

Eastern King Snake

Scientific Name: *Lampropeltis getula getula*



Did You Know?

- These snakes are among our largest species. Adults usually range from 36 to 60 inches in length. They are powerful constrictors.
- The "kingsnake" name refers to the fact that other snakes, including venomous species, are a principle food source for the kingsnake. They also eat rodents, lizards, birds and eggs, and turtle eggs.
- "Chain" Kingsnake is another popular name for the eastern kingsnake. The belly has scales partially colored in the same color as its dorsal bands to create the chain effect.
- The eastern kingsnake is mainly terrestrial and active during the day. They like to hide under things. In the summer months individuals may be found moving at night. They are always found near or around water.
- Their coloration makes them difficult to see in shadowed locations.
- Kingsnakes are non-venomous snakes but will bite when cornered and allowed no avenue for escape. Their jaws are quite strong and the bite can be very painful.
- They give off a smelly musk when captured by a predator. They also vibrate their tail when captured or alarmed. This can sound like a rattle in dry leaves.
- They are immune to the venoms of our indigenous venomous snakes, and they are aggressive in subduing and consuming venomous species.

Chattahoochee NATURE CENTER

General Information on Eastern Kingsnakes

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS:

Kingsnakes have smooth dorsal scales and a shiny appearance. Their heads are small and no neck is discernable. The typical eastern kingsnake is black with thin yellow to pale bands on its back and sides, forming a chainlike pattern. In some localities, specimens can be found with atypical color and patterning. The background color may be more like dark chocolate in some specimens and the bands may be almost white. The width of the bands may be greater. Sometimes the bands may be so wide that the unusual specimen appears to have dark blotches on a pale background.

RANGE:

Southern New Jersey to Northern Florida, west to the Appalachians. Other subspecies are found through the Florida peninsula and west of the Appalachians.

HABITAT:

The eastern king snake may be found in almost any habitat within its range. However, they seem to prefer wetland areas.

NESTING:

Breeding takes place from March-May. In the early summer, 3-29 eggs are laid. Hatchlings are born approximately 5-8 inches (12.7-20.3 cm) in length and they hatch in late summer.

FEEDING HABITS:

The eastern kingsnake feeds on other snakes, lizards, frogs, rodents, and birds and their eggs. In some areas, turtle eggs are the main food item. It eats venomous snakes such as rattlesnakes, and is immune to their venom. It is even known to be cannibalistic.