

spotted salamander *Ambystoma maculatum*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata

Family: Ambystomatidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The spotted salamander averages about four and one-half to seven and three-fourths inches in length. Its body is blue-black, slate or brown-black with two rows of yellow or orange spots along the back extending from behind the eyes to the back of the tail.

BEHAVIORS

In Illinois, the spotted salamander may be found in the southern one-third of the state, the east central border, the northeastern counties and the extreme northwest counties. In northern Illinois, the spotted salamander lives in deciduous and mixed woods. In southern Illinois, it may be found in low, oak-hickory forests next to swamps and creeks. The spotted salamander hides under rocks or logs during the day but wanders the forest floor at night. It migrates to woodland ponds during the spring to breed. A nuptial dance is part of the courtship in this species. The female lays eggs in clusters of several dozen on debris and vegetation in a pond. The female may deposit a total of 300 to 400 eggs. Eggs hatch in less than a month. A single-celled green alga is often found growing in the egg clumps of spotted salamanders. Transformation to a land animal usually occurs in late June through mid-August, although some larvae overwinter and transform the next summer. Two years are needed to reach maturity. The spotted salamander eats arthropods (spiders, insects, mites and others), mollusks (snails, slugs and others) and annelids (earth-worms, leeches).

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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