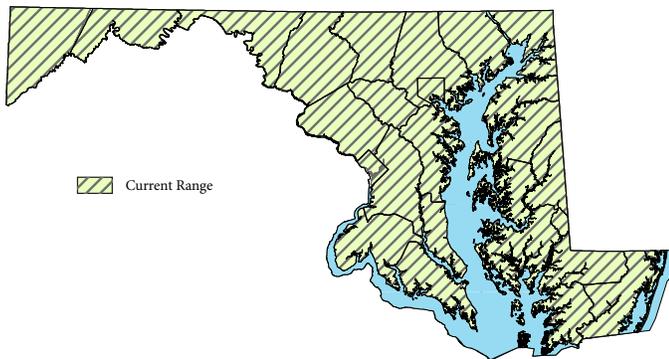


Northern Watersnake

Nerodia sipedon sipedon

The Northern watersnake is one of the most common snakes in Maryland and can be found in or around rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. It is **non-venomous**, but very aggressive and will bite readily if handled. Their saliva contains an anti-coagulant that causes bites to bleed profusely. The northern watersnake has strongly-keeled scales, meaning each scale has a small raised line. These snakes also have a divided anal plate. Their coloration pattern is extremely variable.

Description



The northern watersnake is extremely common throughout Maryland. It can be found in and around lakes, ponds and streams. They are often seen on river banks and the edges of fresh water bodies.

Range/Habitat

The Northern watersnake is easily confused with two highly venomous snakes, the Northern copperhead, and the Eastern cottonmouth. The Eastern cottonmouth is not found in Maryland, its closest population located in southern Virginia. The Northern copperhead is found in the same geographic areas as the northern watersnake, and has similar markings, but is not aquatic.

Similar Species

There are a number of ways to safely tell the difference between the Northern watersnake and the Northern copperhead. Watersnakes (and all non-venomous snakes in Maryland) have round pupils, and lack a heat sensing pit between the eye and nostril.

Venomous vs. Non-venomous

N. watersnake
(Non-venomous)

N. copperhead
(Venomous)

