

woodchuck *Marmota monax*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The woodchuck averages about 17 to 24 inches in length (including the tail) and 14 pounds in weight. It has red-brown back fur with scattered black hairs. Most hairs have a white tip. The fur on the front legs and hind feet is black. The nose, lips and chin have white fur on or around them. The legs and tail are short.

BEHAVIORS

The woodchuck may be found statewide in Illinois in brushy or weedy areas, forest edges, fence rows, railroad embankments and earthen dams. It avoids areas that are subject to flooding. The woodchuck is an herbivore that feeds on clovers, grasses, bulbs, leaves, fruits and bark. When disturbed, it will strike its incisors against one another. This mammal is usually only active during the day. It may dig tunnels up to five feet long in one day and is known to swim and climb trees. The woodchuck spends most of each day in its burrow, coming above ground for no more than two hours. The woodchuck is a true hibernator. It hibernates from about October to February. Mating occurs in February and March. Young are born in the burrow in April. Young woodchucks are helpless at birth and do not leave the burrow until they are about six weeks old. Maturity is attained in the second year.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

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

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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