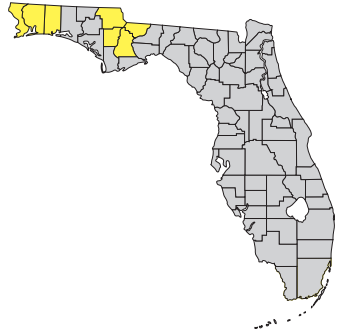


**SOUTHERN COPPERHEAD**  
*Agkistrodon contortrix contortrix*



**Order:** Squamata  
**Family:** Viperidae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G5T5/S2  
**U.S. Status:** None  
**FL Status:** None



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**Description:** A medium-sized (to 3 ft. = 91 cm) venomous snake with a pattern of 16 - 21 brown, hourglass-shaped bands, sometimes broken in middle, on a pinkish-beige to rusty ground color. Belly light, with two rows of brown, square to round blotches. Head rust-colored and triangular, much wider than neck, with facial pit between each eye and nostril; pupils vertical. Dorsal scales keeled, anal scale undivided. Young about 10 in. (254 mm) and with yellow tail tip.

## SOUTHERN COPPERHEAD

## *Agkistrodon contortrix contortrix*

**Similar Species:** Young cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) very similar but more brownish and with a broad, white-bordered, dark band through eye. All non-venomous Florida snakes have round pupils and lack facial pits. Florida water snake (*Nerodia fasciata pictiventris*), young red-bellied water snake (*N. erythrogaster*), and brown water snake (*N. taxispilota*) have smaller heads, and dorsal blotches or bands not forming hourglasses. Eastern hognose snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*) has upturned snout and rarely is coppery color.

**Habitat:** Hardwood forests along floodplains, ravines, and adjacent uplands.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Most active in spring and fall, with young born in late summer. May become nocturnal during hot weather. Inactive and secluded in winter.

**Florida Distribution:** Most common in Apalachicola River drainage from Georgia to vicinity of Bristol and Blountstown; also occurs along northern borders of Florida's westernmost counties.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Southeastern Coastal Plain, from Delaware and Maryland to Texas. A northern race extends to New York, the Midwest, and Kansas.

**Conservation Status:** Occurs on several state and private conservation lands along the Apalachicola River. Some individuals are killed on highways.

**Protection and Management:** Protect hardwood forests and floodplains where species occurs. Avoid fragmentation of habitat by additional roads. Educate public to avoid wanton killing of venomous snakes.

**Selected References:** Ashton and Ashton 1988b, Conant and Collins 1991, Ernst and Barbour 1989, Moler (ed.) 1992, Mount 1975, Tenant 1997.