Do’s and don’ts when living or recreating in venomous snake country

Do’s

- Be aware of the venomous snakes in your area.
- Wear sturdy shoes and insect repellent when you are outside, and use a flashlight at night.
- Do not interact with snakes unless you are knowledgeable and trained in snake handling.

Don’ts

- Do not try to touch or pick up a snake.
- Do not attempt to handle or pick up a snake if you are unsure of its species.
- Do not attempt to capture a snake.

Requesting assistance with a venomous snake

The Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Endangered and Vertebrate Species Program (ENSP) has developed the Venomous Snake Species Manual (VSSM) to provide instructions and increase an awareness of our responsibilities for living or recreating in venomous snake country. The VSSM is a group of trained volunteers that includes animal control officers, park rangers, local and state police, and other state and local government employees. ENSP volunteer members also continue education about snakes and outreach efforts on how to safely manage snake country and return to nearby areas away from human habitation. Landowners that encounter timber rattlesnakes or northern copperheads are encouraged to notify local police or ENSP immediately through the DEP Hotline: 1-877-WARN DEP.

Do not reach into your shrubs, wood piles or rock walls without the use of a flashlight at night or with the use of a snake hook. Do not apply a tight bandage. If medical assistance will take more than 30 minutes to arrive, you can apply a loose bandage around the wound or on the limb to delay the spread of the venom. Do not tie the bandage around the neck. Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than your heart.

Snakes, Discriptions, and Range Maps

1. northern hognose snake (Heterodon nasicus)

   - Description: This species is found in the northern part of New Jersey. It is a non-venomous snake with a slender body and a distinct nose. The coloration is usually brown or gray, with a black or dark brown stripe running along the back.

   - Range: New Jersey is one of the southernmost states where the northern hognose snake is found. It is commonly found in forests, woodlands, and fields.

2. eastern milk snake (Lampropeltis triangulum)

   - Description: This species is commonly found in New Jersey and is easily recognized by its distinctive pattern of black bands alternating with yellow bands. The bands are usually wide and well-separated, and they may vary in color from yellow to orange.

   - Range: The eastern milk snake is found throughout much of the eastern United States, including New Jersey. It is commonly found in fields, woods, and gardens.

3. coastal plain milk snake (Lampropeltis triangulum x L.t. elapsoides)

   - Description: This species is found in the coastal plain of New Jersey and is similar to the eastern milk snake. It has a similar pattern of black bands alternating with yellow bands, but the bands are usually narrower and the coloration is more variable.

   - Range: The coastal plain milk snake is found along the coastline of New Jersey, from New York to Virginia.

4. corn snake (Elaphe guttata guttata)

   - Description: This species is found in the southern part of New Jersey and is easily recognized by its distinctive pattern of black bands alternating with yellow bands. The bands are usually wide and well-separated, and they may vary in color from yellow to orange.

   - Range: The corn snake is found throughout much of the southeastern United States, including New Jersey. It is commonly found in fields, woods, and gardens.

5. northern scarlet snake (Sistrurus catenatus catenatus)

   - Description: This species is found in the northern part of New Jersey and is easily recognized by its distinctive pattern of black bands alternating with yellow bands. The bands are usually wide and well-separated, and they may vary in color from yellow to orange.

   - Range: The northern scarlet snake is found throughout much of the eastern United States, including New Jersey. It is commonly found in fields, woods, and gardens.

Dispelling Myths

From historical times to present day Hollywood movies, snakes have been portrayed as evil, dangerous, and mostly unknown. Despite this negative portrayal, snakes have become increasingly present in our daily lives. However, there are many myths and misconceptions about snakes that can be dispelled. Here are some common myths about snakes that can be dispelled.

- Myth: Snakes are dangerous and should be avoided at all costs.
- Myth: Snakes are not afraid of humans and will attack if they feel threatened.
- Myth: Snakes are a threat to human health and should be eliminated.

These myths can be dispelled by educating ourselves about snakes and their behavior. By understanding the natural behavior and habits of snakes, we can avoid unnecessary fear and danger.

Keeping snakes in captivity

In addition to educating ourselves about snakes, it is possible to keep snakes as pets. However, this can be a challenging and difficult task. Here are some tips for keeping snakes in captivity.

- Ensure that the environment is safe and secure.
- Provide a proper diet and care for the snake.
- Monitor the snake’s health regularly.
- Provide appropriate housing and care for the snake.

By following these tips, it is possible to keep snakes as pets and enjoy them without unnecessary danger.
7. Northern pine snake (Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The pine snake will hiss and defend itself vigorously
- Dark brown blotches. The blotches are more clearly visible on the back. They have keeled scales. Eleven to 18 young are born in June and July, and hatch in late August.

8. Black rat snake (Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- A long, slender, fast black snake
- Light grey blotches on the back with black or dark brown jagged edges. The blotches are more clearly visible on the back.
- They have keeled scales. Eleven to 18 young are born in June and July, and hatch in late August.

9. Eastern hognose snake (Heterodon platirhinos)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- Like the black racer, the hognose snake is difficult to differentiate from eating it.
- If threatened by puffing up its body and flattening its head. If the attacker persists, the hog-nose snake will roll over and play dead. The attacker may then attack the stinger from eating it.
- With a white belly, it may display black dots or a faint redish brown color. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

10. Eastern massasauga (Sistrurus catenatus catenatus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- It is seldom seen. It is seldom seen. It is seldom seen.
- ItPaul Brown
- Normally seen only by wall climbers. These snakes are restricted to sandy habitats as it burrows into the sand. They have keeled scales. Eleven to 18 young are born in June and July, and hatch in late August.

11. Queen snake (Regina septemvittata)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The northern brown snake has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in late August.

12. Northern brown snake (Storeria dekayi dekayi)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- In northern NJ, the snake is found on the ground. It can be distinguished from the southern ringneck snake by its larger head; two rows of dark spots down the back (versus three rows); and a patch on the flank behind the eye and two rows of dark spots down the back and sides (versus none). The northern brown snake has a very round body with smooth scales. Eleven to 18 young are born in June and July, and hatch in late August.

13. Eastern smooth earth snake (Virginia valeriae valeriae)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The southern ringneck snake is found primarily in the southern region and is considered threatened. A common snake of the south, it is found in very rocky habitats such as capped rocks and stone walls. These snakes are the only ones to emerge in NJ, and are often found in vegeta-tion overhanging water in NJ's Barrens. They have keeled scales. Eleven to 18 young are born in June and July, and hatch in late August.

14. Eastern garter snake (Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- This snake is a little over double the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in late August.

15. Eastern ribbon snake (Thamnophis sauritus sauritus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The copperhead neonate is less than 30. This species is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in late August.

16. Northern ringneck snake (Diadophis punctatus punctatus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The northern ringneck snake is a long, fast black snake
- Like the black racer, the hognose snake is difficult to differentiate from eating it.
- With a white belly, it may display black dots or a faint redish brown color. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

17. Northern copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix contortrix)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- Keep your distance!
- Copperhead neonate is less than 30. This species is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in late August.

18. Northern copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- This species is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

19. Eastern ribbon snake (Thamnophis sauritus sauritus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- The copperhead neonate is less than 30. This species is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

20. Smooth green snake (Opheodrys vernalis)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- This snake is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

21. Rough green snake (Dipsosaurus annulatus)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- This snake is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.

22. Northern copperhead (Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen)

- Adult above; Juvenile below
- Keep your distance!
- Copperhead neonate is less than 30. This species is a little over twice the belly color of its slender, greenish common in its limited range of habitat usefulness. The northern copperhead has a triangular head and a blunt snout. It has a very round body with smooth scales. One to five eggs are laid in June and hatch in August.