Copperhead

The copperhead is South Carolina’s most common venomous snake. Found throughout our state, the copperhead can reach a length of 4 feet; however, the average adult is smaller and usually a 2- to 3-foot snake. This species is found in the sandhills of the southern coast, in longleaf pine forests, on sandy ridges, and in other wooded areas. Copperheads are quite bold and will approach humans. Their colors can vary from brown to yellow, and their pattern can range from solid to spotted. Copperheads are not aggressive, but if threatened, they will strike. Copperheads can be identified by their coppery head and dark brown hourglass-shaped cross-bands overlying a pink-orange back. The head is typically a uniform copper color. Copperheads occur in a wide range of habitats including mountain caves, pinewoods, coastal plain, powerline ditches, longleaf pine forests, and farmland. Copperheads feed on a variety of prey including small rodents, fungi, lizards, and birds.

Coral Snake

The coral snake in South Carolina is only representative of a group of snakes known as pit vipers. The head is triangular in cross-section and is flanked by two parietal pits on top of the head. The pit vipers include the following species: copperhead, coral snake, and cottonmouth. Of the pit vipers in South Carolina, most are venomous; however, the coral snake is not venomous. The coral snake’s colors range from dark brown to black; the head is predominantly red, while the back is light tan to cream-white. Coral snakes are quite different both in appearance and behavior from these snakes. Coral snakes are not pit vipers, as are the other venomous snakes, and are quite different in appearance and behavior. Coral snakes are not venomous.

Cottonmouth

The cottonmouth, also known as the water moccasin, is a large snake of wetlands and swamps. Adult cottonmouths are typically 2 to 4 feet in length with a body that is pink to light orange in color. The sides of the body are dark brown to black, and the underparts are white. The cottonmouth is common throughout the coastal plain and swamps. Cottonmouths are almost always, associated with some type of wetland. They occur in rivers, streams, swamps, and floodplains. Cottonmouths and cottonmouths are a part of South Carolina’s environment and play a vital role in controlling rodent populations in most habitats. Their venomous appearance, including large fangs and venom glands, has led to a belief that cottonmouths will not strike; typically only used in defense as a last resort. The best protection against snakebite is to remain aware and alert while in the woods. Try to stay on trails that offer good visibility of the ground. If you come across a snake that you believe may be a cottonmouth, slowly back away slowly while you observe and do not attempt to interact with it. The likelihood of snakebite in South Carolina is extremely low. You are more likely to die choking on food or falling down stairs than from the bite of a venomous snake. In the unlikely event of a venomous snake bite, be as calm as possible. Keep the victim calm and get him or her to medical attention as quickly as possible.

Venomous Snakes of South Carolina

There are thirty-eight species of snakes found in South Carolina, with adults seldom reaching over a foot in length. Background color can vary from dark, sandy soil to light tan or pink. Dark brown hourglass-patterned cross-bands are another form of the coral snake. In the coastal plain, the timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, are quite different both in appearance and behavior from these snakes. The tail is typically a uniform copper color. Copperheads occur in a wide range of habitats including mountain caves, pinewoods, coastal plain, powerline ditches, longleaf pine forests, and farmland. Copperheads feed on a variety of prey including small rodents, fungi, lizards, and birds.

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is the largest venomous snake in the eastern United States. They can reach up to 7 feet in length and are found in a variety of habitats, including marshes, swamps, and wetlands. Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes are ambush predators, waiting in ambush for prey to approach them. All of South Carolina’s pit vipers have vertically elliptical (cat’s eye) pits that are used to detect warm-blooded prey. They feed primarily on rabbits, small rodents, and other small animals. Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes can be confused with harmless scarlet snakes, which are found in South Carolina and are quite different from the diamondback. This snake has a triangular head, with two distinct parietal pits on the top of the head. Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes have a more slender body than scarlet snakes. The female diamondback is the only venomous species of pit vipers.

Pigmy Rattlesnake

The pigmy rattlesnake is the smallest pit viper in South Carolina, with adults seldom reaching over a foot in length. Background color can vary from dark, sandy soil to light tan or pink. Dark brown hourglass-patterned cross-bands are another form of the coral snake. In the coastal plain, the timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, and the piedmont-coastal form, referred to as timber rattlesnake, are quite different both in appearance and behavior from these snakes. The tail is typically a uniform copper color. Copperheads occur in a wide range of habitats including mountain caves, pinewoods, coastal plain, powerline ditches, longleaf pine forests, and farmland. Copperheads feed on a variety of prey including small rodents, fungi, lizards, and birds.

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