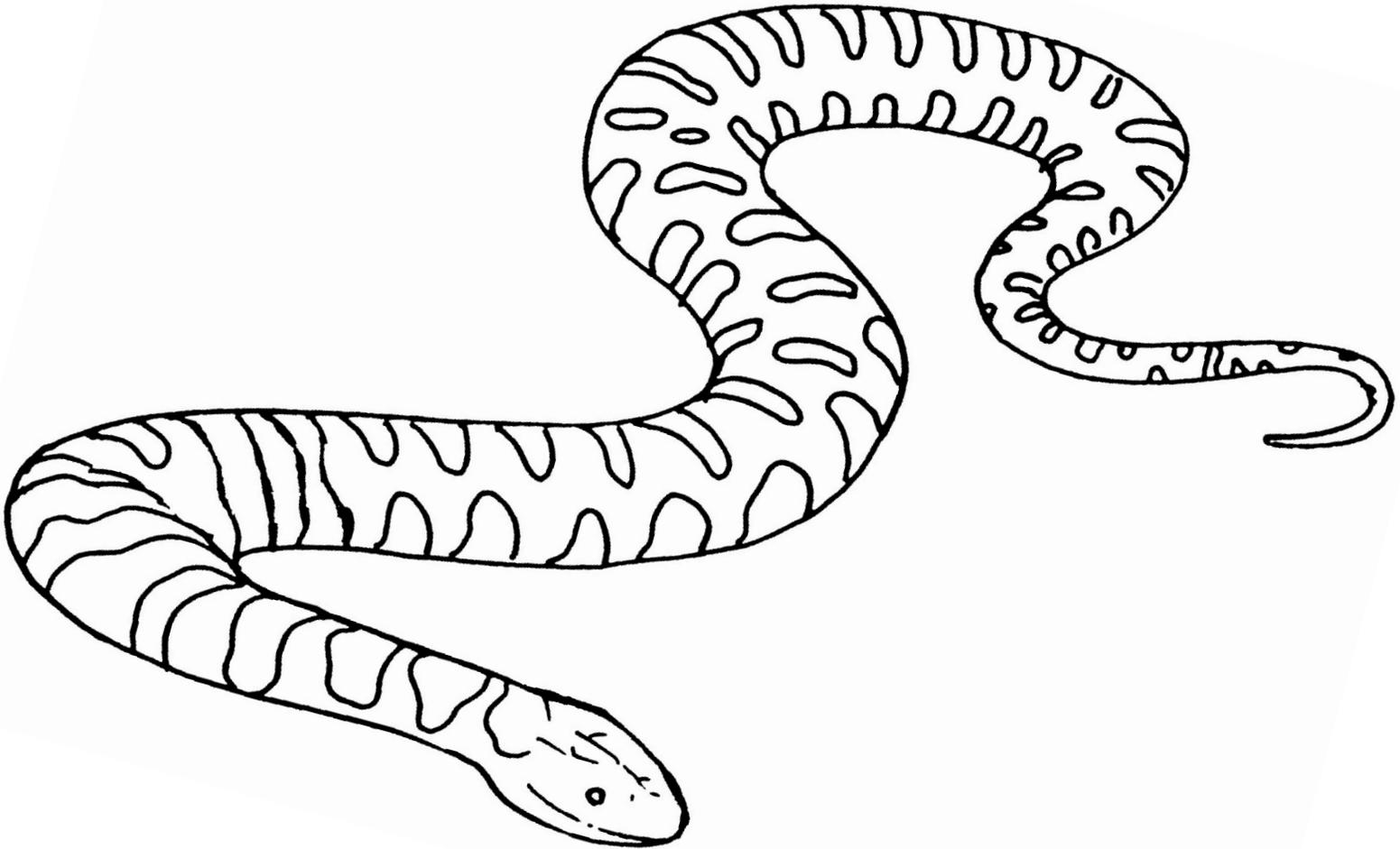




PA's Amphibian and Reptile Coloring Series

Northern Watersnake



All About Me: Hello. I am a Northern Water Snake. We are the largest of PA's three water snakes, and we grow from 24 to over 50 inches long. We are sometimes killed out of fear by being mistaken for a venomous snake, but we are not. We do get angry when defending ourselves. We flatten our heads and heavy bodies when striking; and although we flee if we can, we strike repeatedly if cornered. We are active day and night. We come in a variety of background colors; such as red, brown, gray and almost black. We have crossbands over this color that start on the neck. These bands become dark blotches, alternating from the back to each side as they go down the body. In some adults, the pattern blends into the background color. Our bellies are white, yellow or gray and dotted with spots. We can live in fast streams, but we prefer slow streams, lakes, ponds, bogs, swamps, and rivers. We bask over branches of shrubs, fallen trees, or on a sun-baked rock. We swim among aquatic plants to hunt for food or for protection. We eat salamanders, crayfish, minnows, sick or weak fish, and occasionally small mammals. We are found in every county in PA and are regularly seen around water by hikers, kayakers and anglers.