

Coral Snake

Description: Body with narrow yellow rings that alternatively separate wide dark red bands (which typically contain irregular black spots) and black bands. Tail and head are alternatively banded with yellow and black. Reaches a total length of 3½ feet.

Habits: Fairly common in pine forests, but highly secretive and rarely observed. When disturbed, it is typically (but not always) inoffensive, refusing to bite and sometimes hiding its head under its body (while curling and raising its tail in the air). A coral snake bite causes the nervous system to malfunction.



Venomous Snakebite

Nearly all snakebites occur on an appendage (e.g., hands, arms, legs, or feet). If a venomous snakebite occurs, the spread of venom through the victim's body can be slowed and limited by wrapping the bitten appendage above the site of the bite (e.g., nearer the victim's torso) with a flexible material such as gauze, cloth, leather, etc., making certain it is not wrapped so tight as to impede blood flow. The bitten appendage should then be immobilized with a sling or similar type of device to the greatest extent practicable. Then the victim should be rushed to the nearest medical facility for further evaluation and potential treatment. Do not offer the victim alcohol, cut the area of the bite, or attempt to suck out the venom, all of which will worsen the situation.

If a snakebite occurs, and it is uncertain whether the snake is venomous or non-venomous, attempt to safely take a photo of the snake (e.g., staying outside its strike range – a minimum of five feet should suffice) and promptly send it to a wildlife expert for identification. An attempt to kill the snake should only be made as a last resort; doing so poses additional safety risks. If in doubt about the snake's identification, and if the identification cannot be made through a photo or the specimen itself, then the snakebite victim should be rushed to the nearest medical facility as a precaution.

Disclaimer: the producers of this brochure are not liable for any harm or injuries that occur as a result of a venomous snakebite under any circumstances, whether it be purely accidental or otherwise.

Guide to Venomous Snakes on Military Installations

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Louisiana is home to a wide diversity of snakes, only five of which are venomous.

Taking a few simple precautionary measures will greatly decrease the likelihood of an accident; in particular, pay attention to where you place your hands or feet, and try to avoid thickly vegetated areas. If you encounter a snake while in the field, do not try to capture or kill it; most accidents occur while the snake is being molested, and the majority of snakes encountered in the field are non-venomous.

Prepared
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Cottonmouth



Description: Body of smaller individuals has broad dark brown bands (lighter towards the center, and wider towards the base) separated by medium brown bands (wider towards the top). Tail of smaller individuals is yellow. Regardless of size, all individuals have a solid dark brown band that extends from the nostril, through the eye, to the side of the neck, and bordered above and below with a white line. Reaches a total length of 6 feet, although most individuals are closer to half this size.

Habits: Very common, especially in smaller creeks and the backwaters of larger water bodies. When disturbed, it may quickly slither towards cover if such is available. If not, it will coil up, flatten its head, and open its mouth to expose the white interior. Occasional individuals may flee towards a person if the nearest hiding place is the other side of the person.

Copperhead



Description: Body has broad dark brown bands (lighter towards the center, and wider towards the base) separated by light brown bands (wider towards the top). Tail of smaller individuals is yellow. As individuals become larger, tail coloration becomes darker until it is blackish. Head is medium brown above and light brown below. Reaches a total length of 4 feet.

Habits: Relatively common in most wooded areas, but seldom observed due to its sedentary habits and camouflaged color pattern. When disturbed, it may quickly slither towards cover. However, often it will remain motionless in the hope that it is overlooked.

Timber/Canebrake Rattlesnake



Description: Body has broad light gray or light brown bands, separated by narrow, jagged-edged, black bands that may occasionally be "broken" on the side. Often with a broad brownish-orange stripe that runs along the middle of the back. Tail is predominately blackish. Head is predominately light gray or light brown, with a dark brown stripe that extends diagonally and downwards from behind the eye. Reaches a total length of 6 feet, although most individuals are closer to half this size.

Habits: Rare, and typically confined to hardwood forests associated with wetlands or other water bodies. It is highly sedentary and well camouflaged, and therefore very seldom observed. Tends to coil in a certain location for an extended period of time and await the passage of potential prey. When disturbed, it may slowly slither towards cover, but will often remain motionless in the hope that it is overlooked, and may only rattle as a last resort.

Pygmy Rattlesnake



Description: Body is light gray or light brown, with a row of dark brown or black spots that runs along the middle of the back, directly below which is another row of similarly-colored spots that runs along the lower side. Often with a light brownish-orange stripe that runs along the middle of the back (visible only between the dark spots). Reaches a total length of 3 feet.

Habits: Relatively common in most wooded areas, but seldom observed due to its small size, sedentary habits, and camouflaged color pattern. It tends to coil in a certain location for an extended period of time and await the passage of potential prey.