

# Queen Snake (*Regina septemvittata*)

*Pennsylvania Reptile Species of Concern*  
 State Rank: S3 (vulnerable), Global Rank: G5 (secure)

## Description

Queen snakes have an olive brown dorsum and a creamy yellow venter with four characteristic longitudinal dark stripes running the length of the belly. These slender snakes may reach up to 36 inches, but are usually between 12 and 24 inches. Adult females tend to be longer and heavier than the males. Juvenile queen snakes are similar in appearance to adults, but in older specimens the stripes on the belly may fuse and only be distinct on the chin.

## Habitat and Natural History

Queen snakes frequent areas near small to medium sized waterways, reservoir edges, and marshes where the water is unpolluted and crayfish are present. Much like the far more common northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*) queen snakes will bask in shrubs that overhang the water allowing them to drop into the water if disturbed. Queen snakes have a highly specific diet, consisting almost exclusively of newly molted, soft shelled crayfish. Predators of the queen snake are those that frequent the same aquatic habitat such as herons, mink, and raccoons.

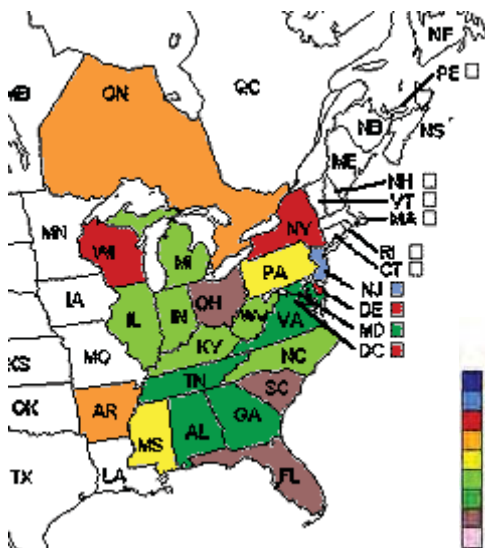
Females reach reproductive maturity in their third year while males mature in their second year. Queen snakes breed in the spring, with females birthing 4-15 live young in August.

Queen snakes are active from late April through October and then seek suitable overwintering sites such as a muskrat lodges, crayfish burrows or a crevices along the rocky areas of a stream. Queen snakes are known to hibernate communally. The species is highly tied to their aquatic habitats and is rarely found away from water.



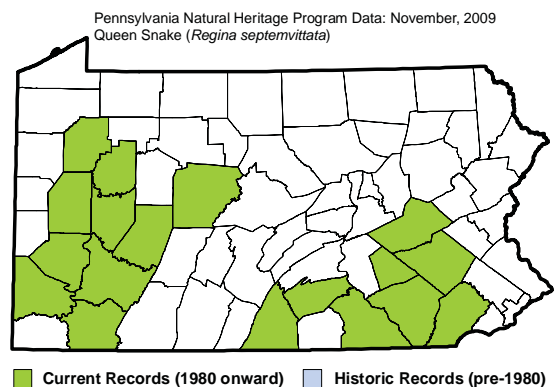
Sally Ray (PNHP)

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## Conservation Considerations

In Pennsylvania, the range of the queen snake occurs in two disjunct populations in the eastern and western sectors of the state. Being dependent on high water quality to maintain a stable food source, queen snakes are particularly susceptible to water pollution.



## References

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