



# A Dog-faced Watersnake, *Cerberus rynchops* (Schneider 1799), with a Rubber Band around its Body Preying on a Bearded Mudskipper, *Scartelaos histophorus* (Oxudercinae), near Valsad, Gujarat, India

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The Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) is a mildly venomous species that is native to the coastal waters of southern and southeastern Asia (Uetz et al. 2021). While birding at about 1700 h on 19 September 2021 along a coastal mudflat near Valsad, Gujarat, India (20.641503°N, 72.884696°E), we observed a Dog-faced Watersnake preying on a Bearded Mudskipper (*Scartelaos histophorus*) (Oxudercinae), an amphibious fish (Fig. 1). Upon closer

observation, we noticed a rubber band wrapped around the snake’s upper body (Fig. 2).

Although macroplastics of various types are known to cause harm to individual animals and populations (e.g., Stuart and Watson 2001; Blettler and Mitchell 2021), the only accounts of rubber bands affecting wildlife of any kind were an Atlantic Croaker (*Micropogon undulatus*) girdled by a rubber band (Overstreet and Lyles 1974) and a Giant Whip-



**Fig. 1.** A Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) with a rubber-band wrapped around its body preying on a Bearded Mudskipper (*Scartelaos histophorus*) in Gujarat, India. Photograph by Aadit Patel.



**Fig. 2.** A rubber band wrapped around the body of a Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rynchops*) encountered as it was preying on a Bearded Mudskipper (*Scartelaos histophorus*). Note the damage caused by the constricting band. Photograph by Aadit Patel.

tailed Catfish (*Pseudohemiodon laticeps*) entangled in a synthetic rubber band (Blettler and Mitchell 2021). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of a rubber band around a snake in nature. Although this individual appeared to be functioning normally at the time of our observation, damage from the band was already evident (Fig. 2) and it will

over time almost certainly have a negative impact on growth or the passage of large food boli.

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