Topics

• Venomous species
  – Identification
  – Ecology (e.g. habitat)
  – Behavior

• Field tips

• Questions?

• “Grab or Don’t Grab”
General Identification

Venomous

- Triangular head
- Large facial-pits
- Cat-like (elliptical) pupils

Non-venomous
General Identification

- Keeled scales
- Lines on face near/through eyes

Non-venomous, Banded watersnake

Venomous, Cottonmouth
Coral Snake

*Micrurus fulvius*
Coral Snake

- Range: Southern coastal plains, NC-LA
- Habitat: Pine forests, sandhill
  - Leaf-litter/debris, in logs, saw-palmetto bunches
- Behavior: semi-fossorial, docile?

Defensive behavior. J.D. Wilson
Fangs

Fixed fangs in front (proteroglyph)
– E.g. Coral snake

Folding fangs in front (solenoglyph)
– E.g. All other venomous snakes in MS
Coral Snake Mimics

• Black rings touch red rings
• Red nose

Scarlet snake

Scarlet kingsnake
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

*Crotalus adamanteus*

Marks McWhorter
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

• Range: Coastal plain, southern NC-eastern LA
• Habitat: Typically drier, sandy forests, sandhills
  – Stumps, burrows, bushes, thick veg.
• Behavior: crepuscular, remain still, rattle?

Camp Shelby. Carl Qualls
Timber/Canebreak Rattlesnake

*Crotalus horridus*
Timber/Canebreak Rattlesnake

- Range: Widespread in east
- Habitat: Mountainous areas, lowland forests, swamps
  - Stumps, rocky-outcrops, thickets
- Behavior: remain still, may or may not rattle
Pygmy Rattlesnake

*Sistrurus miliarius*
Pygmy Rattlesnake

• Range: southern coastal plains
• Habitat: Varied, near water sources but also sandier forests, uplands
  – Under logs, in leaf litter/debris, burrows
• Behavior: often found crossing roads in the evening

Jennifer Lamb
Copperhead

Agkistrodon contortrix

Jay Eubanks
Copperhead

- Range: Widespread in east and central US
- Habitat: lowland forests, swamp margins
  - Logs, debris
- Behavior: will rattle tail, can be quick

Jay Eubanks
Cottonmouth

Agkistrodon piscivorus
Cottonmouth

• Range: throughout SE US
• Habitat: Almost all FW habitats
  – Banks, branches, logs
• Behavior: defensive, gape
Behavior

- Temperature affects behavior
  - Location
    E.g. early morning/late evening - in paths, clearings, roads;
    afternoon - hidden
  - Fight or flight response

- Size affects behavior
Field Tips

• Know the different species
• Wear appropriate clothing
• LOOK before you step or reach
  – Use a walking/probing stick
• Use a tool for turning/moving debris if possible
• Giant-stride off logs
• Avoid brushing branches in rivers/lakes
Questions?

Kelly Breland
Game!