

Cottonmouth or Water Moccasin (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*)

- Most aquatic of Florida's venomous snakes.
- Average adult length: 2-4 feet but can reach 6 feet.
- Cottonmouths prefer the margins of lakes, rivers, ponds, and wetlands.
- Feed on frogs, fish, rats, mice, and other small mammals.
- As a defensive behavior, a Cottonmouth may coil its body and open its mouth wide to reveal the cotton-white interior, hence its common name, 'cottonmouth.' If not further harassed, Cottonmouths usually will flee from the threat.
- Like all members of the viper family, this snake gives birth to live young.

Florida Distribution: Statewide



Appearance

Young Cottonmouths are brightly colored with reddish-brown crossbands and a yellow tail. Young cottonmouths look very similar to the Copperhead snake.

Adults typically are uniformly dark brown or black but they may have a faint or distinct crossband pattern. Juveniles, in particular, have a dark stripe that runs from the eye across the face to the back of the head. Scales are keeled. Several species of harmless water snakes are often mistaken as Cottonmouths. Although water snakes are not venomous, they tend to be aggressive and quick to bite. To avoid confusion and the potential for being bitten, it is best to leave all water snakes alone.



Adult Cottonmouth



Juvenile Cottonmouth