

northern short-tailed shrew *Blarina brevicauda*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Soricomorpha

Family: Soricidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern short-tailed shrew is between four and five inches in length, including the tail. It has gray body fur with light hair on the belly and a short, furred tail. There are no external ears. The eyes are tiny and black.

BEHAVIORS

The northern short-tailed shrew may be found statewide in Illinois. This mammal lives in forests and grasslands. Its diet includes insects, worms, birds, roots, nuts and fruits. The northern short-tailed shrew is active day and night throughout the year. It makes “runs” above ground or tunnels under ground. The northern short-tailed shrew is not a good climber but can swim. The senses of touch, smell and hearing are extremely sensitive, but its vision is poor. Secretions from glands are used to mark territories. During periods of low temperatures, the shrew’s body temperature, metabolism and activity rates will all drop. It is believed that this shrew breeds from March through October. The gestation period is about three weeks. Young are born pink and helpless. They are placed in a nest of leaves and grasses.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; 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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