

## 129.—SNAKES CATCHING FISH.

[From Forest and Stream.]

The writer, who has fished more or less each season for many years, has long been aware of this habit of snakes taking fish, and after careful observation I am firmly convinced that fish furnish a great source of diet to a large portion of the snake family.

On Saturday last, the writer with a companion was fishing for pickerel in the outlet of a pond near this city, and while thus engaged we were treated to a very remarkable exhibition of this habit among snakes. As our boat was slowly paddled along the shore among the lily pads, the writer, who wielded the rod, noticed a large striped perch alarmed at our approach, dart into a small cove, and the next instant there followed a great commotion in the water. As our boat was moved slightly so as to obtain a better view, we saw a large snake holding the struggling perch in its mouth above the water, and making its way slowly to the shore. Scarcely had it reached the bank with its victim when there rushed from some hidden retreat among the bushes another snake, at least a foot longer than the other, and instantly a terrible struggle took place between them for the fish. Over each other they rolled and writhed upon the ground. One instant both would be tugging at the fish; then the fish would lie upon the ground, and over its struggling form the snakes would roll in battle in a desperate contest for the mastery. At last by a mighty effort the larger beat off the smaller, seized the fish in its mouth, and glided into the water, whereupon the smaller became the attacking party, and another terrible fight took place in the water. At last, as though becoming tired of the unequal combat, the smaller one disengaged itself from the fray, and with a slow, tired motion swam slowly ashore among the bushes when the other, holding his ill-gotten prey at least a foot above the water, went quickly ashore.

It was now time for us to show our hand, and picking up a stone each (for we had previously landed so as better to view the fight) we cast them at his snakeship, and he was soon dead.

The perch was a fine specimen, 8 inches in length, was in good condition, gills bright red, and had the luster in appearance that denoted a healthy condition; it was quite exhausted by the rough treatment and from being out of the water so long, but after we returned it to the stream, after a few erratic movements, it slowly swam out into deeper water. The snakes were both bluish-black in color on back and sides, belly was a deep bloody-orange color, and the one we killed was 4 feet and 10 inches in length. These snakes were no doubt the common black water-snake (*Tropidonatus sipedon*).

LOWELL, MASS., June 19, 1884.