

Attack on a coin-marked snake *Hemorrhois nummifer* by a black rat *Rattus rattus*, with a link to video evidence

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The coin-marked snake *Hemorrhois nummifer* is a colubrid species ranging throughout the Levant, Central Asia and parts of the Caucasus, also reaching Cyprus and some Greek islands (Sindaco et al., 2013). In Lebanon, it is frequently recorded in urban settings, including Beirut (Hraoui-Bloquet et al., 2002). The black rat *Rattus rattus*, of Asian origin, has spread worldwide and is an omnivorous species with a broad dietary spectrum that has been recorded to include lizards (Sciberras & Schembri, 2008), chelonians (Caut et al., 2008) but rarely snakes (Daltry et al., 2001), likely because snakes represent high-risk prey and often stand higher than the rats on the food chain. Here, we present an attack on, and potential predation of *H. nummifer* by *R. rattus*.

On 22 September 2024, a black rat was observed and filmed actively pursuing a subadult *H. nummifer*, whose escape was impeded by the low friction of the smooth, tile-covered terrace in Naqqache, Lebanon (33° 55'34" N, 35° 35'38" E; 88 m a.s.l.). The rat initially delivered bites to the posterior of the body, while the snake tried breaking free by twisting and striking. Subsequently, the rat bit the mid-body of the snake, triggering another strike, allowing the rat to grab the head, causing severe cranial injuries, effectively incapacitating the snake. The rat continued biting the body, including a lethal bite to the head, followed by repeated chewing (Fig. 1; BHS video, 2026). The entire interaction lasted approximately three minutes, and the subsequent disappearance of both animals suggests that the snake was likely dragged away and consumed.

This record illustrates the adaptability and opportunistic predatory behaviour of invasive species such as *R. rattus*, and its potential impact on native fauna.

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Figure 1. *Rattus rattus* chewing on a subadult *Hemorrhois nummifer* that it had seriously injured (BHS video, 2026)

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