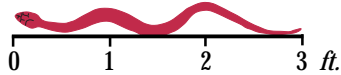
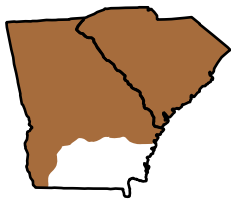


FAMILY VIPERIDAE: VENOMOUS

“pit vipers” whose fangs fold up against the roof of their mouth, such as rattlesnakes, copperheads, and cottonmouths

COPPERHEAD—*Agkistrodon contortrix*

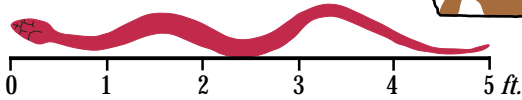
Uncommon to common. Copperheads are found in wet wooded areas, high areas in swamps, and mountainous habitats, although they may be encountered occasionally in most terrestrial habitats. Adults usually are 2 to 3 ft. long. Their general appearance is light brown or pinkish with darker, saddle-shaped crossbands. The head is solid brown. Their leaf-pattern camouflage permits copperheads to be sit-and-wait predators, concealed not only from their prey but also from their enemies. Copperheads feed on mice, small birds, lizards, snakes, amphibians, and insects, especially cicadas. Like young cottonmouths, baby copperheads have a bright yellow tail that is used to lure small prey animals.



Heat-sensing “pit” characteristic of pit vipers

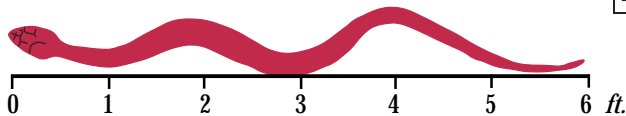
CANEBRAKE OR TIMBER RATTLESNAKE—*Crotalus horridus*

Common. This species occupies a wide diversity of terrestrial habitats, but is found most frequently in deciduous forests and high ground in swamps. Heavy-bodied adults are usually 3 to 4, and occasionally 5, ft. long. Their basic color is gray with black crossbands that usually are chevron-shaped. Timber rattlesnakes feed on various rodents, rabbits, and occasionally birds. These rattlesnakes are generally passive if not disturbed or pestered in some way. When a rattlesnake is encountered, the safest reaction is to back away—it will not try to attack you if you leave it alone.



EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE—*Crotalus adamanteus*

Rare. This rattlesnake is found in both wet and dry terrestrial habitats including palmetto stands, pine woods, and swamp margins. Adults are frequently 3 to 5 ft. long and occasionally are more than 6 ft. Their basic color is light to dark brown with distinct diamonds of a combination of brown and yellow; the tip of the tail is solid black with rattles. Eastern diamondbacks feed on rabbits, rats, and squirrels. This snake, because of its huge size and potent venom, is considered by some to be the most dangerous snake in the United States.

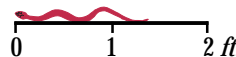


PIGMY RATTLESNAKE—*Sistrurus miliarius*

Uncommon. Pigmy rattlesnakes may occur in association with wet areas in wooded habitats or swamps, scrub oak-longleaf pine forest habitats, or other wooded sites. Individuals are heavy-bodied, but usually are only slightly more than 1 ft. long. The general color of this snake is dull gray with dark gray or brown blotches on the back and sides. The small size of the pigmy's rattles make the "buzz" difficult to hear. This species is so small and well camouflaged that people seldom see pigmy rattlers that are coiled atop pine straw or dead leaves. This snake feeds on mice, lizards, snakes, and frogs.



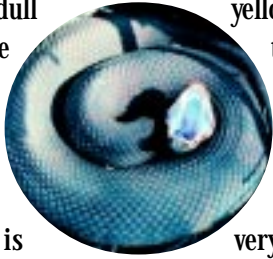
Newborn pigmy rattlesnakes



COTTONMOUTH (WATER MOCCASIN)—

Agkistrodon piscivorus

Abundant. Cottonmouths are found in association with every type of wetland habitat including estuaries, tidal creeks, and salt marshes; this species often wanders overland in search of food. Adults reach lengths of 3 to 4 ft. and often are heavy-bodied. The color pattern is variable, but the backs of adults are usually drab brown or olive with darker crossbands. The belly is a combination of dull yellow and brown and the underside of the tail usually is black. This species is unquestionably the most common venomous snake found in wetland habitat types. However, the harmless brown water snake, which is very common in aquatic areas frequented by humans, often is mistaken for the venomous cottonmouth. If disturbed, the cottonmouth will often stand its ground and give an open-mouthed threat display. Brown water snakes, when disturbed, will drop from overhanging tree limbs and flee.



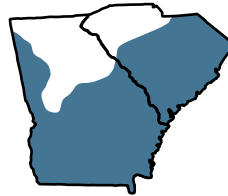
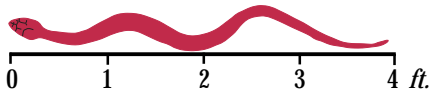
Dark phase



Light phase

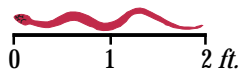
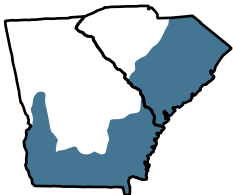


Juvenile cottonmouth



FAMILY ELAPIDAE: VENOMOUS

fixed-fang snakes such as cobras, kraits, and coral snakes



EASTERN CORAL SNAKE—*Micrurus fulvius*

Rare. Eastern coral snakes are found in association with a wide variety of terrestrial habitats including wooded areas, fields, and margins of aquatic areas. Adults reach about 2 ft. in length. Red, yellow, and black rings encircle the body. The narrow yellow rings touch the red rings, a pattern distinguishing this species from the scarlet kingsnake and the scarlet snake. The nose is always black, followed by a wide yellow band. This snake feeds on small snakes and lizards. Coral snakes, which belong to the same family as Old World cobras and kraits, have short, fixed fangs in the front of the mouth. The potential seriousness of a bite from this species warrants a universal warning not to pick up a snake in this region of the country--no matter how pretty--without being certain of its identity.