copperhead

Agkistrodon contortrix

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Crotalidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

adult

ILLINOIS RANGE

FEATURES

The copperhead averages 24 to 36 inches in length. It has a heat-sensitive pit on each side of the head between the eye and the nostril. The head is flattened and much wider than the neck. The pupil of its eye is vertically elliptical. Scales are weakly keeled (ridged). This snake's coloration is as follows: copper-red head; red-brown or yellow-brown body; hour-glass markings across the back when viewed from above.

BEHAVIORS

The copperhead may be found in the southern one-third of Illinois. This reptile lives in rocky, wooded hillsides, abandoned sawdust piles and swamps. The copperhead is active during the day in spring and fall, becoming nocturnal in the hottest summer months. When disturbed it will attempt to run away. If trapped, it rapidly vibrates the tip of the tail, making a noise against whatever the tail hits. This snake may be found in groups, particularly in fall when moving to hibernating dens. Mating occurs in the spring or fall. The female gives birth to a brood of between three and 10 young in August or September. Each female may produce young only every other year. This venomous snake injects prey with venom then waits for it to succumb before eating it. The copperhead eats mice, small birds, lizards, snakes, amphibians and insects.

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adults

Aquatic Habitats
swamps

Woodland Habitats
southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats
none

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