

Canebrake (= Timber) Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*)

A Virginia Endangered Species



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In Virginia, this large, venomous snake reaches a maximum length of about 182 cm. (72 inches). It is the only species of rattlesnake native to southeastern Virginia. The body color is usually pinkish, gray, yellow or light brown with brown to black chevrons and a black tail. A rust-colored mid-dorsal stripe is usually present as is a yellow-gold to brown stripe from the eye to the back of the jaw.

In Virginia, the canebrake rattlesnake primarily occurs on the lower York-James Peninsula and east of the Suffolk Escarpment. The southeastern Virginia population is designated as *State Endangered*.

This species feeds primarily on gray squirrels and typically only feeds once or twice per year. This snake also may capture and eat other rodents, rabbits and birds.

Canebrake rattlesnakes prefer mature hardwood forests, mixed hardwood-pine forests, cane thickets, and in the ridges and glades of swampy areas. Areas with numerous logs, significant leaf litter and humus also provide suitable habitat. This species overwinters in the bases of hollow trees and stumps, and in the underground tunnels resulting from stump and root decomposition. This species has also been known to occupy disturbed areas, such as farm fields and cut-overs.

Canebrake rattlesnakes mature at 4-6 years of age and reproduce every 2-3 years. Mating occurs primarily in late summer and litters of 7-18 young are born the following August or September.

If you have questions about or encounter this snake and need assistance, please contact John Kleopfer of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (804-829-6703; John.Kleopfer@dgif.virginia.gov).

THE CANEBRAKE RATTLESNAKE IS A PROTECTED SPECIES IN VIRGINIA: IT IS UNLAWFUL TO HARM, COLLECT, OR POSSESS THESE SNAKES.