

Northern Copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix mokasen*)

I planned to write about dogwoods this issue, but a recent event changed my mind. One member's long-haired dachshund, Moxie, was with her owner fishing on the banks of the reservoir and was bitten by a copperhead. It was touch and go, and even if she survived, she could lose a foot or leg. In the end, it looks like she will make a full recovery.

A lot of people have been telling me they are seeing a lot of snakes this year – specifically copperheads.

The copperhead is the only venomous snake in Prince William County. It is a pit viper like the water moccasin (cotton mouth) and rattlesnakes. It injects its venom through needle-like retractable fangs. In the middle of the road or on an asphalt trail, it is easily seen and recognized by its hour-glass pattern though its color may vary. It is not aggressive.

For the first year, young copperheads have a yellow or lime-green tail.

Lying still on brown leaves, this ambush predator is invisible. If you get too close – or step on it – it will strike to defend itself.

Very few people die from copperhead bites but they are painful. If bitten:

- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Immobilize the bitten area and keep it lower than the heart.
- Get medical help (antivenin).



Copperhead (Adult)



Copperhead (First Year)



Copperhead In Leaves