

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) predation on *Corallus hortulanus* (Squamata, Boidae)

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Species of the Neotropical treeboa genus *Corallus* occur from Guatemala to southern Brazil and on continental and oceanic islands. They often are conspicuous members of their respective herpetofaunas. Despite this, we have few direct observations of treeboas capturing prey (Henderson, 2002; da Costa Silva et al., 2012) and even fewer observations of predation on treeboas (Henderson, 2002). The only record of predation on the geographically widespread *Corallus hortulanus* (Linnaeus) was by a Smooth-fronted Caiman (*Paleosuchus trigonatus*) in Amazonian Peru (W.W. Lamar in Henderson, 2002). Here we report predation on *C. hortulanus* by the geographically widespread Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) along Igarapé do Galego, a small stream that flows through rice plantations and that is inundated during high tides. It is located on Ilha das Canárias, situated in the extreme eastern portion of Maranhão state, Brazil, and represents a large portion of the Parnaíba Delta (with an area of 115 km²).

On the night of 14 July 2012 at 2030 h during a survey for *Corallus hortulanus*, one of us (PdCS) observed an adult *C. hortulanus* with a total length of about 1.0 m about 30 cm above ground level in a rice (*Oryza*) plantation and with its head moving and angled upward while flicking its tongue. Also observed was an adult Barn Owl sitting on a dried branch of a Red Mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) about 2.6 m above ground level and about 6.0 m from the *C. hortulanus*. The owl appeared to be scanning its surroundings, presumably searching for food. At 2032 h the owl's head was angled downward and toward the boa. At 2035 h the boa stopped moving and remained motionless while the Barn Owl continued to orient its head in the direction of

the snake. At 2045 h the owl flew from the mangrove, attacked and grasped the boa at its neck, and flew off with the boa in its talons.

Although Henderson (2002) suggested that raptors are the most important predators on species of *Corallus*, little documentation supports that assumption. Aside from the observation reported herein, Bierregaard (1984) noted predation on *C. caninus* by a Guiana Crested Eagle (*Morphnus guianensis*) in Amazonian Brazil. Nevertheless, we still are inclined to believe that raptors are the most important predators of arboreal boids in the genus *Corallus*.

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