Poisonous Plants and Animals of Virginia

Scouts Beware!!!

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Venomous vs. Non-venomous
Rattlesnake, Cottonmouth and Copperhead Snakes
The Timber Rattlesnake

- Grows 36-60 in.
- Emerge from hibernation in April-May
- In the Fall they commune and hibernate with other rattlers and Copperheads
- Does not defend territory
- Diurnal in Spring and Fall
- Nocturnal in hot Summer
The Timber Rattler

Notice diamond head

Yellow phase

Notice the rattle

Black phase
The Timber Rattler

juvenile
The Cottonmouth

- Large, venomous, semi-aquatic
- Grows 30-48 inches in length
- Will stand its ground, coil, rattle tail, and open mouth when approached
- Has pits, vertical eye slits and swims with body entirely on water surface
The Cottonmouth

Triangular head

White neck
The Cottonmouth

Baby cottonmouth

Adults may be uniform in color but still have distinctive white throat
Cottonmouth vs. Water Snakes

Brown Water Snake
Northern Water Snake
Redbellied-Water Snake

All swim with most of the body below the surface of the water

Eastern Cottonmouth

Swim with most of the body above the surface of the water

Venomous
Eastern Cottonmouth

Harmless
Northern Water Snake

Cottonmouth vs. Water Snakes
Water Snake vs. Cottonmouth

Adult Northern Water Snake
- Distinct change in body pattern occurs midway down the length of the body
- Body does not fade to black near the tail

Adult Eastern Cottonmouth
- Broad stripe through eye
- Body fades to black near the tail

Pattern change midway down the length of the body

Juvenile Northern Water Snake

Juvenile Eastern Cottonmouth
- Blackish tail, becomes completely black with age
- Bright yellowish tail tip, fades to black with age
The Copperhead

- Heavy bodied, medium sized venomous snake.
- Mates in April-May, babies hatch mid-August to October
- Depends on camouflage to escape detection
- Will flee before fighting
- May rattle tail tip when agitated
The Copperhead

Notice dark hour-glass banding

Thick body

Narrow head and tail
The Copperhead

Notice copper coloring and thickness of body

Yellow tails on juveniles
Copperhead look alikes
Copperhead look alikes
Coral Snake vs. Scarlet King Snake vs. Milksnake

Red next to yellow, will kill a fellow

Red next to black, a friend of Jack
Eastern Hognose
Snakebite dos

1) Get medical help immediately.
2) Mark the place of the bite.
3) Restrict movement.
4) Keep the affected area below heart level.
5) Remove any rings or constricting items.
6) Monitor the person's vital signs.
7) If swelling occurs, mark the extent of the swelling with a marker and write the time.
8) Apply a bandage.
- DO NOT allow the person to become over-exerted
- DO NOT apply a tourniquet.
- DO NOT apply cold compresses to a snake bite.
- DO NOT cut into a snake bite with a knife or razor.
- DO NOT try to suction the venom by mouth.
- DO NOT give the person stimulants or pain medications unless instructed to do so by a doctor.
- DO NOT give the person anything by mouth, except water
Wolf, Black Widow, and Brown Recluse Spiders
The Wolf Spider

Non-poisonous
The Black Widow

- Found in dark, damp, warm places
- Is actually non-aggressive and would rather flee than fight
- Venom is a neurotoxin, seek medical treatment
- Chances of dying from a widow bite are the same as being hit by lightening
The Black Widow

Female

Male

The Black Widow
3 pairs of eyes rather than normal 8 eyes

The Brown Recluse
- Belongs to a group of spiders also known as violin or fiddle back
- Live in basements, garages, hides behind boards and boxes, in piles of towels and clothes
- Seldom aggressive, only bite when threaten or injured
Brown Recluse bite

1 Hour

3 Hours

2 Days
- Most stinging caterpillars are found on shade and ornamental trees and bushes
- Poisonous hairs and spines are connected to poison glands
- Stings feel and react like a bee sting
- Irritation can last 1-2 days, localized redness
- Nausea within first few hours

Characteristics of a poisonous caterpillar sting
Buckmoth

- Found in early June
- Often confused with spiny elm caterpillars and gypsy moth caterpillars
- Feeds on oak, willow, hazelnut, cherry and rose
Hagmoth

- covered with short, dark brown hairs
- Feeds on rose, sassafras, alder, and spirea
Hackberry leafslug

- six small tufts of hair on each segment
- Body is off-white with a large purple patch on the back
- Feeds on leaves of hackberry bush
Io Moth

- to 2 1/2 inches long
- feeds on alder, ash, birch, cherry, elm, locust, oak, sassafras
- Not uncommon in cornfields
Saddleback Caterpillar

- Four large tubercles
- Purple saddle with lime green blanket
- Feeds on leaves of basswood, chestnut, cherry, plum, oak, and other trees and shrubs.
Spiny Oak Leafslug

• Fully grown caterpillars have a brown area on their backs

• Feeds on oak, beech, chestnut, pear
Stinging Rose

- Yellow to red with black and blue stripes down the middle of its back
- Less distinct red, black and blue stripes along its sides
- Feeds on oak, sycamore, red bud, hickory, bayberry and wild cherry
Puss Moth

- 1 inch long
- Covered in long, silken brown hairs
- Hidden among hairs are poisonous spines
- Feeds on hackberry, elm, plum, sycamore, oak and rose
Poison Oak, Poison Sumac and Poison Ivy
Poison oak

• has leaves that look like oak leaves

• usually with three leaflets but sometimes up to seven leaflets per leaf group

• grows as a vine or a shrub
Poison Sumac

- has 7 to 13 leaflets per leaf stem
- leaves have smooth edges and pointed tips
- Poison sumac grows as a shrub or small tree
Poison Ivy

- Three broad, spoon-shaped leaves or leaflets
- Climbing or low, spreading vine that sprawls through grass
Poison Ivy

A blistering rash is caused by an oily toxin known as urushiol.

If poison ivy is burned, the smoke carries the toxin.
Poison Ivy Vs. Virginia Creeper
For further research

- Virginia/Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension- http://www.ext.vt.edu/
• Caterpillar information: North Carolina Cooperative Extension
• Caterpillar pictures: John Dicus, Clemson, ScienceRay,
• Poisonous snake information: Virginia Herpetological Society, Virginia/Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension
• Poisonous snake pictures: John White, Photographer; Paul Sattler, Photographer
• Poisonous plant pictures: Will Cook, photographer, Virginia Tech Weed I.D. Guide
• Poisonous plant drawing: Healthwise Inc.
• Brown Recluse Picture: Kugellar imaging