

There are three subspecies of Banded Water Snake: *Nerodia fasciata fasciata*, *Nerodia fasciata pictiventris*, and *Nerodia fasciata confluens*.

*Nerodia fasciata pictiventris* is the Florida Banded Water Snake and is found in peninsular Florida. It is found throughout the Florida peninsula except in the Florida Keys. Outside the state, it occurs in extreme southeastern Georgia and a very isolated population is in extreme southeastern Texas around Brownsville.

*Nerodia fasciata fasciata* is commonly called the Banded Water Snake and is found in the coastal plain regions from North Carolina to Mississippi, except in peninsular Florida.

*Nerodia fasciata confluens* is called the Broad-banded Water Snake and is found in Louisiana, coastal Mississippi, eastern Texas, Arkansas, and portions of Mississippi, Tennessee, and Missouri close to the Mississippi River.

The Florida Banded Water Snake can be found in nearly all freshwater habitats, preferring the shallow waters of swamps, marshes, ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers. It is active mainly at night, but it may be found during the day sunning on banks or on vegetation hanging over the water.

Florida Banded Water Snakes are harmless and non-venomous, although

## Banded Water Snake

*Nerodia fasciata pictiventris*



they have a mouth full of sharp teeth. When threatened, they may flatten to mimic a Water Moccasin. If that doesn't work, they will bite viciously and smear their tormentors with a foul smelling musk to defend themselves.

Primarily a nighttime hunter, the Banded Water Snake eats live or dead fish, frogs, salamanders, crayfish, and tadpoles.

The adult is a stocky snake with black, brown, or red cross bands across its back. As the snakes age, the bands become less and less visible. The background color can vary from black to a gray, tan, or have a reddish tint. Its underside is pale with roughly square shaped spots.

Young are brightly colored with broad bands. Bands on juveniles appear narrower and come closer to the background color.

Adults are typically from 24-40 inches in length, but they can grow to almost five feet long.

The head is the key area for identification. The most noticeable feature is the lower jaw, which is whitish with many thin, dark vertical stripes. There is also a thin dark stripe from the eye to the angle of the jaw.

Because they are found around bodies of water, water snakes are often mistakenly identified as the venomous Water Moccasin. But jaw colors and head shape and color patterns make it easy to distinguish between the two.

The Moccasin has a wide, dark band that goes through the eye to the front of the head, and it has a vertical pupil in the eye. The Banded Water Snake lacks that band and has a round pupil.

If the heads are viewed from above, the eyes of the water snake are easily visible while the eyes of the Moccasin cannot be seen.

Most noticeably, Moccasins do not have the fine stripes on the lower jaw, just large blotches.

Like all water snakes, the Florida Banded Water Snake bears live young. Mating occurs from midwinter to spring and litters of 20-30 young are born in late spring through summer. The young are 7.5-10.5 inches at birth and very brightly colored.



Banded Water Snake: front  
Water Moccasin: front



Banded Water Snake: adult  
Water Moccasin: adult



Banded Water Snake: juvenile  
Water Moccasin: juvenile



Banded Water Snake: young  
Water Moccasin: young

