

northern zigzag salamander *Plethodon dorsalis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Caudata

Family: Plethodontidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern zigzag salamander averages two and one-half to three and one-half inches in length. A zigzag, lobed, straight or wavy red or yellow stripe is present down the back. The belly is mottled with orange or red.

BEHAVIORS

The northern zigzag salamander lives under rocks on wooded hillsides. In dry conditions it may retreat to crevices, caves or below ground. It is nocturnal. It breeds in fall, with eggs deposited under rocks or in rock crevices. The female guards the eggs until they hatch in late summer. The newly hatched larva is attached to a yolk sac for a day or so after hatching. After this time, the gills disappear, and the hatchlings are terrestrial, which is different than in most other amphibian species. They remain terrestrial as adults. The zigzag salamander feeds on worms, sowbugs, centipedes, insects and spiders.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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