

Eastern Copperhead

(*Agkistrodon contortrix*)

HERPING VIRGINIA

Size: 28 - 44 inches

Range: Statewide

Status: Least Concern

The Eastern Copperhead is our most common Pit Viper in Virginia, though they are secretive and less likely to be seen than several other species that look similar. Copperheads have a bad reputation, but their venom is usually only life



threatening if the subject is immunocompromised and does not receive medical attention, yielding only six human fatalities throughout its range. The Copperhead predates on a wide variety of animals, such as rodents, lizards, fish, cicadas, and mayflies. Copperheads have bands that are shaped like hourglasses from above, and Hershey Kisses from the side. They also have short tails with dark tips, except for neonates that have yellow tail tips, and there is a transition in juveniles. These snakes often have orangey heads (hence the name “Copperhead”).

Can you ID a Copperhead?



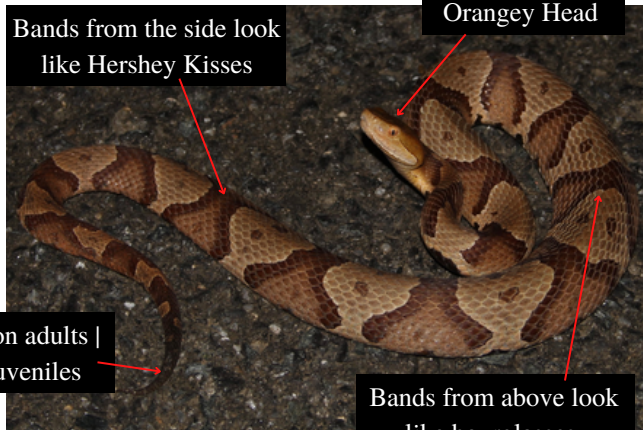
Scan the QR code for more
Copperhead info!

Bands from the side look
like Hershey Kisses

Orangey Head

Dark tail-tip on adults |
yellow on juveniles

Bands from above look
like hourglasses




Similar Species: The most similar species is the **Northern Cottonmouth**, which is only found in the southern coastal plains and has a darker head, more “pixelated” pattern, and a mask over the eyes. **Northern Watersnakes** are often killed in confusion, but this species will either appear to have no pattern, or blotches with bands that narrow towards the belly, instead of widening. I see people often mistake juvenile **Central Ratsnakes** though they have saddles (not bands), and **Dekay’s Brownsnakes** that have two rows of spots down their backs.



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We at Herping Virginia strive to conserve herps and the hobby of herping by educating the public on these species. For more information, check us out at

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