

six-lined racerunner *Aspidoscelis sexlineata*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Reptilia

Order: Squamata

Family: Teiidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The six-lined racerunner averages six to nine and one-half inches in length. It has a long tail. Tiny scales are present on the back, and rectangular scales are on the belly. Six light stripes on the back extend onto the tail. Stripes may be yellow, white, pale gray or pale blue. Two folds of skin are present on the throat. The dark part of the body may be brown or black. A young racerunner has a light blue tail.

BEHAVIORS

The six-lined racerunner may be found along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers and in extreme southeastern Illinois. It lives in open areas such as prairies, fields, thickets, rock outcrops and floodplains. It is active during the day and may frequently be seen sunning on logs, rocks, trees or buildings. It may take shelter under rocks, boards, in burrows of its own construction or in burrows of other animals. It burrows in loose soil on south- or southwest-facing slopes to overwinter. Courtship and mating occur in the spring. The male displays his colorful throat and chest during courtship. Three to five eggs are deposited by the female in late June or early July in loose soil, sand or rotten logs. Older females may produce two clutches per year. Eggs hatch in August. The racerunner eats arthropods (insects, spiders and others), particularly termites.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge; hill prairie; sand prairie

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