

Dangers in Florida

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Land dangers

Poisonous Snakes in Florida



Southern Copperhead,
Copperhead, Highland
Moccasin, Chunkhead



Cottonmouth, Florida
Cottonmouth, Water
Moccasin



Eastern Diamondback
Rattlesnake, Rattlesnake,
Rattler



Timber Rattlesnake,
Canebrake Rattlesnake



Dusky Pigmy
Rattlesnake, Pigmy
Rattler, Ground Rattler



Eastern Coral Snake,
Coral Snake

Although 50 species of snakes are found in Florida, only the 6 listed here are venomous and a danger to humans. The remaining 44 species (and its subspecies) are harmless and should be protected for the beneficial role they play in natural ecosystems, eating insects, rodents, rabbits, and other small prey.

A word of caution is warranted here. If you find a snake and you do not know whether or not it is venomous, the safest thing to do is leave it alone. Florida snakes are not aggressive and, unless they are cornered, most will flee when humans approach. Occasionally, you might encounter one that is reluctant to leave because it is basking in the sun to get warm. Among snakebite victims, an unacceptably high number are bitten on the hands and arms when they are handling the snake. **Do not catch a snake and do not handle one unless you are sure it is not venomous.** In addition, for a short time after a snake is killed, its reflexes may continue to work. Those reflexes typically cause the body to writhe slowly for a while, but they can cause a convulsive contraction and a bite, so you should not handle a freshly killed venomous snake

The only acceptable treatment for venomous snakebite, involves the use of antivenin. So if you or someone else is bitten by a venomous snake, seek immediate medical attention at the nearest hospital or medical facility.

Poisonous Spiders in Florida

There are 5 species of dangerously venomous spiders that inhabit Florida. I feel that anyone who lives in or visits Florida should make themselves aware of these spiders, and learn how to identify them. Click on any of the spider names below for information about the species.

- **Northern Black Widow** - *Latrodectus variolus*
- **Southern Black Widow** - *Latrodectus mactans*
- **Brown Widow** - *Latrodectus geometricus*
- **Red Widow** - *Latrodectus bishopi*
- **Brown Recluse** - *Loxosceles reclusa*



Plate 2. Southern black widow.



Plate 5. Brown widow spider.



Plate 3. Red widow spider.



Plate 8. Brown recluse spider.

Black Bears



Florida black bears are just as afraid of you as you are of them, but their attacks can still be deadly, even if they are extremely rare. In the past century, black bears have killed less than 100 people, according to **Bear.org** . More often than not, when black bears are spotted they're either going through a pile of trash or **hanging out** in a tree downtown.

Feral Pigs



Feral pigs roam rural areas and can get up to 300 pounds. Unlike many wild animals, feral pigs aren't afraid to attack without provocation. Their tusks can cause harm but are rarely lethal to humans. In 2009, a woman was **attacked** by a wild boar and left with an injury to her calf.

Mosquitos



They're everywhere, seriously. Any Floridian who's spent any time outside has suffered the wrath of these winged menaces. Their bites are mostly annoying, but they can carry deadly diseases like West Nile virus and dengue fever.

Fire ants



Don't let their size fool you. These little red bugs tend to attack in swarms and are known as the most aggressive ants in the world. Their bites normally cause an itchy rash, but they are deadly in about **five percent** of cases if the victim goes into anaphylactic shock. A Seminole county man **died** after being attacked by a swarm of fire ants while he was walking his dog.

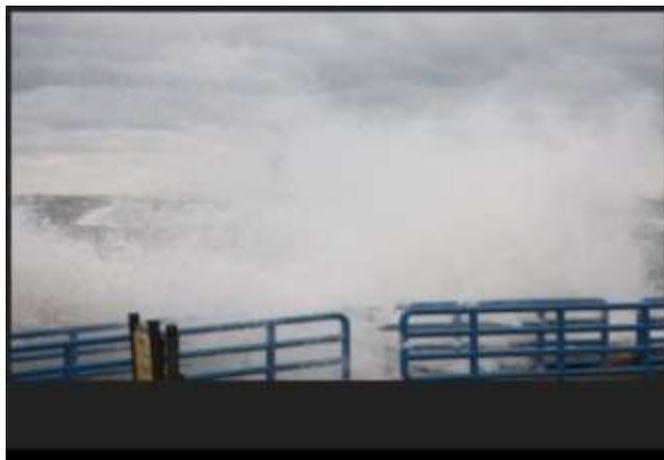
Water Dangers

Rip Currents



When the wind and waves combine near the shore it can cause dangerous rip currents that can drag swimmers away instantly. Between 1994 and 2007, 230 people in Florida were drowned in rip currents, representing about 48 percent of all rip current deaths in the U.S., according to the **Next Generation Weather Lab** .

Rogue Waves



Living in a state surrounded almost entirely by water means Floridians face several threats from the deep blue sea. One that's nearly impossible to predict is the formation of massive rogue waves, like the one that **hit Daytona** in 1992 that was 18-feet tall, 27 miles long, 250 feet wide and injured at least 75 people.

Alligator/Gators



Between 1948 and November 2012, a total of 344 people were bitten by an alligator without provoking it and of those 344 bites, 22 were fatal and another 206 required major medical treatment, according to the **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation**. Alligators are often spotted in retention ponds at apartment complexes and other urban areas, even the **Orlando International Airport** . Most male alligators are about 11 feet long, but the largest recorded size of gator in Florida is a massive 14 feet long and 654 pounds.

Jelly Fish



The waters near Florida often experience jellyfish blooms during the summer months. During one August weekend in 2013, **151 stings** were reported in Volusia county alone. Statewide, there are about **200,000** jellyfish stings per year. The only foolproof way of avoiding these brainless, gelatinous creatures is to stay out of the water, although **Safe Sea** manufactures a jellyfish repellent lotion.

Otters (rabies)



Hear us out: otters are vicious. They make look cute and cuddly but add a bit of rabies into the mix and you've got yourself a killing machine. Take, for example, the **96-year-old Sarasota man** who was attacked by a rabid otter for about six minutes as a good samaritan tried to beat it off. The threat of rabies applies to all of Florida's animals: raccoons, foxes, coyotes and pretty much anything else with a spinal cord.

Portuguese man of war



The Portuguese man of war is similar to the jellyfish, except their stings are much more painful and leave red welts on the skin. Stings are rarely lethal to humans, but can cause severe allergic reaction and illness. If you see a dead one washed up on the shore, be sure NOT to touch it.

Stingray



All Florida natives know the stingray shuffle, but sometimes beachgoers forget and end up with an unwanted barb in their ankles. Annually in the U.S., about 5,000 people are stung by stingrays, according to **TheJump.net** . As long as you're mindful of the creature and keep your feet close to the ground you should be safe, unless you're like this **unfortunate woman** who fell to her death after a giant stingray flew in the air and hit her in the face while she was on her boat.

Sturgeon



When they're not swimming in rivers, sturgeon can leap out of the water and knock someone unconscious, which is exactly what **happened** to a 32-year-old woman in 2012.

Sharks



Although they rarely kill, sharks do bite. Some of the areas with the highest rates of shark attacks in the state are right here in Central Florida. Between 1882 and 2012, there have been 249 shark attacks in Volusia county and 111 in Brevard, marking the highest numbers in the state, according to the **Florida Natural Museum of History**. In that time, there has been a total of 663 unprovoked shark attacks in Florida with 11 of them being fatal. The most recent Florida fatality came in 2010, when a 38-year-old kiteboarder was **surrounded** by a group of sharks and bitten several times. Although most shark bites aren't serious, Florida does **lead the country** in the number of bites reported.

Natural Disasters

Hurricanes



Between June 1 and Nov. 30 of each year every Floridian knows to stock up on water bottles and prepare an emergency escape plan in case the state gets hit by a hurricane. In the past few years Florida has managed to (mostly) avoid major hurricanes like Katrina and Sandy; but between 2000 and 2012, Florida was hit by more than 50 hurricanes and tropical storms, resulting in millions of dollars of damage and lives lost.

Lightning



Central Floridians are right smack dab in the middle of "Lightning Alley" -- the area between Tampa and Titusville that sees the highest recorded number of lightning strikes per year in the U.S. Lightning is the most lethal weather occurrence in Florida and, on top of that, Florida is the **lightning strike capital** of the country. On average, 1.45 million strikes of lightning hit the state each year, according to **LiveScience.com** . Between 1959 and 2013, there have been 468 lightning-related deaths in Florida with an average of nine deaths per year.

Sink Holes



The scariest thing about sinkholes is that you don't know when or where they'll pop up. There have been 19,280 known sinkholes in Florida, with Pasco county ranking at the top with 7,210 sinkholes. Pictured is a sinkhole that developed in Tampa in March and **swallowed** a man who was sleeping in his home. Even more recently, a sinkhole **15-foot-deep** swallowed a building at a resort near Disney World.

Tornados



Of the 1,253 tornadoes that hit the U.S. each year, about 66 occur here, making Florida third in the nation, according to the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**. Some notable tornadoes in the state include a series of twisters that hit Kissimmee in 1998 killing 42 people and causing more than \$100 million in damages, and the Groundhog Day tornado outbreak in Central Florida that killed 21 people and caused more than \$200 million in damages.

Wildfires



In the first eight months of 2013, more than 1,000 acres of state land has been destroyed by wildfires, according to the **Florida Forest Service**. But that number is miniscule compared to some big burns in the past. In 2007, more than 123,000 acres of land was burned by the Bugaboo fire in Baker County.

Sources

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