

A Family Tradition



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*When You Get Bit
You'll Either Love It*

or

Hate It - But You'll

NEVER FOR GET IT!!

▶ *Large Rodents*

Each can easily be identified in hand, but it can be difficult to tell them apart in their aquatic habitats. All three species have lips that close behind their large incisor teeth. This allows the mouth to be sealed off while the large incisors protrude for underwater feeding. The large incisors are constantly growing, replacing the worn surfaces caused by constant chewing. The **beaver** is the only one of the three that "fells" trees, making the presence of this large rodent easy to determine. Limbs with the bark removed, or dams and lodges constructed of limbs and mud also indicate the presence of beaver. **Muskrat** use marsh vegetation to build a characteristic lodge, smaller than that of a beaver. **Nutria** leave no telltale sign, All three species consume vegetation and leave trails and burrows. Other signs, including lodges, dens, feeding platforms, loafing areas and mud slides vary among species in size, shape, and placement, and can be used to determine which species is present.

▶ *Beaver*

The largest North American rodent, can weigh up to 100 pounds but this is unusual. The usual weights for **beaver** are from 35 to 68 pounds. Typical total length for this species is from 39 to 47 inches, and the large flat tail varies from 10 to 13 inches long and from 3.5 to 8 inches wide. The large flat tail easily identifies this species. Other identifying characteristics are the hind feet which have four webbed toes and a fifth free toe that supports an articulating split nail used for grooming. The coat consists of two layers; a coarse outer layer of guard hair, often yellowish to reddish in color, and a fine dense layer of underfur.



▶ *Brandy Sparks*



Is a 1st generation noodler with 10 years of experience. She was the **2011 Champion Female Noodler** in Pauls Valley, OK at the Okie Noodling Tournament. She has been featured in Okie Noodling 2, the New York Times Magazine and news articles.

▶ *Bethany Sparks*

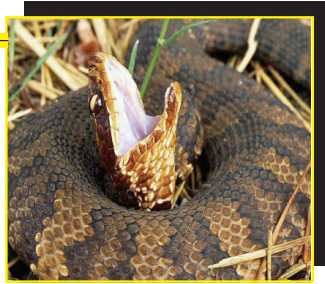
Is a future rodeo star in barrel and pole racing. She looks forward to gradating high school, going to OSU and becoming a vet. She lives in Walters. She is a 4th generation noodler. Bethany prefers to swim and spectate, however, she will get in there when needed. Bethany was the **2011 Okie Noodling Queen** in Pauls Valley, OK. She has been featured in Okie Noodling 2 and news articles.



▶ Cottonmouth

Forty-six species of snakes are native to Oklahoma. Only seven species are harmful to humans. Venomous species are the *copperhead*, *cottonmouth*, and five *rattlesnake* varieties (the western diamondback, the timber, the prairie, western massasauga and the western pigmy).

Cottonmouths are aquatic residents of the eastern one-third of the state and those counties along the southern boundary, west to Comanche County. Copperheads can also be

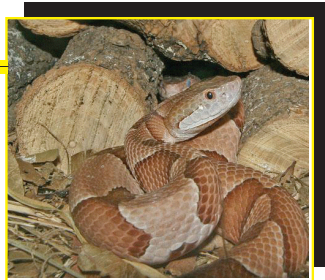


▶ Rattlesnake

aquatic. Cottonmouths, copperheads, massasaugas and pigmy rattlesnakes are usually found in moist areas. Prairie rattlesnakes are found in the prairies of western Oklahoma while the timber rattlers inhabit the forested eastern half of the state. Western diamondbacks are most common in southern and western Oklahoma,

▶ Copperhead

but have been found as far north as Tulsa, Cherokee and Adair counties. Rocky outcrops are the favored habitat of rattlesnakes and copperheads. These outcrops provide shelter, basking and possible hibernation sites.



There are five features that can help you identify **poisonous** snakes:

- ▶ Presence of rattles on the tail positively identifies a snake as poisonous.
- ▶ Head shape can help identify poisonous snakes. Poisonous snakes in North America tend to have diamond or triangular shaped heads. Harmless snakes have narrow heads.
- ▶ Vertical eye pupils (cat's eyes) are a strong sign a snake might be poisonous.
- ▶ The best identifying character is the facial pit. This is a depression on the side of the face joint below a line between the eyes and the nostrils. The venomous snakes of Oklahoma have facial pits.
- ▶ If you have a dead snake a poisonous snake can be identified by examining the scales under the tail. The tail of a snake is the portion of the snake that extend beyond the vent or anus, while non-poisonous snakes usually have two rows of scales beyond the vent.



Places to look can be about anywhere, but some of the best places will be....

- ▶ Rocky shores of lakes, creeks, rivers.
- ▶ Old building foundations or concrete floors that have been overtaken by damming a lake or river.
- ▶ Old demo sites where new bridges have been built.
- ▶ Anywhere someone has to rip rap to stop soil erosion.
- ▶ Log jams, brush piles, and boat ramps

These places offer great hiding places for big fish. However, they offer big hazards like shifting concrete, rebar, reptiles, and rodents. Be aware of the regulations in that area, and special restriction, like no swimming, or size limits.

▶ Safety

Safety is all about situational awareness and common sense. Always have someone there with you. Keep an eye out for reptiles, rodents, and other signs of wildlife that maybe indigenous to the area you are Noodling. It is wise not to go anywhere with alligators. They can be almost anywhere these days. Check with your local wildlife department for things of that nature. Learn all you can before you go, like beaver slides, cuttings, and how fish holes differ from other types. Remember safety first, and your extremities are fearless. They will go anywhere you stick them. It is always best to have a guide your first few trips. No fish is worth your life.