

Snakes are perhaps the most maligned animals in Kentucky. Yet these animals have fascinating life histories, exhibit beautiful color patterns and play critical ecological roles in Kentucky's environment.

Of the 33 snake species found in Kentucky, only four are venomous. Venomous snakes include the Copperhead, Western Cottonmouth (water moccasin), Timber Rattlesnake, and Pigmy Rattlesnake.

While venomous snakes should be respected and approached with caution, most snakes encountered in Kentucky are harmless and beneficial because they eat mice and other rodents.

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College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
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For more information about UK Forestry Extension, please visit <http://ukforestry.org>.

Photo Credits:
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If you would like to purchase a Venomous Snakes of Kentucky poster for \$4 each, please contact Forestry Extension at 859.257.7597.

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Venomous Snakes of KENTUCKY

FORFS 18-02



Kentucky Snakes Website
<http://kysnakes.ca.uky.edu/>

Snake Characteristics

HEAD SHAPE



Round Head
• non-venomous



Triangle Head
• non-venomous

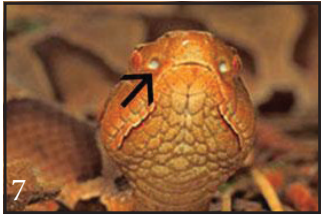


Triangle Head
• non-venomous

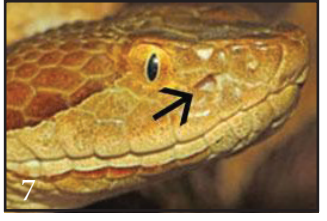


Triangle Head
• venomous

PIT (venomous)



Front View Pit

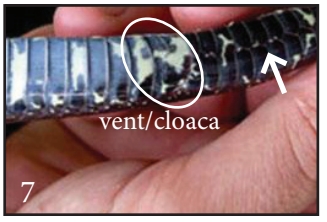


Pit

SCALE ARRANGEMENT



Single Row
• venomous



Double Row
• non-venomous

COPPERHEAD



- Most common venomous snake in Kentucky
- Dull gray to orange in color with hourglass or "Hershey's kisses" pattern
- Adults 2-3 feet long
- Commonly confused with other banded snake like eastern milksnakes
- Important for controlling rat and mouse populations



Young snakes are usually more brightly colored with tail tip colored lime-green or yellow



TIMBER RATTLE SNAKE



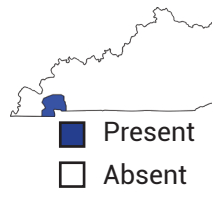
- Kentucky's largest venomous snake
- Can reach 5 feet in length
- Overkilling and road mortality has caused populations to decline throughout their range
- Most distinctive feature is the rattle found on the tail
- Banded, with coloration ranging from light to dark gray



PYGMY RATTLE SNAKE



- Kentucky's smallest and rarest venomous snake at less than 2 feet in length
- Range is limited to Land Between the Lakes area
- Key features are dusky gray-brown pattern with black spots along the sides and center of the back



Often confused with the eastern hognose due to their similar markings. Hognose snakes have a distinctly upturned snout and are found throughout Kentucky



COTTONMOUTH



- The cottonmouth gained its name from its defensive habit of gaping its mouth when threatened
- Adults will be about 3 feet in length
- Found in or near bodies of water and swamps
- Cottonmouths prey on frogs, fish, rodents, and other snakes
- Common watersnakes are often mistaken for cottonmouths because they frequent the same habitats



Young snakes have an irregular triangular band pattern that fades into a solid chocolate brown or black as they age

