

**TANTILLA NIGRICEPS (Plains Black-headed Snake).**

**PREDATION.** *Tantilla nigriceps* is a small fossorial snake that occurs from Tamaulipas to Chihuahua, Mexico, north to Kansas and Colorado, USA, with a disjunct population in eastern Wyoming, USA (Ernst and Ernst 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 668 pp.). Predators of *T. nigriceps* are thought to include small mammals, birds, lizards, and snakes (Collins et al. 2010.

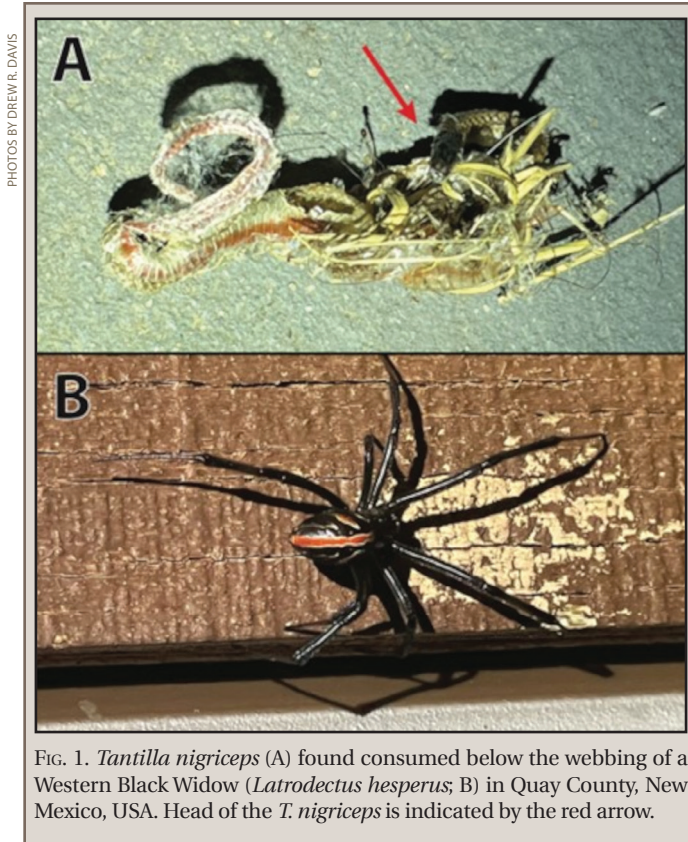


FIG. 1. *Tantilla nigriceps* (A) found consumed below the webbing of a Western Black Widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*; B) in Quay County, New Mexico, USA. Head of the *T. nigriceps* is indicated by the red arrow.

Amphibians, Reptiles, and Turtles in Kansas. Eagle Mountain Publishing, Eagle Mountain, Utah. xvi + 312 pp.; Holycross and Mitchell 2020. Snakes of Arizona. ECO Wear and Publishing, Rodeo, New Mexico. 860 pp.); however, few records of predation exist. Documented predators of *T. nigriceps* include “ants” (Tanner 1985. Great Basin Nat. 45:615–676), pyramid ants (*Conomyrmasp.*; McCormick and Polis 1982. Biol. Rev. 57:29–58), Desert Kingsnake (*Lampropeltis splendida*; LaDuc et al. 1996. Herpetol. Rev. 27:25), and Western Massasauga (*Sistrurus tergeminus*; Holycross and Mackessy 2002. J. Herpetol. 36:454–464). Spider predation on snakes is a well-documented phenomenon, especially in the USA (Nyffeler and Gibbons 2021. J. Arachnol. 49:1–27), and it has been recorded for multiple species in the genus *Tantilla*, including *T. coronata* (Telford 1966. Bull. Florida State Mus. Biol. Sci. 10:261–304), *T. gracilis* (Pruett and Jadin 2010. Herpetol. Rev. 41:99), *T. hobartsmithi* (Punzo and Henderson 1999. Bull. Br. Arachnol. Soc. 11:121–128; Grayson et al. 2023. Herpetol. Rev. 54:498), and *T. melanocephala* (Rocha et al. 2017. Herpetol. Notes 10:647–650). Here, we report an observation of spider predation on *T. nigriceps*.

On 23 September 2023, an adult *T. nigriceps* was found dead below a spider's web in a vault toilet at the Roadrunner Loop campground, Ute Lake State Park, Quay County, New Mexico, USA (35.35640°N, 103.45377°W; WGS 84). The dead *T. nigriceps* was desiccated and wrapped in spider's webbing along with the remains of several invertebrates and dried vegetation (Fig. 1A) and was directly below the web of a Western Black Widow (*Latrodectus hesperus*; Fig. 1B). Multiple individual *L. hesperus* were present in the vault toilet at the time of the observation. *Latrodectus hesperus* has been reported to consume several species of small snakes, with observations of predation on Sonoran Coralsnake (*Micruroides euryxanthus*; Jones et al. 2011. Herpetol. Rev. 42:440–441), Sharp-tailed Snake (*Contia*

*tenuis*; Beaman et al. 2014. Herpetol. Rev. 45:514), and Desert Nightsnake (*Hypsiglena chlorophaea*; Carroll 2007. Herpetol. Rev. 38:468). Due to the position of the spider directly above the snake's remains, the web wrapped around the snake, and the fact that *L. hesperus* is known to prey on snakes, we conclude that *L. hesperus* was the predator of this *T. nigriceps* individual. Both the *T. nigriceps* and the *L. hesperus* were collected and deposited at the Biodiversity Collections, The University of Texas at Austin, and photographs were posted to iNaturalist (*T. nigriceps*: TNHC 117274 [DRD 11233], iNaturalist record #184644818; *L. hesperus*: UTIC 310957, iNaturalist record #184491336). This observation provides an additional record of snake predation by a spider and documents a new predator of *T. nigriceps*.

All work was conducted under a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Scientific Collecting Permit (#3872) and an approved ENMU IACUC protocol (2023-DAV-005). We thank members of the Davis Herpetology Lab for helpful comments on this note.

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