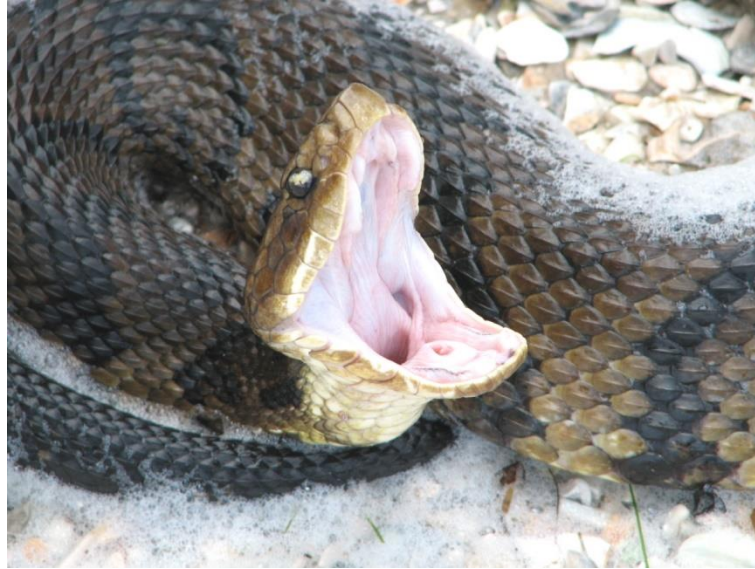
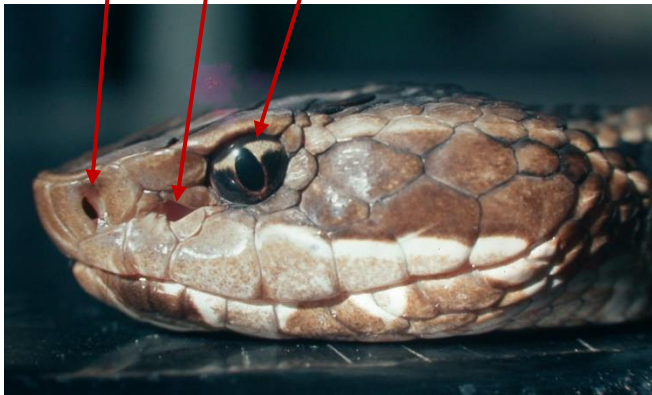


A Guide to Identifying the Cottonmouth: Size = 9 - 10 inches at birth; maximum about 60 inches.



Many snakes have a whitish mouth. Cottonmouths just have a habit of turning their head upward, gaping, and showing you the whitish mouth interior as a threat posture to deter possible harm to themselves.

NOSTRIL PIT EYE with elliptical pupil



Flat top head is obvious



Newborns have a yellow tail tip.



The vertical pupil is like the pupil of a cat's eye and is very narrow in bright light. The yellowish tail tip of young Cottonmouths is apparently used as a lure to attract prey to within striking distance. As with the Copperhead, the yellowish tip turns dark with age.

Prepared by Alvin Braswell 31 July 2016. Photos property of N.C. State Museum of Natural Sciences. Reproduction by permission only. See the Museum's web site (www.naturalsciences.org) for a free pdf of *Venomous Snakes of North Carolina* booklet [look under <http://naturalsciences.org/visit/museum-store/featured-products>].



Young are normally lighter in color than adults and are occasionally mistakenly identified as Copperheads.



When leisurely swimming, Cottonmouths ride higher in the water than the non-venomous water snakes.

Non-venomous water snakes commonly misidentified as Cottonmouths include:

Northern Water Snake



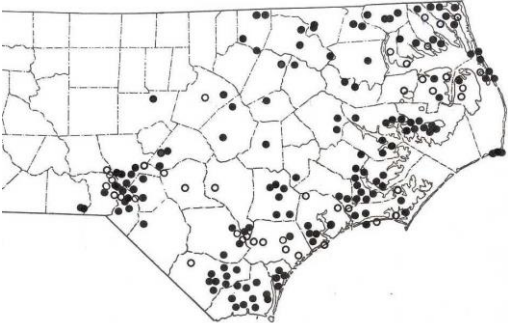
Banded Water Snake



Brown Water Snake



Cottonmouth range map



Scales under the tail:
 Fig. 1 = non-venomous water snakes
 Fig. 2 = Cottonmouth



Fig. 1

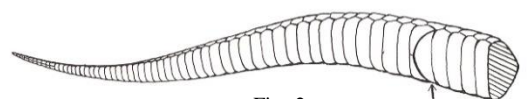


Fig. 2

Round pupil in nonvenomous water snakes.

