Venomous Snakes of Northeast Florida

Del Webb Men’s Club
October 22, 2015
Snakes of Florida

• 45 species (and many more ssp.)
• Only 6 are venomous
• Approx. 34 species in our area
• Only 4 venomous in our area
• Most commonly encountered (Urban)
  – Black Racer
  – Corn or Rat Snakes
  – Banded Water Snake
Identifying Snakes in Northeast Florida

Venomous snakes in our area:

- Coral Snake
- Cottonmouth
- Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake
- Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake
National Statistics on Snake Bites in the U.S.A.

- 40,000 bites occur annually
- 8,000-10,000 of these are venomous
- 8-12 fatalities occur due to bites per year
- 90% of bites are between April and October
Statistic on Venomous Snake Bites

- 10-15% are Dry bites
- 85% mild to moderate
- 15% critical
- 50% of snake bites occur on the hand
- 60% handling the snake
- 20% - 40% are intoxicated
- 80% of people bitten are males between 18 and 45 years old
Venom Yields / Lethal Doses

- Cottonmouth (Water Moccasin) yield 100 to 150 mg. The lethal dose is 150 mg.
- Pygmy Rattlesnake yield 20 mg. The lethal dose is 100 to 125 mg.
- Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake yield 500 mg. The lethal dose is 100 mg. Death may occur in 6 hours.
Lethal Doses (continued)

- Eastern Coral Snake yield 3 to 5 mg. The lethal dose is 4 to 6 mg
- Copperhead yield 40 to 70 mg. The lethal dose is 100 mg
- Canebrake Rattlesnake yield 100-200 mg. The lethal dose is 150 mg
Florida Snakebites

- Snakebites
- Venomous
- Keeper

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United States Fatality Statistics

Approximate Number of U.S. Deaths per Year

- Lung Cancer: 1,624,600
- Car/Motorcycle Accident: 375,940
- Lightning Strike: 54
- Hornet, Bee or Wasp Sting: 53
- Dog Bite/Attack: 21
- Spider Bite: 7
- Snake Bite: 6
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

- Largest venomous snake in North America
- Average adult size is 3-5 feet, record length, 8 feet
- Occurs throughout the entire state
- Prefers upland habitats
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake
Florida Cottonmouth

- Average adult size is 2-4 feet, record length 6 feet 2 inches
- Occurs throughout the entire state
- Prefers wetlands, waterways and areas near wetlands
Florida Cottonmouth
Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake

- Average adult size is 1 - 2 feet, record length is 2 feet 7 inches
- Occurs throughout the entire state
- Occupies a variety of habitats
Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake
Eastern Coral Snake

- Average adult size is 2-3 feet, record length is 3 feet 10 inches
- Occurs throughout the entire state
- Occupies a variety of habitats
- Secretive and are usually found under debris or while digging in the ground
Eastern Coral Snake
Snakes of our Area

Non-venomous snakes you may encounter in your yard, while hiking or conducting other outdoor activities
Identifying Snakes in Northeast Florida

- Common non-venomous snakes in our area:
  - Southern Black Racer
  - Corn Snake
  - Eastern Garter Snake
  - Yellow Rat Snake
  - Banded Water Snake
Identifying Snakes in Northeast Florida

• Other non-venomous snakes in our area:

- Rough Green Snake
- Eastern King Snake
- Scarlet King Snake
- Pine Woods Snake
- Southern Ringneck Snake
- Peninsular Ribbon Snake
First Aid: Do

• Move away from the snake to avoid multiple bites
• Call 911 Immediately and seek medical care
• Remember any details you can about the snake’s color, size, pattern, location (habitat type), head shape
• For humans call the Poison Control Hotline...
  800-222-1222 and they will communicate with the emergency crew
• Remain calm – the more you move the faster your heart pumps
• Remove jewelry and tight clothing immediately
First Aid: Do

• Keep the bite at or below the heart if possible
• Note the time of the bite and symptoms
• Wash the wound gently with a mild soap and water – do not irrigate the wound
• Use a pen to mark the edge of the swelling around the bite every 15 minutes. This will help your doctor estimate how the venom is moving in your body.
• Cover lightly with a clean dry dressing but do not apply pressure
First Aid: Don’t

• Do not attempt to capture the snake – even if you think it’s dead
• Do not attempt to suck venom from the bite wound
• Do not make cuts over the snake bite...this often leads to more tissue trauma and damage
• Do not apply a tourniquet or other constricting device
• Do not apply a cold pack or ice to the snake bite
• Do not apply an electrical shock to the snake bite
• Do not take pain reliever or other medications unless instructed to do so by a physician
• Do not drink alcoholic beverages
• Do not administer anti-venom in the field...treatment for snake bites is best conducted in an appropriate medical facility
Reduce your chances of being bitten

• Be careful when working in gardens
• Roll logs with your foot before reaching under them
• Wear proper attire when in natural areas (boots, long pants)
• Never pick up a snake – even if you think it’s nonvenomous
• Give the snake an escape route
• Do not try to get close to ID or take a picture (snakes can strike up to 2/3 their body length)
• DO NOT TRY TO KILL THE SNAKE – if you can kill it, you are too close – many snake bites involve people handling or trying to kill a snake
• Call a professional to assist with removal if the snake is stationary or in your home
Snake “Prevention”

- Reduce or manage good snake habitat in your yard
  - Cut grass regularly and do not allow it to get overgrown
  - Keep shrubs and tree branches trimmed away from the house and up off of the ground
  - Keep leaf litter raked
  - Keep brush or wood piles away from the house and any areas you would not want snakes
  - Store firewood on a rack neatly stacked – not on the ground
Snake “Prevention”

• Seal up your house
  • Check doors, windows, walls and the roof for gaps (some snakes can fit through an opening as small as a pencil)
  • Check areas where wiring or plumbing enters the house
  • Use hardware cloth to cover areas that need to stay open (pool drains, chimney stacks, outside vent opening for your dryer)
  • Pet doors don’t discriminate against non-domesticated wildlife
  • Outdoor cats don’t always kill wildlife, they also bring it inside oftentimes still alive

• Rodent proofing is snake proofing
  • Keep garages and sheds clutter free
  • Seal up pet food and do not leave food outside for pets or wildlife
  • Keep doors for garages and homes closed and seal all holes
Snake “Prevention”

• Fencing such as privacy fencing can deter snakes

• A small low fence (6” deep and 2-3’ high) can also deter snakes
  • Silt fencing or aluminum flashing is often used for this purpose
  • These are optimally placed on your property where it is adjacent to wetlands or natural areas
  • If the whole area is not fenced, point the ends “outward” toward natural habitats to get the snakes going in the right direction

• Make sure posts are on the inside of the fencing
• Make sure shrubs and bushes don’t overhang the fencing
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