

## gray fieldslug *Deroceras reticulatum*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Mollusca

Class: Gastropoda

Order:

Family: Agriolimacidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

### FEATURES

The maximum length for this species is one to two inches. Slugs have a complex system of organs. The mouth contains a radula, a flexible, ribbonlike structure lined with rows of teeth, used to scrape food. On the head are tentacles. Most slugs in Illinois have an eye at the tip of each upper tentacle. Slugs have either a much-reduced shell, located under the mantle on the dorsal side, or no shell.

### BEHAVIORS

Slugs need to seek sheltered places to live, eat and rest. They prefer to live in moist areas and are commonly found under logs, loose bark or coarse woody debris, and in leaf litter on the forest floor. Most slugs are hermaphrodites, possessing both male and female sex organs and gametes. When slugs mate, fertilization often occurs in both individuals, and both lay a clutch of eggs. Slugs lay their eggs in spring and fall. Eggs are deposited in a cool, damp place, often just under the soil's surface. The adult slug provides no care for the eggs. Hatching takes place in about seven to 10 days. The young slugs emerge and begin to search for food immediately. A slug's skin contains glands that produce mucus. The mucus prevents the slug from drying out and helps it move. During very hot, dry weather and during very cold periods, slugs may become inactive. Slugs eat live and decaying vegetation. The gray fieldslug, believed to have originated in western Europe, has successfully invaded many areas of the world. It can become a garden pest. This animal emits milky-white mucus when disturbed and can self-amputate its tail when threatened.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2020. Biodiversity of Illinois.