

# NORTHERN SCARLETSNAKE

## *Cemophora coccinea*

---

The genus *Cemophora* is derived from the Greek “kemos” meaning muzzle and “phora” meaning to bear; referring to the pronounced rostral (nose) scale. Species *coccinea* is derived from the Latin “coccinus” meaning scarlet-colored.

### IDENTIFICATION

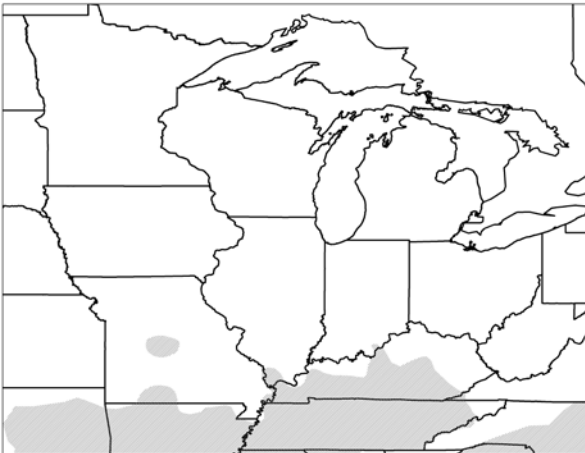
**Appearance:** The rarely seen and less frequently photographed Northern Scarlet Snake is a medium-sized snake measuring about 15 inches in length with young approximately 7 inches long. Their red to orange saddles are edged with black and are separated by yellow bands that blend with its cream belly. The head is red with a dark bar between the eyes. The young have the same pattern except that the red saddles are pink.



Jeff Briggler

**Confusing species:** The species with which the scarletsnake appears to be most frequently mistaken is the “red” phase of the Eastern Milksnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*). This is quite a reasonable error, given the similarities in coloration. However, the pronounced rostral scale on the snout of the scarletsnake is lacking on the milksnake.

### DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS



The distribution of the Northern Scarlet Snake extends from New Jersey, south to northern Florida, west to parts of Texas and Oklahoma, and north to parts of Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois, and Indiana. It is a state Endangered species in Indiana and state Imperiled in Missouri.

### ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR

The Northern Scarlet Snake prefers moist soils in forested areas that are easy to burrow into. They spend much time underground and have been found buried several feet deep. Scarlet Snakes kill young mice, small lizards, and snakes by constriction. Small eggs are swallowed whole, while larger eggs are punctured and their contents squeezed out.



Center for Reptile and Amphibian Conservation and Management  
Science Building, Indiana University-Purdue University  
2101 East Coliseum Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46805-1499  
<http://herpcenter.ipfw.edu> [herps@ipfw.edu](mailto:herps@ipfw.edu)

