



FIG. 1. *Chironius foveatus* that consumed a *Drymophila squamata* (Scaled Antbird) captured in a mist-net in southeastern Brazil

Hist. 6:78–150; Hartmann et al. 2009. Pap. Avuls. Zool. 49:343–360).

On 27 April 1996, during a study of the bird community of the lowland forest of Serra dos Órgãos, municipality of Guapimirim, state of Rio de Janeiro, southeastern Brazil (22.5233°S, 43.0177°W, datum WGS84; elev. ca. 350 m), a *C. foveatus* was found attached to one of the mist-nets used to capture birds. The snake (> 1.5 m total length) had preyed upon a *Drymophila squamata* (Scaled Antbird; Passeriformes: Thamnophilidae) previously captured in the mist-net (Fig. 1). After removal of the bird, the snake was released near the site of capture. This episode represents a rare record of opportunistic predation of a small passerine by a primarily anurophagous snake species.

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COLUBER CONSTRICTOR (North American Racer). EGG PREDATION. *Solenopsis invicta* (Red Imported Fire Ants) have been implicated as predators of the eggs of many species of reptiles, including turtles, lizards, and snakes (Mount et al. 1981. J. Alabama Acad. Sci. 52:66–70; Diffie et al. 2010. J. Herpetol. 44:294–296). On 21 June 2012, a clutch of 11 snake eggs was discovered underneath a partially rotten pine log at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center in the Conecuh National Forest, Covington Co., Alabama, USA (31.13144°N, 86.68134°W; datum WGS84). Fire ants were observed moving in and out of small holes approximately 2 mm in diameter in nine of the eggs. The other two eggshells were also perforated with the same small holes, but the eggs themselves were hollow and their contents completely consumed. Two eggs had evidently been penetrated only recently, as embryos inside were still alive despite perforation of the eggshell by fire ants. These embryos were identifiable as *Coluber constrictor*, and their status indicates that fire ants were not merely

scavenging rotten eggs but preying on viable, developing eggs. To my knowledge, this is the first reported instance of fire ants preying on the eggs of *C. constrictor* and is another indication that fire ants are capable of preying on the eggs of a wide range of species in natural situations.

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COLUBER CONSTRICTOR (North American Racer). MORTALITY. *Coluber constrictor* is a fast-moving diurnal snake that spends much of the spring and summer actively foraging aboveground (Ernst and Ernst 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Books. Washington, DC. 668 pp.). Conspicuous behavior and frequent activity by *C. constrictor* often bring them into contact with a wide range of predators including automobiles. Here we describe the first reported incidence of *C. constrictor* being struck and killed by a train.

On 21 April 2013, on the Savannah River Site, Aiken, Co., South Carolina, USA, an adult *C. constrictor* (SVL = 98 cm, 375 g) being tracked with radio-telemetry was found sliced in two pieces on the rail of a train track (Fig. 1). The snake had been tracked since July 2010 and had been observed to cross these tracks on at least four occasions. Approximately 2 cm of antenna from the implanted transmitter had been sheared off during the collision. It is curious that an animal so sensitive to vibrations (Hartline 1971. J. Exp. Biol. 54:349–371) could be struck by such a conspicuous vehicle. Train-induced snake mortality may be more common than assumed, as investigators typically do not “road cruise” rail lines as they do roads.



FIG. 1. Carcass of an adult *Coluber constrictor* struck and sliced in two by a train on 21 April 2013. The wire antenna of a radio transmitter can be seen protruding from the carcass.

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COLUBER (= MASTICOPHIS) FLAGELLUM FLAGELLUM (Eastern Coachwhip) and **PITUOPHIS MELANOLEUCUS MELANOLEUCUS (Northern Pinesnake).** **DIET** and **PREDATION.**