

# Homalopsis buccata Almost Rips My Finger Off



A bitey puff-faced watersnake (*Homalopsis buccata*).

*(Page Updated: 6 September 2016)*

OK, exaggerating a bit.

OK, a lot.

There is nothing quite like a bite from a snake, when you're completely not expecting it. I've caught a number of these "Puff Faced Water Snakes" – *Homalopsis buccata*, and while one bit the tongs, none has ever attempted to strike at me. That changed the other night while on a herping trip with Courtney from North Carolina in the states.

I grabbed it fine the first time, and it death-rolled so fiercely I thought it was going to break it's own neck. I let it go back on the ground by the pond I'd just picked it up at.

The flashlight was shining right in his face – and I was

coming up on the approach from behind, but, in hindsight – a bit too much to the side, and he could still see my hand coming. He twisted and struck backward and sideways to grab my middle finger fiercely. I did the twitch, you know, where you jerk your arm in an exaggerated fashion, twirling the snake around like a circus baton, by the mouth on your finger – putting the teeth MUCH deeper than they were originally? Yeah, I did that.

He was NOT letting go, so I asked Courtney to gently put the snake hook point through the jaw between my finger and the joint. Eventually the top opened enough, and then I snuck the bottom finger out. No re-bite, which I was thankful for.

This was a juvenile, but these snakes have powerful jaws, and 26 teeth (I counted the puncture marks on my finger). I was bleeding good, and Courtney got a few pics. Will put one up when she sends me one.

Though a snake is not “known” to bite... do not take it for granted. Practice the same techniques as always to keep from getting bitten. Twenty-six teeth in your finger is not a good feeling... more importantly, you could break some of them in your finger – harming the snake.

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