

## lesser siren *Siren intermedia*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata

Family: Sirenidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

### FEATURES

The lesser siren averages seven to 16 inches in length. The body color is dark brown to blue-black. It has tiny front legs with four toes each and no rear legs. Bushy external gills are present. The belly is lighter than the back. The animal is named for the Siren in mythology. It makes a series of clicking sounds or may shriek when in distress.

### BEHAVIORS

The lesser siren lives in swamps, ditches and sloughs. It is aquatic throughout its life. This animal spends the daylight hours burrowed in debris on the bottom of the water body. If the water body dries up, it burrows into the mud. If the mud dries over, the siren's skin glands will secrete a substance that becomes a protective cocoon over the entire body, except the mouth, where it will remain until the rains come again. The female deposits several hundred eggs in the spring on the bottom of a water body. Maturity is attained after two years of development. The siren eats aquatic insects, crayfish, fish, mollusks and worms.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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