Venomous Snakes of South Carolina

Copperhead

The copperhead is South Carolina's most common venomous snake. Found throughout our state, the copperhead can reach a length of 6 feet. However, the average adult is about 3 feet long. Copperheads are often found in riverine swamps, floodplains, lake edges, coastal plain edges, and in forested areas, especially near water. Their venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain and paralysis in humans. Copperheads are usually ground-dwelling but can climb trees and bushes. They are most active at night and during the cooler parts of the year. Copperheads do not have a rattle, but the rattle at the end of the tail is a warning signal to potential predators.

Coral Snake

The coral snake is the most venomous snake in our state and the most dangerous snake in the world. It is a small, brightly colored snake with red, yellow, and black bands that are arranged in a characteristic banded pattern. The coral snake's venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain, paralysis, and death if left untreated. Coral snakes are not aggressive and will only bite if handled or provoked. They are found in wooded areas, especially near water. Coral snakes hibernate during the winter and emerge in the spring to hunt small mammals, birds, and other snakes.

Cottonmouth

The cottonmouth is the only dangerously venomous snake found in South Carolina. It is a large, dark-colored snake that is often mistaken for a water snake due to its distinctive white belly. The cottonmouth's venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain, swelling, and paralysis if left untreated. Cottonmouths are most active at night and tend to hide in aquatic habitats such as ponds, creeks, and rivers. They are primarily nocturnal and will often burrow into the mud or hide in rocks and other debris. Cottonmouths can be found in a variety of habitats, including coastal marshes, wetlands, and even in freshwater streams.

Pigmy Rattlesnake

The pigmy rattlesnake is the smallest species of venomous snake in South Carolina. It is a small, dark-colored snake that is often mistaken for a water snake. Pigmy rattlesnakes are found in a variety of habitats, including forests, grasslands, and wetlands. They are most active at night and will often burrow into the ground to hide from predators. Pigmy rattlesnakes are not aggressive and will only bite if handled or provoked. Their venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain and swelling if left untreated.

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is one of the largest snakes in North America. It is a predator of small mammals, birds, and other reptiles. The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is most active during the warmer months and can be found in a variety of habitats, including forests, grasslands, and wetlands. They are most active at night and will often burrow into the ground to hide from predators. Their venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain and swelling if left untreated.

Timber Rattlesnake

The timber rattlesnake is one of the most common snakes in North America. It is a predator of small mammals, birds, and other reptiles. The timber rattlesnake is most active during the warmer months and can be found in a variety of habitats, including forests, grasslands, and wetlands. They are most active at night and will often burrow into the ground to hide from predators. Their venom is a neurotoxin that can cause severe pain and swelling if left untreated.

Venomous snakes are not uncommon, especially in the sandhills region of South Carolina. They occur in a variety of habitats but are seldom found in the low country. Pigmy rattlesnakes are found throughout South Carolina, with the exception of the mountains. They tend to over-winter singly in stump-holes and other subterranean structures. The best protection against snakebite is to remain aware and how to identify them, and to avoid trying to kill venomous snakes. Many people are bitten or harmed when trying to approach or catch a venomous snake. The likelihood of envenomation in South Carolina is extremely low. You are more likely to die choking on food or falling down stairs than by the bite of a venomous snake. In the unlikely event of a venomous snakebite, it is best not to treat and let the physician keep the victim calm and get him or her to medical attention as quickly as possible.