

eastern foxsnake *Pantherophis vulpinus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Colubridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The eastern foxsnake averages 36 to 54 inches in length. Its body is yellow to light brown and covered on the back with a series of dark brown or black blotches. The head is wider than the neck and is usually brown to red with no blotches. The belly is yellow with black checks. Scales with weak keels (ridges) are present along the middle of the back but are smooth elsewhere.

BEHAVIORS

The eastern foxsnake may be found in the northern one-half of Illinois. This terrestrial snake lives in farmlands, prairies, pastures and woods. It is active during the day. It may find shelter under logs, boards or in other animals' burrows. Its prey is killed by constriction. When disturbed, it may vibrate the tip of its tail and strike. Mating occurs in June or early July. Courtship begins when the male chases the female, sometimes for as much as 40 minutes. The female's eight to 27 eggs are deposited in soil, rotten logs, leaf litter or sawdust about 30 days after mating. Eggs stick together as they are laid. Hatching occurs in late August and September. This snake eats small mammals and birds.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; 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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