



HUMANE SOCIETY  
WILDLIFE LAND TRUST.

# Wildlife NOTES

## Identifying Poisonous Snakes

Snakes provide important balance within their ecosystems. They are generally shy creatures who will make every effort to stay out of your way. Still it is wise to be cautious around any snake and to keep children and pets away from snakes too.

There are only four kinds of poisonous snakes in the continental United States: coral snakes, rattlesnakes, copperheads and cottonmouths.

The **coral snake** is easily identified by its bands of color: red, black and yellow. The scarlet kingsnake and milk snakes also have colored rings, but are not poisonous. Remember the old saying, "Red against black is a friend to Jack; red against yellow can kill a fellow." The coral snake is found in the South usually under rotting logs or leaves, or moving on dirt surfaces. They are most active at dusk and at night.

**Copperheads** range from 22-53 inches. They are stout bodied with an orange, copper or even pink tinge and reddish-brown cross bands. Copperheads are found in the Eastern states, in wooded hillsides and rock outcrops, near swamps or flooded areas and in canyons. They are especially active in late summer and early fall and can be aggressive when returning to their dens for the winter.

The **cottonmouth**, also known as water moccasin, is a water snake but, unlike other water snakes, it swims with its head well out of the water. The head is noticeably wider than the neck and it looks olive, brown or black from above. It may have cheek stripes with light borders on dark brown stripes. Cottonmouths can be found in many different wet habitats across much of the U.S.

There are many species and subspecies of **rattlesnakes**, and color variations within species. The rattle, made of loosely attached "plates," is used to warn others to keep away. The noise that the rattle makes depends somewhat on the size of the snake. It has been described as sounding like escaping steam, like a buzzing, and like the noise of cicadas.

### How to Make Fun Snakes

*Getting children involved in nature projects is not only time well-spent together but also provides the opportunity to pass on your values of care and compassion for all living creatures.*

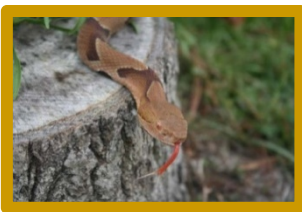
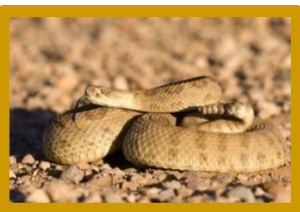
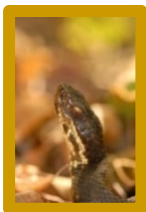
You'll need:

- Old ties
- Craft wire or a wire hanger
- Polyfil stuffing
- Wiggly eyes
- Glue

Select ties of different colors, bright stripes or green and brown for camouflage. If you would like your snake to be bendable, straighten out a wire hanger or use some other type of wire. Fold down the ends of the wire with some pliers so that the edges are very smooth. Insert the wire into the tie.

Stuff the tie with polyfil from each end. Glue or sew the tail end of the snake closed. Push some stuffing up into the point of the snake's head (the wider end of the tie). Glue the end closed and glue on some wiggly eyes to finish.

*Check your library and the internet for other fun projects.*



**Can you match the picture to the description?**