

red-bellied mudsnake *Farancia abacura*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Dipsadidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The red-bellied mudsnake averages 40 to 54 inches in length. It has smooth, shiny scales. The back is black while the belly has alternating red and black bars with the red bars extending onto the lowest scale rows. The tip of the tail is sharp.

BEHAVIORS

The red-bellied mudsnake may be found in extreme southern Illinois where it lives in shallow ponds, sloughs, swamps and lowlands. The red-bellied mudsnake is aquatic and also burrowing. It is active at night, hiding under a log or in a burrow in the day. It prefers areas with many rotten or water-soaked logs. It may press its blunt tail end into your hand if you try to pick up the snake, which is why it is sometimes called the “stinging snake.” Its habit of lying in a loose coil resulted in the name and fable of the “hoop snake.” Mating occurs in the spring. The female deposits 11 to 50 eggs in rotten wood or in animal burrows in early July. The female stays with the eggs until they hatch in August or September. This snake eats aquatic salamanders, other amphibians and fishes.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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