



Queen Snake (*Regina septemvittata*)

Reg-een-ah sep-tem-vit-tot-ah



**Photos by Sam Fellows*

Description: 15 to 24 inches. Queen snakes are a fairly small species of snake with keeled scales. Ground color can range from brown, grayish brown, to olive brown with two wide, paler yellow lateral stripes on each side. There may also be 1 to 3 faint, darker dorsal stripes present as well, which tend to be more evident on juvenile queen snakes. The head tend to be dark and unpatterned, with paler yellow to cream colored labial scales. The belly, or ventral surface tends to be a lighter cream color with two rows of longitudinal darker reddish-brown stripes.

Scales: Keeled

Anal Plate: Divided

Taxonomy and Classification:

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

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Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata
Class: Reptilia
Order: Squamata
Suborder: Serpentes
Infraorder: Alethinophidia
Family: Colubridae
Subfamily: Natricinae
Genus: Regina
Species: *Regina septemvittata**
**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Similar/Confusing Species: Garter snakes (*Thamnophis sp.*) usually have more well defined longitudinal stripes, and undivided anal plates. Northern water snakes (*Nerodia sipedon*) are often banded, blotched, and/or solid colored, and lack longitudinal stripes on the dorsum, laterals, and ventral surfaces.

Etymology: Regina- Regus (queen). septemvittata-septem (seven); vitta (band, stripe, ribbon).

Subspecies: None.

Range & Habitat: In Wisconsin, queen snakes occupy only the southeastern portion of the state. Queen snakes are a very habitat specific species, most often associated with open to semi open, clear, rocky streams and small to mid-sized rivers, where their preferred food source, crayfish, are found.

Habits & Natural History: Queen snakes are a fairly small species of semi aquatic snake, requiring the above mentioned habitat, where their preferred food source, freshly molten crayfish, may be found. Relatively little is known about the habits and natural history of queen snakes in Wisconsin, although this species does overwinter in nearby foundations, dams, and bridge abutments, and emerges in late April or May. Queen snake habitat and distribution have declined drastically in Wisconsin down to only two or perhaps three locales due to development and introduction of nonnative crayfish species as well as sediments, chemicals, and other pollutants into habitats which these snakes require. Ovoviviparous, or live bearing.

Phenology: Relatively little is known about queen snake natural history in Wisconsin, but as with many other snake species, they probably emerge from overwintering as early as mid to late April or May, and remain active throughout the year through late September or October (or even later into the year if warmer temperatures persist or otherwise permit).

Conservation Status: WI State Endangered, Regulated by the WI DNR. IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

Contact

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species, group of species, or this informational sheet, please email and contact the Madison Area Herpetological Society at info@madisonherps.org

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