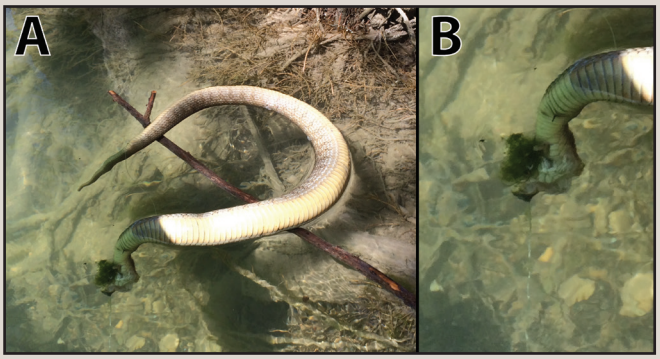

PHOTOS BY GERARD T. SALMON

FIG. 1. Adult *Nerodia erythrogaster* found deceased in Kendall County, Texas, USA, with a fishhook attached to a tangled fishing line visibly protruding through ventral scales: A) full-body view; B) magnified anterior view.

***NERODIA ERYTHROGASTER* (Plain-bellied Watersnake). MORTALITY.** The effect and prevalence of ingested fishhooks has been examined in some reptiles, such as turtles (Steen et al. 2014. PLoS ONE 9:e91368; Work et al. 2015. Dis. Aquat. Org. 115:103–115), but few studies specifically examining snakes exist. Although reports of snakes ingesting foreign objects are common (Jacobson et al. 1980. Vet. Med. Small Anim. Clin. 5:879–880; Zwart et al. 1986. Tijdschrift voor Diergeneeskunde 111:925–927; Souza et al. 2004. J. Herpetol. Med. Surg. 14:4–5; Scott et al. 2021. J. Am. Vet. Med. Assoc. 258:1135–1141), reports of snakes ingesting fishhooks are sparse. Reported instances of snakes ingesting a fishhook include *Sistrurus catenatus* (Eastern Massasauga; Gilbert et al. 2015. Herpetol. Rev. 46:107), *Nerodia rhombifer* (Diamond-backed Watersnake; Kofron 1978. J. Herpetol. 12:543–554), and *Xenochrophis piscator* (Checkered Keelback; Nath et al. 2011. Indian J. Vet. Surg. 32:154), and none of these instances were reported as fatal. A *Pantherophis* sp. (North American Ratsnake) was reportedly admitted to a wildlife center in Virginia, USA, with either a swallowed or implanted fishhook, but the fate of this snake is unknown (Brown and Sleeman 2002. J. Wildl. Dis. 38:699–755). In reported cases of snakes ingesting foreign objects, it is often believed that the snake mistook the object as a food source or did not recognize the object's presence when consuming a perceived food item (Souza et al. 2004, *op. cit.*). Here, we report mortality in an adult *Nerodia erythrogaster* that was likely caused by ingestion of a fishhook.

At 1044 h on 17 July 2016, GTS, Gary Heyroth, and Jeff Heyroth observed a deceased adult *N. erythrogaster* floating belly-up on the edge of the Guadalupe River, ca. 0.1 km downstream from FM 1376 bridge, Kendall County, Texas, USA (29.95746°N, 98.71635°W; WGS 84). The snake was bloated and estimated to have died >2 d prior to the observation. A fishing hook, connected to a tangled fishing line, was visibly protruding from a ventral scale in the anterior region of the snake. We believe that the *N. erythrogaster* attempted to swallow bait that had been attached to the hook, leading to it being impaled. The combination of the ingested hook and the tangled fishing line attached to the hook likely resulted in this snake drowning. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first reported observation of snake mortality due to ingestion of a fishhook, but we believe this situation is more common than the number of reported observations suggests.

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