

## What to do if bitten...

- Stay as calm as possible.
- **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!** Do **NOT** attempt to drive yourself to a hospital.
- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Immobilize the bitten area, keeping it lower than the heart.

## What **NOT** to do if bitten...

- Do **NOT** attempt to draw the venom from the wound by sucking. Attempts to draw venom from a wound should only be done with a snake bite kit.
- Do **NOT** cut the wound.
- Do **NOT** apply ice to the bite.
- **ONLY** apply a tourniquet if it will take **LONGER than 30 minutes** to reach medical assistance. If it is necessary to use a tourniquet, wrap a bandage 2 - 4 inches above the bite to attempt to slow the venom transfer through the bloodstream. Be careful not to tie the bandage too tightly, constricting blood flow. You should be able to slip a finger under the tied bandage.

**\*\*If you can get medical assistance within 30 minutes, DO NOT apply a tourniquet.**



## Safety Tips

- Do **NOT** approach a rattlesnake! The timber rattlesnake is basically a passive animal, but can become defensive when threatened. Because rattlesnakes view humans as predators, your prolonged presence could encourage a defensive strike.
- **NEVER** attempt to handle a rattlesnake. This is extremely threatening to the rattlesnake, and encourages defensive strikes. In addition, the timber rattlesnake is protected under the NJ Endangered Species Act. Therefore, it is illegal to kill, handle or harass a timber rattlesnake in New Jersey.

## If you encounter a timber rattlesnake...

- 1) Move a safe distance away from the snake. Rattlesnakes can strike at a distance up to 1/2 their body length.
- 2) If possible, cover the snake with a large, empty garbage can so that it is unable to escape. **BE CERTAIN TO GET THE ENTIRE SNAKE UNDER THE MOUTH OF THE CAN** so the back is not crushed. If it is not possible to cover the snake, have someone watch the snake from a safe distance in case it moves from the original site, while a second person calls ENSP.
- 3) **IMMEDIATELY** take note of the time and call ENSP at:

Southern region: (609) 628-2103

Northern region: (908) 735-8975

or (908) 735-9281

Weeknights/ weekends:

1-877-WARN DEP

(1-877-927-6337)

A biologist will speak with you and inform you of what to do or what will be done.

# Timber Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*)



## Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP)

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program is dedicated to the protection and survival of New Jersey's timber rattlesnakes because they are an important part of our natural environmental systems. ENSP is initiating a study of timber rattlesnakes in the state and needs your help in locating the snakes. The study will entail tracking the movements of the rattlesnakes using radio telemetry and the results from the study will help:

- minimize interactions and conflicts between people and rattlesnakes.
- protect habitat critical to their survival.

### ENSP NEEDS YOUR HELP!

- If you see a timber rattlesnake, immediately contact the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program: Southern region - (609) 628-2103; Northern region - (908) 735-8975; State-wide - 1-877-WARN DEP.

## Timber Rattlesnake

The timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) is among New Jersey's most endangered species. Although beneficial to our natural systems, years of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge have made people fearful of these magnificent creatures. This fear has often made rattlesnakes the target of unjustifiable killing. While the illegal killing of rattlesnakes in NJ threatens their long term survival, habitat loss through destruction, alteration, and human encroachment is currently the greatest threat to the survival of this native species.

## Identifying a Timber Rattlesnake



*Light or yellow phase*



*Intermediate phase*

The timber rattlesnake can be a light (yellow) phase or a dark (black) phase. Just as humans have varying skin tones, rattlesnakes have varying color tones. For example, a yellow phase rattler may have colors that are a very pale yellow, brilliant yellow, or may appear very brown, and every shade in between. Dark phase snakes (not shown) appear almost completely black, revealing their pattern only at close range. Watersnakes and milksnakes are often misidentified as rattlers. Following are some key features to take note of from a safe distance:

1. **The rattle:** Some snakes will vibrate their tails on leaves imitating rattlesnakes, so be careful not to use sound as the sole identifier. For either color phase, the rattle will be a light beige color.
2. **The head shape:** Rattlesnakes have a shovel-shaped head. The body portion directly following the head is smaller giving the head a shovel-like appearance. Non-venomous snakes of New Jersey have body portions almost equal in size to the head, giving the appearance of little or no distinction between the head and body.

## 3. The color pattern:

**Timber Rattlesnake:** Dark brown to black crossbands or chevrons, blotches nearest head, full lateral jagged bands by mid-section of body. Dark bands typically outlined with lighter colored skin.

**Milksnakes:** Large reddish to brownish blotches alternating with smaller ones. Often they have a light colored "Y" or "V" on back of head.

**Watersnakes:** Dark brownish markings that are wider than the lighter "background" color of the snake.

**Black Rats and Racers:** Racers have smooth black scales with some white on the "chin." Black Rat snakes have black, weakly keeled scales with a light colored throat and some traces of a light pattern throughout. Dark rattlesnakes have a rattle and strongly keeled scales.

**Northern Copperheads:** Shades of rust and copper with darker bands. Darker pattern along the body has lateral hour-glass shapes, wider along the sides of the body, more narrow along the back.

## Venom:

Timber rattlesnakes have hemotoxic venom. This venom attacks the human circulatory system, working slower than some western species' neurotoxic venom which attacks the nervous system. The amount of time the hemotoxic venom takes to affect a person will vary with a person's overall size, level of excitement, the amount of venom that was injected, and the potency of the individual snake's venom. In addition, some people experience an allergic reaction to the venom, similar to that of bee stings. Because of the possibility of experiencing anaphalactic shock, it is imperative that you find help as soon as possible. Tell the first person you see what has happened to you and ask them to stay with you while you seek and await medical assistance.