

# Upland Snake Species Profile:

## Mole Kingsnake

*Lampropeltis calligaster  
rhombomaculata*

and South Florida Mole  
Kingsnake *L. c. occiptolineata*



**Range:** The mole kingsnake can be found from Maryland and Virginia west to Tennessee and south to South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and eastern Louisiana. Populations of this species can also be found in isolated locations throughout Florida.

**Identification:** Mole kingsnakes are a subspecies of yellow-bellied kingsnakes, and they can be identified by about 55 reddish dorsal blotches and a white or cream venter with brownish blotches. This subspecies has 21-23 midbody scale rows and typically 8 infralabials. The South Florida mole kingsnake, *L. c. occiptolineata*, can be identified by over 75 dorsal blotches and rounded or mottled brown venter blotches. This subspecies has less than 21 midbody scale rows and a dark line pattern on the back of the head.

**Natural History:** Mole kingsnakes prefer open habitats, such as savannas, meadows, fields, pasture edges and open woodlands. Due to its secretive nature, little is known regarding the biology of this species, but they are thought to be active most of the year in the southern portions of its range while they overwinter in road embankments, rock ledges and rodent burrows farther north. Males may establish a dominance system during the mating season, perhaps to control access to females.

This species has been observed actively hunting and searching for prey, primarily rodents and lizards, but they have also been observed attempting to ambush animals as they pass. Although they feed on a wide variety of prey animals, small mammals are the predominant item.



Photo: B. Johnston

**Conservation:** The mole kingsnake has been designated as a species of special concern in Louisiana and is thought to be rare in Florida. A lack of detailed studies regarding this species makes it difficult to determine the status of populations in other areas.

### Useful References:

Conant, R. and J.T. Collins. 1998. A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Houghton Mifflin Company. New York.

Ernst, C.H. and E.M. Ernst. 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution. Washington

For more information, contact:



**GOPHER TORTOISE COUNCIL**

c/o Florida Museum of  
Natural History

P. O. Box 117800

Gainesville, FL 32611-7800

[www.gophertortoisecouncil.org](http://www.gophertortoisecouncil.org)