

SNAKES OF NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina is home to 38 snake species, most of which are nonvenomous. This handout lists nonvenomous snake species, by average adult size, from smallest to largest. Venomous species are listed by family.



Worm Snake (*Carphophis amoenus*). Common-found statewide under rotting logs; in soil in damp woodlands, backyards, cool, moist hardwood forests. Feeds primarily on worms. Avg. length-9"



Ringneck Snake (*Diadophis punctatus*). Common-found statewide under rotting logs, leaf litter; flowerbeds. Light yellow or orange ring around neck; yellow belly with dashed line. Eats worms, salamanders. Avg. length-12"



Rough Earth Snake (*Haldea striatula*). Common-found in Piedmont & Coastal Plain underground in rotting logs; flowerbeds, around homes; similar to Smooth Earth Snake but with keeled scales. Eats mostly worms. Avg. length-9"



Smooth Earth Snake (*Virginia valeriae*). Found statewide except northwestern NC, underground in forested areas. Similar to Rough Earth Snake but with smooth scales, often tiny, black dots on back. Avg. length-9"



Pine Woods Snake (*Rhadinaea flavilata*). Found in southeastern NC, in pine flatwoods, oak forests, under rotting logs, loose bark. Avg. length-12"



Southeastern Crowned Snake (*Tantilla coronata*). Most common in Piedmont & southeastern NC, in sandy woodlands, flatwoods, sandhills, under rocks/logs. Eats mostly centipedes, other invertebrates. Avg. length-9"



Northern Brown Snake (*Storeria dekayi*). Common-found statewide in vacant lots; forested areas, flowerbeds, under trash, logs, rocks. Eats slugs, worms, snails. Avg. length-10"



Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*). Common-found statewide in moist woodlands, under logs; flowerbeds, gardens, rocks; Belly is orange or red. Eats worms, snails, soft-bodied insects. Avg. length-9"



Rough Green Snake (*Opheodrys aestivus*). Common-found statewide except northwestern NC, in trees, grasses, other dense vegetation. Eats insects, spiders; Green with white or yellow belly; Avg. adult length-2'



Eastern Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*); Common statewide usually in or near wet areas; lives in nearly every habitat; Identified by checkered spotting on back/sides; Eats fish, worms, insects. Avg. length-1.75' (Photo: Jodie Owen)



Eastern Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis sauritus*); Found in Piedmont, Coastal Plain, southern Mtns., near ponds, canals, streams, marshes; excellent swimmers; Eats small frogs, salamanders. Avg. length-1.75' (Photo: John Mosesso)



Mole Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis rhombomaculata*); Found in Piedmont; Coastal Plain; Cherokee Cty, in old fields, farmland, wooded areas. Spends most time underground. Eats lizards, rodents, other snakes. Avg. length-3'



Scarlet Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis elapsoides*); Uncommon-found statewide in rotting logs; under bark, in pine forests. Looks similar to Eastern Coral Snake but has red nose, yellow/red bands separated by black. Avg. length-1.5'



Eastern Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*). Found in Mtns., on wooded slopes, grassy fields, under large stones. Like its close cousin, the Scarlet Kingsnake, eats small snakes, lizards, mice. Avg. length-2.25' (Photo: Dave Badger)



Northern Scarlet Snake (*Cemophora coccinea*). Found in Piedmont, Coastal Plain, in oak, pine forests with sandy soil, mostly underground. Similar to Scarlet Kingsnake but with white or yellow belly. Avg. length-1.5'

Blue text indicates nonvenomous snake;
 Red text indicates venomous snake;
 Green text indicates "Protected Species"
 (Endangered; Threatened or State Special Concern).
Learn more: ncwildlife.org/snakes; ncparc.org

Photos: Jeff Hall (unless otherwise indicated; Carolina Water Snake-Nathan Shepard)



Eastern Hognose Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*); Found statewide; upturned snout; defensive posture includes spreading neck; usually dark with darker splotches; sometimes all black. Avg. length-2.25' (Left photo: John G. Best)



Southern Hognose Snake (*Heterodon simus*); Protected-Threatened. Rare, found in sandy fields, woods in Coastal Plain, Sandhills. Eats toads, other amphibians. Avg. length-1.5'



Northern Pine Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*). Protected-Threatened. Rare, found in Sandhills and south Coastal Plain. Eats rodents. Live mostly underground. Avg. length-4.5'



Black Racer (*Coluber constrictor*). Common-found statewide in nearly all habitats; often confused with Rat Snake but has uniform black color (often with white chin), slender body, smooth scales; Avg. length-4' (Photo: Jodie Owen)



Eastern Coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*). Found in Sandhills, southeast Coastal Plain; declining populations due to habitat destruction. Eats lizards, mice, snakes. Like racers, very fast. Longest snake in NC. Avg. length-4'



Corn Snake (*Elaphe guttata*). Common-found statewide except northern counties, around edges of old fields, clearings; under tin, dead trees/logs. Eats rodents, lizards, treefrogs. Often mistaken for Copperhead. Avg. length-3'



Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*). Common-found statewide in all habitats, including urban areas. Excellent climber; Can be black (Piedmont/Mtns) or yellowish green with stripes (Coastal Plain). Avg. length-5' (Left photo: Jodie Owen)



Eastern Kingsnake (l) (*Lampropeltis getula getula*). Found statewide, except northwest counties. **Outer Banks Kingsnake** (*Lampropeltis g. sticticeps*) Found in Outer Banks from Cape Hatteras to Cape Lookout. Avg. length-3.5'



Carolina (Black) Swamp Snake (*Liodytes pygaea*). Protected-Special Concern. Found in coast in ponds, swamps, other shallow waters. Rarely found out of water. Eats leeches, small fish, tadpoles. Avg. length-13"



Banded Water Snake (*Nerodia fasciata*). Found in Coastal Plain, in all freshwater habitats, most abundant in marshes, ponds. Often confused with Cottonmouth. Feeds on fish, frogs, tadpoles. Avg. length-2.75'



Northern Water Snake (l) (*Nerodia sipedon*). Found in n. Coastal Plain, Piedmont, Mtns., in/around water. **Carolina Water Snake (r)** (*Nerodia s. williamengelsi*). Found in areas surrounding Pamlico/Core sounds, OBX. Avg. length-2.75'



Red-bellied Water Snake (*Nerodia erythrogaster*). Found in eastern Piedmont; Coastal Plain in lakes, swamps, rivers; will travel far from water. Eats frogs, toads, and salamanders. Avg. length-3.25'



Brown Water Snake (*Nerodia taxispilota*); Usually found in rivers, large streams in Coastal Plain, large rivers in Piedmont. Often confused with Cottonmouth. Eats primarily catfish. Avg. length-3.5'



Glossy Crayfish Snake (*Liodytes rigida*). Found in lower Coastal Plain in canals, swamps, wetlands. Sometimes basks in trees. Very secretive, rarely encountered, not much is known about them. Avg. length-1.5'



Queen Snake (*Regina septemvittata*); Found in western Piedmont, Mtns., along rocky streams, small rivers. Often found in tree limbs that overhang the water where they drop if disturbed. Avg. length-1.75' (Photo: Jeff Beane)



Eastern Mud Snake (*Farancia abacura*); Found in Coastal Plain, in swamps, marshes, bays, slow-moving waterbodies. Very secretive, so rarely encountered. Eats mainly aquatic salamanders. Avg. length-3.5'



Rainbow Snake (*Farancia erythrogramma*). Found in eastern, southern Coastal Plain, in large streams, lakes, swamps, fresh/brackish waters. Eats mainly American eels. Avg. length-3'



Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*); Most common venomous snake in NC; found statewide in forested areas, wooded neighborhoods, open fields. Dk. brown with hour-glass shaped crossbands along body. Avg. length-2.75'



Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*); Found in Coastal Plain, usually near/in water, although can be found far from water. Eats rodents, frogs, fish, and other snakes. Avg. length-3'



Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) AKA canebrake; Protected-Special Concern. Found in Mtns. (colored dk. gray, yellow or black); southern Piedmont, Coastal Plain, in forests (with pinkish background often with stripe down back). Avg. length-4'



Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*). Protected/Endangered. Very rare, found in southeastern Coastal Plain; populations have plummeted mainly due to habitat destruction. Largest rattlesnake in world. Eats rodents and rabbits. Avg. length-4'



Carolina Pigmy Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus miliarius*); Protected-Special Concern; Rare, found in southeast Coastal Plain (red phase), Sandhills (gray phase) and in Gaston County; Eats lizards, mice, and frogs and will sometimes eat other small snakes. Avg. length 1.5'



Eastern Coral Snake (*Micrurus fulvius*); Protected-Endangered. Very rare, found in sandy areas, in southern Coastal Plain. Member of Cobra family. Looks like Scarlet Kingsnake, Scarlet Snake, but with black head; red, yellow bands touch. Eats snakes, lizards. Avg. length-2'

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