

Agkistrodon contortrix

For other snakes commonly called "copperheads", see [Copperhead](#)

Agkistrodon contortrix

[Conservation status](#)

[Least Concern](#) (IUCN 3.1)^[1]

[Scientific classification](#)

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Domain: [Eukaryota](#)
Kingdom: [Animalia](#)
Phylum: [Chordata](#)
Class: [Reptilia](#)
Order: [Squamata](#)
Suborder: [Serpentes](#)
Family: [Viperidae](#)
Genus: [Agkistrodon](#)
Species: ***A. contortrix***

[Binomial name](#)

Agkistrodon contortrix
([Linnaeus](#), 1766)

[Synonyms](#)

- *Boa contortrix*
Linnaeus, 1766
- *Scytale contortrix*
— [Sonnini](#) & [Latreille](#), 1801
- *Scytale Cupreus*
[Rafinesque](#), 1818
- *Scytale cupreus*
— [Say](#), 1819
- *Tisiphone cuprea*
— [Fitzinger](#), 1826
- [*Cenchris*] *marmorata*
[F. Boie](#), 1827
- *Acontias atrofuscus*
[Troost](#), 1836
- [*Toxicophis atrofuscus*]
— Troost, 1836
- *T[rigonocephalus] cenchris*
[Schlegel](#), 1837
- *Trigonocephalus Contortrix*
— [Holbrook](#), 1838

- *Trigonocephalus atro-fuscus*
— Holbrook, 1842
- *Cenchris contortrix*
— [Gray](#), 1842
- *Cenchris atrofuscus*
— Gray, 1849
- *Agkistrodon contortrix*
— [Baird](#) & [Girard](#), 1853
- *T[rigonocephalus] histrionicus*
[A.M.C. Duméril](#) & [Bibron](#), 1853
- *Ancistrodon contortrix*
— Baird, 1854
- *Agkistrodon contorting*
[Abbott](#), 1869 (*ex errore*)
- *Ancistrodon atrofuscus*
— [Cope](#), 1875
- *Agkistrodon atrofuscus*
— [Yarrow](#), 1882
- [*Ancistrodon contortrix*] Var. *atrofuscus*
— [Garman](#), 1884
- *Ancistrodon contortrix*
— [Boulenger](#), 1896
- *Agkistrodon contortirix*
[Keim, 1914](#) (*ex errore*)
- *Agkistrodon mokasen cupreus*
— [Gloyd](#) & [Conant](#), 1938
- *Agkistrodon contortrix contortrix*
— [Klauber](#), 1967
- *Ancistrodon contortrix contortrix*
— [Schmidt](#), 1953

Agkistrodon contortrix is a species of venomous snake. The common name for this species is the **eastern copperhead**.^[2] It lives mainly on the eastern coast of North America and in the [Mississippi](#) drainage. They're common. Compared to others they're more likely to bite if they feel threatened. They're medium-sized. One of the longest ones ever recorded measuring a little more than four feet long. The copperhead is venomous, but its venom is rarely fatal to humans.

Description

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

Camouflaged copperhead

Copperhead snakes have reddish-brown bodies with a crossband pattern consisting of tan and copper. The average length adult copperheads is 76 cm in length. and are normally described as heavy-bodied snakes. Copperheads are [sexually dimorphic](#). The head has a solid, rich brown color. Copperhead [venom](#) is usually not fatal to healthy adult humans. They can live up to 18 years.^[3]

Distribution and Habitat

[\[change\]](#) | [change source](#)

It is found in North America. In the [United States](#), it is found in [Alabama](#), [Arkansas](#), [Connecticut](#), [Delaware](#), Northern [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Illinois](#), [Indiana](#), [Iowa](#), [Kansas](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Maryland](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Mississippi](#), [Missouri](#), [Nebraska](#), [New Jersey](#), [New York](#), [North Carolina](#), [Ohio](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#), [Texas](#), [Virginia](#) and [West Virginia](#). In [Mexico](#), it is found in [Chihuahua](#) and [Coahuila](#).^[4]

It lives in many different types of habitats. In most of North America, it likes [deciduous forest](#) and [mixed woodlands](#). During the [winter](#), it [hibernates](#) in [caves](#) or in cracks in [limestone](#). It is also found in [coniferous forest](#). It is also found in the [Chihuahuan Desert](#) of West Texas and northern [Mexico](#).^{[5][6]}

Diet and predators

[\[change\]](#) | [change source](#)

The copperhead eats mainly rodents, especially mice. Sometimes it eats birds, other reptiles, even snakes, and amphibians. They also feed on some insects, a lot of times cicadas, because of their size that'll fill a copperhead up. They eat other animals, but they're not the [apex predator](#) around their habitat, Their natural predators include [kingsnakes](#), [water moccasins](#) (also known as cottonmouths), [bullfrogs](#), large birds of prey, coyotes, alligators, and an other predators.

Behaviour

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The copperhead snake is active from March or April to early November in the northern part of its range. During the winter, they have been seen to [basking](#) on warm days in December and January. Even though copperheads have been seen [hibernating](#) by themselves they usually hibernate together.

Copperheads are mainly active during the day in the [spring](#) and [autumn](#). In the summer months, they become nocturnal to hunt during the evening.^[3]

Reproduction

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The copperhead snake breeds in late [summer](#), but not every year. They give birth to their young ones alive. They usually give birth to four to seven young ones. The young ones are lighter in color, and with a yellowish-green-marked tip to the tail, which is used to lure [lizards](#) and [frogs](#).^[7]

Venom

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Even though copperhead snakes are venomous, bites are almost never fatal. The symptoms of a bite from a copperhead snake is extreme [pain](#), tingling, throbbing, swelling, and severe [nausea](#).

The venom of the southern copperhead has been found to hold a [protein](#) called "contortrostatin" It stops the growth of [cancer cells](#) in [mice](#) and also stops the [tumors](#) from moving to other places in the body. However, further testing is needed to make sure that it is safe and efficient in humans.

The [antivenom CroFab](#) is used to treat copperhead bites that show [symptoms](#). It is not given when there is no symptoms.

References

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

1. [↑] [Frost DR](#); Hammerson GA; Santos-Barrera G (2007). "[Agkistrodon contortrix](#)". *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. **2007**. Retrieved 2017-05-20.
2. [↑] Moriarty, John J. 2017. *Scientific and standard English names of amphibians and reptiles of North America north of Mexico with comments regarding confidence in our understanding*. 8th ed. Society Study Amphibians and Reptiles [Herpetological Circular 43](#): 102 pp.
3. [↑] [3.0 3.1](#) Hartsuff, Anna. "[Agkistrodon contortrix \(Southern Copperhead\)](#)". *Animal Diversity Web*. Retrieved 2020-09-16.
4. [↑] McDiarmid, Roy W. (1999). *[Snake species of the world : a taxonomic and geographic reference](#)*. Campbell, Jonathan A., Touré, TShaka A., Herpetologists' League. Washington, DC: Herpetologists' League. ISBN 1-893777-01-4. OCLC 42256497.
5. [↑] "[Northern copperhead](#)". *Smithsonian's National Zoo*. 2016-04-25. Retrieved 2020-09-16.
6. [↑] Campbell, Jonathan A. (2004). *[The venomous reptiles of the Western Hemisphere](#)*. Lamar, William W., 1950-. Ithaca: Comstock Pub. Associates. ISBN 0-8014-4141-2. OCLC 52047308.
7. [↑] Smith, C. F.; Schwenk, K.; Earley, R. L.; Schuett, G. W. (2008). "[Sexual size dimorphism of the tongue in a North American pitviper](#)". *Journal of*

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