

Hellbender *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata

Family: Cryptobranchidae

ILLINOIS STATUS endangered, native

FEATURES

The hellbender averages 11 and one-half to 20 inches in length. It has a large, thick body and a flattened head. Flaps of skin are present on the sides. The body color is gray-olive with dark markings.

BEHAVIORS

The hellbender lives in the fast-running water of rivers and large streams. It may be found living under flat rocks in streams. It is generally active at night. This animal is extremely slimy. Breeding occurs in the fall. Fertilization is external with 200 to 700 eggs laid in strands that become twisted into one string. Eggs are placed under a rock or other object. The male may stay with the eggs and aerate them with movements of his body. Eggs hatch in about one month. The gilled larva requires a two-year period to transform into an adult. The hellbender eats crustaceans, earthworms, fishes, insects and even its own eggs and young.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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