

Predation of the snake *Spilotes pullatus* (Squamata: Serpentes) upon the rodent *Proechimys gardneri* (Rodentia: Echimyidae) in the Amazonian basin, northwestern Brazil

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The snake *Spilotes pullatus* (Linnaeus, 1758), popularly known in Brazil as caninana, has diurnal and scansorial habits (Vanzolini et al., 1980; Sazima and Haddad, 1992). Its diet differs from most Neotropical species of the subfamily Colubrinae, which mostly feed on amphibians and lizards (Martins and Oliveira, 1998; Marques and Sazima, 2004), having been analyzed in several studies over the years (Vanzolini et al., 1980; Vitt and Vangilder, 1983; Sazima and Haddad, 1992; Bernarde and Machado, 2002; Marques et al., 2004; Marques and Sazima, 2004; Esbérard and Vrcibradic, 2007; Cicchi et al., 2007; Pontes and Rocha, 2008; Hartmann et al., 2009; Palmuti et al., 2009).

This species appears to be a generalist, having a varied diet based mainly on rodents and birds. However, it also feeds on bats (Bernarde and Machado, 2002; Esbérard and Vrcibradic, 2007), bird eggs (Marques and Sazima, 2004) and, eventually, on amphibians and reptiles (Martins and Oliveira, 1998), actively seeking its preys, searching in their shelters in different strata of the vegetation (Marques and Samiza, 2004).

Only two of the above mentioned studies identified the preys from the stomach contents of specimens of *S. pullatus* at the genus or species level. Esbérard and Vrcibradic (2007) identified species of bats and Marques and Sazima (2004) rodents of two genera: *Oligoryzomys* and *Nectomys*.

During a field expedition carried out in the interfluvies of the Purus and Madeira rivers, state of Amazonas,

northwestern Brazil, a male specimen of *S. pullatus* (MNRJ 20215; Fig. 1 A,B) was collected on the interstate BR 319 (05°57'26.4" S, 62°29'17.7" W) and had its stomach contents analyzed after fixation. The snake had recently preyed upon a specimen of the order Rodentia, *Proechimys gardneri* da Silva, 1998, (MN 75671; Fig. 1C). The rodent was identified following the identification key of Brazilian rodents, based on morphological characters and species distributions (Bonvicino et al., 2008). This is the first record of predation on the rodent *P. gardneri* by the snake *S. pullatus* or any other snake.

The rodent *P. gardneri* has only recently been described (da Silva, 1998) and there is scarce information available about this species' natural history, conservation status, distribution and ecological interactions (Patton and Percequillo, 2008). Like other species of the genus, *P. gardneri* is a terrestrial species, found in forests that occasionally flood (Patton et al., 2000; Oliveira and Bonvicino, 2006; Bonvicino et al., 2008). This species is known to occur in two localities throughout the western Brazilian Amazon and northern Bolivia, and its distribution may be limited by the Juruá river on the west and by the Madeira river on the east (Patton et al., 2000).

This record of ecological interaction adds another species to the diet of *S. pullatus* and presents a potential predator for the rodent *P. gardneri*. As already pointed out by other researchers (Sazima and Haddad, 1992; Marques and Sazima, 2004), this occurrence reinforces the fact that *S. pullatus* forages on the forest ground actively searching for preys. In addition, it fills breaches on the *P. gardneri* distribution for the region, since it had been found recently predated.

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Figure 1. Dorsal (A) and ventral (B) aspect of the specimen of *S. pullatus* that preyed upon *P. gardneri* (C).

the specimen of *P. gardneri*. Thank to Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES) and Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ) for financial support.

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