



# A Hook-nosed Seasnake, *Hydrophis schistosus* Daudin 1803, Killed Trying to Swallow a Fish

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Hook-nosed Seasnakes (*Hydrophis schistosus*) are widely distributed from the Persian Gulf through the Indian to the Pacific Ocean (Warrell 1994; Kularatne et al. 2014). Although seasnakes typically display only moderate levels of aggression or threatening behavior (Heatwole 1999), *H. schistosus* can be quite aggressive (Murthy 1986) and not infrequently threaten fishermen (Hatkar and Chinnasamy 2016). Although the species is generally encountered in shallow coastal waters, it will move into offshore waters in calm seas in search of fish and crustacean prey (Sharma 2003).

At 1912 h on 22 May 2023, I encountered a dead *H. schistosus* (~80 cm total length) on Rabindranath Tagore Beach in Karwar, Karnataka, India (14.81088 N, 74.12617 E). The snake was presumably killed trying to swallow an unknown species of fish (Fig. 1), the tail of which protruded from the snake’s mouth. Seasnakes typically eat their prey

head-first (Thurman and Webber 1984; Voris et al. 1978), ostensibly to facilitate the passage of spiny fins. I could not determine if the snake had died at sea and washed up onto the beach or if the fatal incident occurred on the beach. Unfortunately, I was unable to identify the fish thus cannot provide any information regarding the diet of *H. schistosus*.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Surya Narayan, Nilanjan Mukherjee, and Seshadri K.S. for their support in writing this note and the Youth for the Coast workshop for organizing the fieldwork.

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**Figure 1.** A dead Hook-nosed Seasnake (*Hydrophis schistosus* Daudin 1803) with an unknown fish lodged in its mouth, which likely contributed to the snake’s death. Photograph by Harsh Singhal.