

# The Groundhog



A Newsletter for and about Mentone

March, 2012

## Into the Wilds

### Snakes – Stop, Look and Listen

Florida has snakes, and Mentone has its share. We have to learn to live with them, and the trick is to be able to identify the nasty ones. The bottom line is just leave them alone! Snakes are active in spring, so learn a bit about “when to hold ‘em and when to run.”

Florida has six venomous snake species, only four of which can be found in our area: the [Eastern diamondback](#), the [pygmy rattler](#), the [cottonmouth](#) or water moccasin, and the [coral snake](#).

Although our poisonous snakes are normally non aggressive, they will all strike in self-defense if they feel threatened, and they will feel that way if you accidentally grasp one in your garden, or corner one, or step on one. All except the coral snake are extremely well camouflaged by their natural markings. As a help in identifying snakes, *no North American venomous snake is clearly striped from head to tail.*

THE BADDIES:

**The Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake** is large and heavy bodied with a row of large dark diamonds with brown centers and cream borders down its back. The ground color of the body is brownish. Average adult size is 36-72 inches and it can accurately strike up to 2/3 its body length. It can lay silent and motionless, and then strike without the usual nervous buzz from its rattle.

**The Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake** is small (12-24 inches) but thick. The body is light to dark gray with a row of black or charcoal blotches disrupting a reddish brown stripe down the middle of the back and dark spots on the side. The tail is slender and ends in a small rattle. The belly is heavily mottled with black and white.

**The Cottonmouth**, commonly known as the **Water Moccasin**, is an evil-looking, heavy-bodied, thick-headed snake averaging 20-48 inches. Juveniles are brightly-colored with reddish-brown bands on a brown field, but the pattern darkens with age to appear almost black. They can be found anywhere, including far from water. When threatened, the Cottonmouth will often coil its

body and open its mouth, revealing a white interior. Its bite can be quite dangerous and needs prompt medical attention.

**The Eastern Coral Snake**, a relative of the cobra, is most notable for its red, yellow/white, and black colored banding. This non-aggressive snake is the only neurotoxic member of our indigenous poisonous snakes. Adults average 20-30 inches. They are quite secretive, usually found under debris and in the ground, and generally bite humans only when handled or stepped on. There are several colorful, banded, non-venomous snakes that can be mistaken for the Coral Snake, hence the mnemonic “**red next to yellow – kill a fellow; red on black – friend of Jack**” which helps get the color sequence right. Coral snakes have jet black noses, another way to identify them.

Coral Snake



Scarlet Kingsnake



Every other band **is** yellow, and Yellow does not touch red, and yellow touches both black and every other band **is not** yellow. red, but black and red never touch. Black and red always touch.

There are a few very common non-venomous snakes which are very often misidentified as venomous – these are the harmless ones: [yellow and red rat snakes](#), [black racers](#) and several types of [water snakes](#), particularly the [banded water snake](#), the [brown water snake](#) and the [green water snake](#).

The University of Florida’s on-line guide to snakes is a great resource. <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/herpetology/FL-GUIDE/onlineguide.htm>

## Notes from the Board

**Welcome to New Board Members, John and Beverly Dickinson.**

The current Board members are now: Irv Lampert, President; Jeremy Cook, VP; Jay Blaske, Treasurer; Beverly Dickinson, Secretary; John Dickinson and Dave Jenkins, Members at Large.

## **Around the 'Hood'**

### **Stay in touch: New Email List by and for Mentone residents**

If you want to keep up with the latest Mentone news and trends, join the list! It is moderated by a Mentone



resident, and will announce any events which are not sponsored by the Board or management. Examples would be the new GARDEN GROUP which has just formed. If you are interested in keeping up with the latest, send an email to "[Mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com](mailto:Mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com)" You'll be added to the list. All names will be confidential. You can be a renter or a resident. Already, there is a garden group formed. Think of the possibilities! Walking groups. Book clubs, whatever people are interested in doing. Even lost or found pets.

### **Fourth annual Family Pot-Luck/Game Day Now on April 21, 4-7 pm**

It's the Mentone EVENT everyone looks forward to and loves! Bring some food, bring the kids and get ready for FUN. Lots of games like three legged races, with ribbons for the participants. The picnic is sponsored by our capable Social Committee, who could use some extra volunteers for this event. If you'd like to help, please email



[mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com](mailto:mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com) and let us know. Help is needed for clean up, games, and set up.

### **Trade plants, Garden tips, Garden Produce Join the Mentone Garden Group**

Do you want to learn more about growing a back door garden? Do you have more tomatoes than you can use, and need cukes? Would you like to tour other Mentone gardens? Learn more about Florida friendly plants? Join a group of interested gardeners, who want to learn from each other. Meet new neighbors. Send an email to

[mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com](mailto:mentoneeventslist@yahoo.com), with "Mentone garden group" in the subject line. If you join the Garden Group,

**The Pool Heater** will be turned up on March 10.

**The Neighborhood Yard Sale** is Saturday, March 17th. Start collecting your unwanted treasures and turn them into cash! The management will put signs up at the entrances and advertise the sale in the newspaper.

### **Good People Make Good Dogs!**

PLEASE clean up after your dog! Don't give our neighborhood pets a bad rep just because we humans don't do our part. We dog lovers might sometimes forget to bring a plastic bag when we walk our dogs. To avoid this, keep a bunch of bags right next to the leash.

As a reminder, please remember that dogs are not allowed on the children's playground, no matter how friendly the dog. Some children have a fear of dogs.

If you cannot bring your trash cans in on Monday night, please ask a neighbor to move them in for you. And then return the favor when you have an opportunity.

If you are planning an event at the pool, please remember to fill out a form to request the date. This will avoid duplicate events at the same time. You can find the form on the website: [www.mentone.go.to](http://www.mentone.go.to), under the documents link. There will also be a posting of all the events scheduled to take place at the pavilion, to help you plan.