

DeKay's brownsnake *Storeria dekayi*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Natricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

DeKay's brownsnake averages nine to 13 inches in length. It is usually brown but may be red or gray on the back with an area in the middle of the back lighter than the sides. The scales are keeled (ridged). A dark streak is present on each side of the head. Numerous dark lines cross the back giving it a ladderback appearance. The belly is yellow, brown or pink.

BEHAVIORS

DeKay's brownsnake may be found statewide in Illinois. This small reptile lives in parks, cemeteries, urban empty lots, bogs, floodplains, swamps, prairies, marshes, moist woods and hillsides. It is active during the day, except in the hottest summer months. It is rarely seen, however, as it spends much time under rocks, logs and other objects on the ground. The brownsnake may flatten its body when disturbed and release a substance from its anal scent glands. Mating occurs in April and May. The female gives birth to from five to 25 young in late summer, the number depending on her size and age. This snake eats slugs, insects and earthworms.

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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