

Northern Water Snake

Northern Water Snake (*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*) - Pl.9

Identification: 22" - 53". Ground color is brown or gray. Brown, reddish, or black bands mark the neck; further back, blotches alternate between the back and sides. On the back, the light spaces are much narrower than the bands or blotches. Half-moons or speckles may be present on belly. Older water snakes are much darker, usually brown or black with only faint remnants of pattern. Juveniles have a more vivid pattern, with darker markings on a lighter ground color. Scales are keeled; anal plate is divided. The Northern Water Snake can exhibit a mean disposition and can inflict a painful, non-venomous bite if handled, as well as a pungent musk.

Where to find them: Prefers quiet waters, but it can be found in just about any river, stream, pond, lake, swamp, marsh, or bog. It can be seen swimming and foraging as well as basking on land.

When to find them: Active May through October.

Range: Entire state.

Note: Although the Northern Water Snake is a nonvenomous species, the darker specimens are occasionally mistaken for the venomous Cottonmouth, which is not found in New Jersey. While the more reddish-brown specimens in our area may superficially resemble Copperheads, the Northern Water Snake has a head shape, pupil shape and pattern that are quite distinct from these venomous snakes. Although water snakes are non venomous, they are quick to anger and should be viewed from a distance.

Northern Water Snake

(*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*) - text pg. 19



Key Features

- Reddish-brown to black bands along the body that are narrower on the sides of the snake than along the top.
- Base color gray to brown, but sometimes very dark brown to almost black in color.
- Scales keeled.



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife ~ 2002



Excerpt from: "Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians of New Jersey"
Order the complete guide at - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/products.htm>