



Two of the five subspecies of copperhead snakes are found in Alabama. The northern copperhead (*A. c. mokeson*) and the southern copperhead (*A. c. contortrix*) are both stout-bodied snakes. The head is noticeably wider than the neck. The top of their head is a copper color, hence the name copperhead. Dark “hourglass cross bands” are common to both species. The body may be colored from a light brown to tan or pinkish in the southern copperhead. Both belong to a group of snakes commonly called “pit vipers”. Copperheads have elliptical pupils. Pit vipers have a set of well developed fangs capable of injecting venom.



The eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*) It is a heavy-bodied snake that can reach lengths close to seven feet, although the average adult is four to five feet. The tail is short and stout with a rattle or button at the end. The rattle is composed of hollow, interlocking segments that click against each other when the tail vibrates. The topside of the snake contains the characteristic yellow diamond shapes surrounding black and brown centers. The belly is generally yellowish to white. The large and distinctive head is marked with a dark band extending obliquely from each eye to the lips. A heat sensitive “pit” is located on each side of the head between the eye and nostril.

Venomous Snakes

**Directorate of Public Safety
in conjunction
with Department of
Natural Resources**



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Eastern cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) They are generally dark above – olive, brown, or black. A lighter to darker cross-banding pattern may be seen, especially on the sides. Adult snakes usually vary in length from 30 to 48 inches up to a maximum of 74 inches. Juveniles are brightly-colored with reddish-brown cross-bands and have a sulfur-colored tail. The reddish-brown cross-bands contain many dark spots and speckles but darken with age so adults retain only a hint of the former banding or are a uniform black. The scales are keeled. The eye is camouflaged by a broad, dark, facial strip. The head is thick and distinctly broader than the neck and, when viewed from above. Eye pupils are vertical.



There are three subspecies of pigmy rattlesnakes (Carolina pigmy, dusky pigmy and western pigmy), all of which occur in Alabama. Generally, pigmy rattlesnakes, as their name would imply, are miniature rattlesnakes. Sometimes referred to as “ground rattlers”, they range in length from 15 to 24 inches at maturity, and when in a coiled position are roughly the size of a loblolly pine cone. The tip of their tail contains a very small delicate rattle or button that is not much wider than the end of the tail itself. When vibrated for a warning, the rattle is often difficult to hear and has been compared to the sound of an insect buzzing.

Snakes like hiding places. Keep yards clear of places they can hide. Flower beds are ideal habitat for snakes. Before working in flower bed make sure that it is clear. Do not reach in with your hands, use a stick or tool to check.



Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) are heavy-bodied snakes with a broad head that is distinct from its narrow neck. Adult timber rattlesnakes average 36 to 60 inches in total length. The coloration of this species varies from blackish to yellowish to pinkish, or grayish with dark, bent crossbands aligned along the dorsal length of its body. On many specimens a reddish dorsal stripe runs between the crossbands. The velvety black tail is short and thick, tipped with a tan rattle.

Do not handle any reptiles venomous or non-venomous. Contact the Directorate of Public Safety. If you are able, take a photo of the snake, this will help with identification. Always, remain calm, move away from the snake slowly. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO CATCH OR TOUCH the snake.