Snake Species at Lake Crabtree:

- Eastern Worm Snake
- Black Racer
- Ringneck Snake
- Black Rat Snake
- Eastern Kingsnake
- Northern Water Snake
- Rough Green Snake
- Brown Snake
- Eastern Garter Snake
- Eastern Smooth Earth Snake
- Mole Kingsnake
- Copperhead * (venomous)

A Note About "Water Moccasins"

Both cottonmouths and northern water snakes are commonly referred to as "water moccasins," but they are not the same snake. The cottonmouth is a venomous snake, while the northern water snake is non-venomous. Cottonmouths are not found at Lake Crabtree or in this area of Wake County. If you see a brown snake in the water, it's likely the harmless northern water snake. Note the characteristics of each in the chart below.

Cottonmouth	Northern water snake
No "stripes" around mouth	Vertical "stripes" around mouth
Swims with entire body above water	Swims with only head above water
Elliptical pupils	Round pupils
Diamond shaped head and the head is distinctly wider than neck	Head is not distinctly wider than neck
Horizontal dark bar behind the eye	No bar behind the eye

Being Safe With Snakes

While bites from copperheads are seldom lethal, they can be very painful and require immediate medical attention. Tips to avoid snake bites:

- **Avoidance is the best policy! Keep a safe distance away.** Do not harass the snake.
- Do not put hands or feet into places where you cannot see. Snakes may hide in these locations.
- Do not handle a snake that you assume is dead.
- Teach children about snakes and caution them to keep a safe distance.
- If you or anyone you know is bitten and you can't positively identify the snake, seek medical care immediately.

Have a snake you want to ID? Check out these online resources for help:

Davidson College Herpetology: http://www.herpsofnc.org/herps_of_NC/snakes/snakes.html#

Database of wildlife recorded at Wake County Parks: http://wcnrid.wakegov.com/public.php

WAKE COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA

Lake Crabtree County Park
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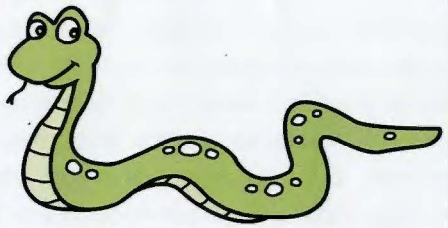
http://www.wakegov.com/parks/lakecrabtree

SNAKES AT LAKE CRABTREE



Lake Crabtree County Park
1400 Aviation Parkway
Morrisville, NC 27560
(919) 460-3390

THE ONLY GOOD SNAKE IS A LIVE SNAKE!

Black rat snake, Raleigh, NC, 2013, M.Tschopp

Some people may have a fear of all things "snakey," but here at Lake Crabtree, we think snakes are awesome! Snakes are generally not aggressive, relatively harmless, and provide an important service to us by keeping the rodent and insect population in check. Snakebites to humans are rare, and most snakebites happen when a snake gets stepped on or when someone tries to handle or harm the snake. Most snakes will lie completely motionless and wait for humans to pass by, as they are hoping we never notice them. Snakes only bite as a defense mechanism, so if you don't give them a reason to fear you, you will be safe.

What should I do if I see a snake?

Snakes are fun to watch! We recommend observing them or taking photos from a safe distance. Note colors and/or any patterns or behaviors. Let us know what you see and we would love to help you identify the species!

Do not approach or harass the snake. If there are children nearby have them calmly move to a safe area away from the snake.

Remember: an unprovoked snake will not bite.

While in the park, please note that hunting, trapping, injuring, or killing any animal, including snakes, is prohibited.

Snakes at Lake Crabtree

Lake Crabtree County Park is proud to be home to 12 different species of snakes, and the only venomous one found here is the copperhead. Copperheads are easily recognized by the dark brown hourglass shaped cross bands on a brown or gray background. Some other non-venomous snakes have similarly colored bands, but the copperhead's bands are the only ones with dark bands that are narrower on top and become wider on the sides (see image below). If you see a copperhead, keep a safe distance away.

Hourglass pattern on copperhead

Northern Water Snakes

On warm summer days, the northern water snakes are almost always out swimming near the water's edge. We encourage you to watch them as they hunt for fish and other prey. Do not worry! These snakes are non-venomous and are unlikely to approach humans. They are often misidentified as cottonmouths or "water moccasins", but there are no cottonmouths at Lake Crabtree.

Northern water snake at Lake Crabtree County Park, 2014, M. Tschopp

Snakes in Wake County are typically not aggressive and do not bite unless they feel threatened by a person getting too close, trying to pick them up, or stepping on them. Watch your step and keep a safe distance away if you see a snake.

Copperhead at Lake Crabtree County Park, 2011 C.Bockhahn

Snake Facts

- **Snakes are amazing!** They are interesting animals and they are helpful to people because they consume rodents and insects.
- Snakes are ectotherms, which means they warm their bodies from external heat.
- Snake venom may be useful in medicine. It is currently being studied as a possible treatment for strokes, cancer, and prevention of blood clots.
- Snakes have scaled bodies. They are not slimy like many people believe!
- Snakes smell with their tongues.
- Snakes shed their skin several times a year. Sometimes you can find their shed skins in the woods.
- Snakes don't have eyelids.
- Snakes are found on every continent except Antarctica.

Snake Myths

- Snakes travel in pairs, and one will seek revenge if the other is killed: **FALSE.** Snakes do not have social bonds.
- Snakes can only strike from coiled position: **FALSE.** Snakes can bite or strike from any position. Coiling does increase the striking distance.
- Snakes can't bite underwater: **FALSE.** Snakes can bite underwater, that is how they catch fish!
- Angry snakes chase after people. **FALSE.** If a human walks up on a snake and they are both suddenly frightened, they may inadvertently flee in the same direction. Snakes do not chase humans.