Milk Snake

APPEARANCE

- 2-3.5 feet long, but usually very slender
- Light to dark gray or brown background color
- Bright or rusty red blotches with black borders on sides and back
- Belly white with clusters of black checkers
- May have a light V, Y, or spot marking on back of head

DIET

- Mice, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, reptile eggs, birds, and bird eggs

STATUS

- PROTECTED. Illegal to kill or collect in Iowa.

HABITAT

- Rocky hillsides like those found in farmlands, grasslands, and rock outcroppings. Some woodlands.

RANGE IN IOWA

- Statewide

FUN FACTS

- Non-venomous
- Called "milk" snakes because it was once believed they would enter barns and steal milk from cows, but snakes only drink water. Milk snakes found in barns are looking for rodents to eat.
- Active from April to September
- Common, but very secretive, so they are difficult to find
- Spend much of their time hiding beneath logs, rocks, boards, bark, or other debris
- May climb to find food or escape flooding
- Will have brightest coloration right after hatching
- When threatened, will coil and strike with a short, forced hiss then slither away to hide