

**Introduced fish *Ameiurus nebulosus* (LE SUEUR, 1819): hazard to the Grass snake,
Natrix natrix (LAURENTI, 1768)**

**Introducirana vrsta *Ameiurus nebulosus* (LE SUEUR, 1819): opasnost za bjeloušku,
Natrix natrix (LAURENTI, 1768)**

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On April 2nd 2012, in the marsh ecosystem known as Bardača (45°04' N, 17°24' E, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina), in a channel used for water discharge from the Rakitovac lake, unusually large numbers of fish were observed. The fish presumably got caught in the channel due to rapid lowering of the water level. The prevalent species was the brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*) belonging to the Ictaluridae family, which is non-indigenous (allochthonous) in the Balkans. Along the channel several grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*) were found, some of which had a body wall pierced at various positions (Fig. 1). The damage was inflicted by the stiff spiny rays of the dorsal and pectoral fins of the bullhead, fed on by grass snakes. One of the snakes succumbed to these injuries (Fig 1. b, c). Injuries resembling the ones described here were documented for the North American snake *Nerodia taxispilota*, caused also by native catfish from the Ictaluridae family (MILLS, 2002). Lethal outcome was also recorded in viperine water snake, *Natrix maura* in Spain, resulting from the ingestion of two allochthonous fishes – pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) (SANTOS & GARCÍA-CARDENETE,

2005) and the largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) (ALARCOS ET AL., 2009). The data we present consider *Natrix natrix*; the closely related *N. tessellata* often occupies the same habitats, therefore we expect to reveal feeding on bullheads and other alien species in the dice snake as well.

REFERENCES

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Figure 1. Grass snake injuries in various parts of the body as a consequence of ingesting the brown bullhead, *Ameiurus nebulosus*: a) live specimen with bullhead in its belly, b) & c) specimen found dead with bullhead in mouth
Slika 1. Ozljeđe različitih dijelova tijela kod bjelouške, kao posljedica gutanja američkog somića, *Ameiurus nebulosus*: a) živi primjerak sa somićem u truhu, b) & c) primjerak pronađen mrtav sa somićem u ustima