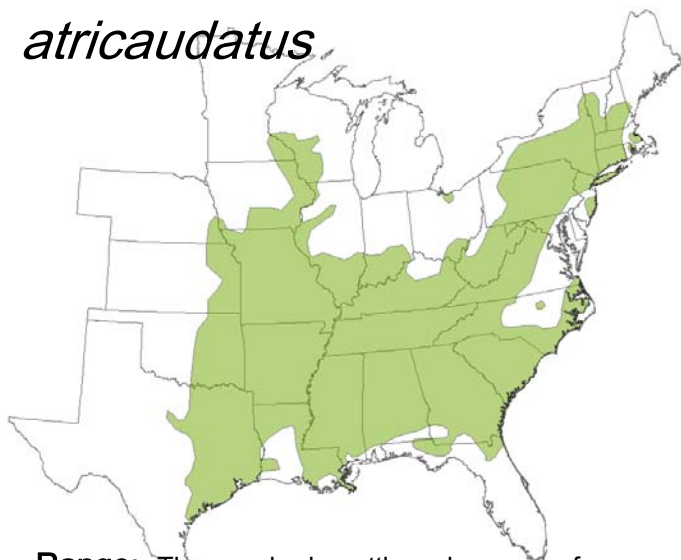


Upland Snake Species Profile:

Canebrake Rattlesnake

Crotalus horridus

atricaudatus



Range: The canebrake rattlesnake ranges from southeastern Virginia along the Atlantic coastal plain to northern Florida, west to central Texas and north along the Mississippi valley to southern Illinois. The range map shown is for all subspecies of *Crotalus horridus*. For a detailed description of the range of each subspecies, see Ernst and Ernst (2003).

Identification: Adult canebrakes have a pinkish brown or grey body with reddish orange vertebral stripes. Individuals may grow to be 189 cm (over 6 feet). A dark stripe extends from the eye to the corner of the mouth. Males are typically larger than females.

Natural History: Canebrake rattlesnakes prefer lowland thickets, pinewoods, canebrakes and swamp borders. Unlike timber rattlesnakes in the north, canebrakes are not known to hibernate in large groups, instead spending the winter in mammal burrows, logs or rock crevices.

These rattlesnakes are an ambush predator and may be found alongside logs or trees waiting for a small mammal to come within striking distance. They are known to occasionally climb trees, perhaps searching for squirrels or birds.

Canebrakes have hemolytic venom and may cause a variety of symptoms in bite victims, in some cases including death. Venom is typically used to incapacitate prey items, usually mammals but sometimes including birds and other snakes. Predators of juveniles include birds of prey, canids and other snakes, adults are generally safe from these animals.



Photo: J. Jensen

Conservation: *Crotalus horridus* is considered endangered in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Vermont, Virginia, Indiana and threatened in Illinois, New York, Minnesota and Texas. Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maine, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Virginia also recognize the imperiled status of this species. Due to its life history characteristics, which include delayed sexual maturity and long generations, populations are vulnerable to the loss of adults. These individuals are often targeted during rattlesnake roundups or killed on sight. Habitat loss, particularly of denning sites, and road mortality also pose significant threats to the continued persistence of this snake.

Useful References:

Conant, R. and J.T. Collins. 1998. A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Eastern and Central North America. Houghton Mifflin Company. New York.

Ernst, C.H. and E.M. Ernst. 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution. Washington.

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