Snakes in Georgia

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Herpetology

Reptiles
- Alligator
- Turtle
- Lizard
- Snake

Amphibians
- Frog
- Toad
- Salamander
- Siren
Frogs and toads collectively make up the anuran group of amphibians, and are the most commonly seen representatives of amphibians.
Salamanders and sirens are often lumped together by many herpetologists. True salamanders have 4 legs, while sirens only have forelegs. Sirens generally sport large, feathery external gills, while most salamanders only possess gills during their larval stages.
The alligator is our largest terrestrial/freshwater reptile. Adult males often surpass 12 feet in length and may weight several hundred pounds, although females generally are between 6 and 8 feet in length. Unlike most reptiles, alligators are vocal, and females defend their nests and hatchlings.
Turtles

Turtles are among some of the oldest reptiles in world, and are found in freshwater, marine, and terrestrial habitats.
Lizards and snakes are closely related and usually can be separated by the presence or lack of legs. However, glass lizards are examples of legless lizards. Lizards possess moveable eyelids, ears, and have the ability to break off their tails easily which later regenerate.
Lizards and Snakes

Lizards also have the ability to break off their tails easily which later regenerate.
Snakes (Serpentes)

- Colubrids (includes all our harmless varieties)
- Vipers (includes rattlesnakes, cottonmouth, & copperhead)
- Elapids (the cobra group, represented by the coral snake)
Snakes (Feeding Strategies)

- Over-power
- Constriction
- Venom
Harmless Snakes: Water Snakes

Water snakes are widespread in Georgia, and several species are found in the state. The most common water snakes are the *fasciata* group in the southern part of the state and the *sipedon* group in the northern portion of the state.
Harmless Snakes: Water Snakes

The brown water snake and red bellied water snake are often killed for cottonmouths.
Harmless Snakes: aquatic Snakes

The glossy water snake and queen snake are related species that feed primarily on crayfish.
The black swamp snake and striped swamp snake are found in southern Georgia, but are very secretive snakes not often seen in the open.
Rainbow and mud snakes are fairly large, handsome snakes that are specialized feeders. Mud snakes primarily feed on sirens, while rainbow snakes feed on eels.
Harmless Snakes: Garter Snakes

Garter snakes are found throughout the state, and feed mostly on frogs, toads, and fish. Juveniles also eat earthworms.
Ribbon snakes are thinner cousins to the garter snake. Like garter snakes they are often found near water.
The southeastern crowned snake is a reared-fanged snake that may have a weak venom used to subdue centipedes and other invertebrates. The pinewoods snake is another small species of snake that feeds small lizards, frogs, and salamanders. These snakes are generally less than 12 inches in length as adults.
The ringneck is a common, secretive snake found throughout the state. Individuals tend to be slate gray or black with a narrow ring just behind the head, but have colorful bellies.
Green snakes feed on insects, they are particularly fond of caterpillars. They are excellent climbers and are often found off the ground.
Harmless Snakes: Eastern King Snakes

The eastern king snake is a large constrictor, best known for eating other snakes (including venomous varieties). They have a natural immunity to the venom of rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, and copperheads.
The scarlet king snake is a small snake that along with the scarlet snake, resemble the venomous coral snake. Unlike the coral snake these harmless varieties have their red bands bordered by black.
Harmless Snakes: Black Racer

The black racer is usually referred to as a black snake. Juveniles however display a blotchy pattern for the first year or two of their lives.
Harmless Snakes: Coachwhip

Closely related to the black racer is coachwhip snake. Adults resemble braided whips to a degree and reportedly whip people to death! Juveniles like racers display a slight pattern for the first year or two of their lives.
Corn snakes are members of the rat snake group. Adults are brightly colored in shades of red and orange, although black forms have been found in Georgia and Florida. The belly pattern is black and white checker board.
Rat snakes vary in type by locality. North Georgia has black rat snakes, west Georgia has gray, and coastal Georgia has yellow.
Harmless Snakes: Hognose Snakes

The hognose snake is unique in that individuals will give the appearance of a cobra when first approached, but when this fails, it will roll over and play dead.
There are two species of hognose snakes found in the state. The eastern hognose comes in a variety of color phases, including a completely black, “melanistic” phase, the southern hognose displays a dark blotchy pattern with a gray or reddish brown background.
The indigo snake is the largest native snake to the United States with individuals approaching 8 feet in length. It is confined to southern Georgia usually in areas that support gopher tortoises, whose burrow it often uses for shelter. It is federally protected as a threatened species.
Venomous Snakes: Coral Snakes

The coral snake is a member of the cobra family. It has a neurotoxic venom, unlike our other venomous snakes. It resembles a couple varieties of harmless snakes, but has a black head and the red bands are surrounded by yellow bands.
Venomous Snakes: Copperheads

The copperhead is the probably are most common venomous variety of snake state-wide, although it is curiously absent from the southeastern corner of the state.
The cottonmouth or water moccasin is closely related to the copperhead. Although it is primarily a fish eater, it will feed on a variety of other animals, including frogs, other snakes, and small mammals.
The pigmy rattlesnake is our smallest rattlesnake, usually under 20 inches as an adult. They are often referred to as ground rattlesnakes, and because of their cryptic coloration are probably overlooked by most individuals.
The canebrake or timber rattlesnake at one time was considered two separate subspecies of snakes. Individuals from northern parts of Georgia (timber) are smaller than their southern counterparts (canebrake), and often display a blotchy pattern, rather than a series of chevron-shaped cross bands.
The eastern diamondback rattlesnake is restricted to the Coastal Plain region of the state, and is usually associated with sandy, well-drained upland habitat, although sizable populations exist on many of our barrier islands and salt-marsh hammocks.
If you want to learn more.....
Thank You