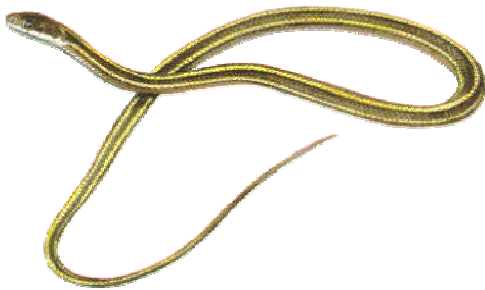


Water Snakes



Although water snakes do eat some fish, they pose no serious threat to pond fish populations or man. Water snakes are not poisonous! Of the 36 different types of snake found in Virginia, only two species, the northern water snake (*Natrix sipedon*) and the brown water snake (*Natrix taxispilota*), are true water snakes. Many people confuse these water snakes with the eastern cottonmouth or water moccasin (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) which is a poisonous, water-dwelling snake. However, the cottonmouth southeastern Virginia, near the Dismal Swamp. Since these snakes have never been found further west than Petersburg, about 90% of the state has no cottonmouths. Water snakes will bite if handled, but are relatively harmless and should not be indiscriminately destroyed. Clearing debris and mowing vegetation at the pond edges reduces hiding places for snakes and will effectively reduce their numbers.
