

thirteen-lined ground squirrel *Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The thirteen-lined ground squirrel has a small (four and one-half to six and one-half inches) body with brown fur alternating with cream-colored stripes and spots. There may be 13 lines on the back, but the number of lines is not characteristic. This mammal has small ears and a tail that is about half the size of its head-body length. The dark tail has a tan tip.

BEHAVIORS

The thirteen-lined ground squirrel may be found in the northern two-thirds of Illinois. It lives in areas of short grasses or short weeds, such as cemeteries, golf courses, parks, lawns, fencerows and roadsides. The plants must be short enough for this animal to see over them when sitting up on its hind legs. Its diet includes grasses, weeds, seeds and insects. It is active during the day. It hides, nests and hibernates in burrows it digs about one to one and one-half feet deep in the soil. Hibernation occurs from November through March. Adult males hibernate first and may enter hibernation several weeks before the adult females and young. The hibernation chamber contains a large nest, and the entrance is plugged shut. Not normally vocal, this animal will make a high-pitched noise when disturbed. Mating occurs in April and May, and young are born in the burrow during May and June. Litter size varies but is often about six. Only one litter is produced each year. Young are helpless at birth. Their eyes open about three weeks after birth. Young thirteen-lined ground squirrels leave the nest after about one month.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge

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