, small snakes and mice as well as the eggs of turtles, lizards and other snakes. Mating occurs in spring with eggs laid in June. Two to nine eggs per female make up a clutch, and they hatch in September. This species has not been found in Illinois since 1942. There is only one specimen to record its presence in the state. It is found in isolated areas in Missouri and Indiana and more commonly in Kentucky, so it is possible that it still lives in Illinois.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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