

## Queen Snake, *Regina septemvittata*

**Status:**

*State:* Endangered

*Federal:* Not listed

### Identification

This slender snake can reach lengths of 16-24 in. (41-61 cm) when fully grown. The dorsal (or upper) surface of a queen snake is a solid, grayish-brown color. A yellow band is present on the lower half of the body and extends from the snake's chin to its tail. The belly of the snake is a white to yellow color with four characteristic stripes that make for easy identification. Of these four stripes, the two outer stripes are visibly thicker than the inner pair. Queen snakes have keeled scales and an anal plate that is divided.



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### Habitat

This species is highly aquatic and a very adept swimmer. Authorities report that swiftly flowing creeks, brooks and streams are the preferred habitat for queen snakes (Wright and Wright 1957). But finding them along the edges of more slowly flowing rivers and streams, and sometimes lakes, is not uncommon in some states. The queen snake's diet (see below) always keeps it close to water, where it can sometimes be seen with just its head above the surface of the water. On occasion, a lucky observer might find these snakes basking in high numbers along the banks of streams and even hanging from streamside vegetation (Golden, personal observation). Such aggregations are probably unlikely in New Jersey, however. The best strategy for finding this species in the state would be to look under flat rocks and other debris along the banks of the Delaware River and its tributaries.

### Status and Conservation

With its selective diet, this species is uncommon in areas where crayfish are not abundant. In some areas, however, it can be locally abundant and easily observed. As of October 2001, the last recorded sighting of this species in New Jersey dated back to 1977. Queen snakes are also listed as endangered in the New York and are absent from all other northeastern states.