

## Good Snake or Bad Snake?

*I have a snake in my yard. How can I tell if it is venomous?*

Snakes are much maligned creatures with many myths surrounding them. The best way to educate yourself about the different types of snakes that may slither into your yard is to get a field guide appropriate to your area of the country.

Snakes do play a role in the natural balance of even a small ecosystem, like a yard. Without snakes, you would probably be overrun with small rodents. Learn to respect snakes, not fear them.

### **Fact or Fiction?**

One of the most common UNTRUE myths is that snakes with triangular heads are venomous. Although most venomous snakes do have triangular heads, this trait cannot be used to determine if a snake is venomous or not.

### **Did You Know?**

Most snakes have the ability to flatten their heads, which gives them a triangular appearance. This is especially true if the snake is irritated.

There are only two venomous snakes that are found in this area: the Copperhead and the Canebrake Rattler.

### **Things to know about Copperheads**

The Copperhead's bite is not fatal.

Copperheads are very easy to identify as they are the ONLY snake in Georgia whose dark bands are fatter on the sides than on the back of the snake.

It looks as though Hershey's kisses run down the sides of a Copperhead snake.

Until it is approximately one-foot long, a Copperhead's tail is fluorescent yellow-green.

Copperhead Snake – Identification, <http://srelherp.uga.edu/snakes/agkcon.htm>

### **Things to know about the Canebrake Rattler**

This robust, venomous snake is equipped with a broad triangular head, vertical pupils and heat sensitive pits.

Its body color may be yellow, gray, dark brown or black, with dark, V-shaped crossbands across the back and a dark copper stripe that runs the entire length of its body.

The pattern may not be obvious if the body is very dark.

The Canebrake Rattler's head is usually not patterned and is covered with many small scales.

A distinct rattle on the end of a darkly colored tail produces a buzzing sound when vibrating.

When young, the rattlesnake has only a small button on the tail.

Body scales are strongly keeled and the light colored belly is flecked with dark spots.

Canebrake Rattler – Identification, <http://srelherp.uga.edu/snakes/crohor.htm>