

masked shrew *Sorex cinereus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Soricomorpha

Family: Soricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult masked shrew is between three and one-half and four and one-half inches in length, including the tail. It has a pointed nose, tan feet and gray-brown body fur with the belly fur, underside of the tail and sides a lighter color. The tail is two-colored: light below and dark above.

BEHAVIORS

The masked shrew may be found in Illinois in the northern one-third of the state, in the southeastern part near the Wabash River and in the southwestern section near the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. This tiny animal lives in damp places with good ground cover, like sedge meadows, wet prairies, drainage ditches, peatlands, bottomland forests, swamps and fencerows. A masked shrew feeds on insects and other invertebrates. It has a high metabolic rate and eats more than its own body weight in food in a day. The masked shrew is nocturnal. Breeding occurs in late March or early April. The gestation period is about 18 days. Litter size ranges from four to eight.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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