

SOUTH CAROLINA VENOMOUS SNAKES



EASTERN DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE

Usually less than 6' long • Black/brown/gray with darker diamonds outlined in white/yellow on back • Black diagonal stripe on the side triangular-shaped head • Does not always rattle in the wild • Declining through much of the range due to urbanization and intentional killing.



CANEBRAKE / TIMBER RATTLESNAKE

Usually less than 5.5' long • Brown/yellow/gray (or pinkish toward the coast) background with black bars (“chevrons”) and a brown/rust-colored stripe on back • Pattern transitions into a more solid black toward tail • Solid tan head • Rarely rattles in the wild • Local declines due to urbanization and intentional killing.



PIGMY RATTLESNAKE

Usually less than 2' long • Gray (light or dark) background with black squares outlined in white • Orange/pink stripe on back extends on to head • Solid black around mouth • Tiny rattle that is practically inaudible • Locally abundant, but mostly in Florida. **Similar nonvenomous species:** [southern hognose](#), juvenile [eastern hognose](#).



COPPERHEAD

JD Willson

Usually less than 3.5' long • Light to dark brown or grey background with darker brown hourglass or saddleback shapes across back • Solid-colored "copper" head • Sometimes rattles tail against leaves, particularly younger individuals • Most common venomous snake in the area but also has the mildest venom.



COTTONMOUTH / WATER MOCCASIN

JD Willson

Usually less than 4' long • Dark brown/black/tan background with lighter brown or yellow markings but can be solid black as adults • Babies look similar to copperheads with darker bands on lighter background • Black band across the eye on head above mouth • Gapes and exposes white mouth and shakes tail when cornered and can't flee • Nonvenomous watersnakes are commonly mistaken for cottonmouths and killed. **Similar nonvenomous species:** [banded watersnake](#), [northern watersnake](#).



CORAL SNAKE

C Young

Usually less than 4' long • Red bands always touch yellow bands (vs. red touches black on scarlet snakes and scarlet kingsnakes) • Black nose/head • Slender snakes with small heads • Incredibly secretive and usually hidden. **Similar nonvenomous species:** [scarlet kingsnake](#), [scarlet snake](#).

Reference: Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, Univ. of Georgia

