Canopy Foraging by *Corallus caninus* (Squamata: Boidae) in French Guiana

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Although several species in the arboreal boid genus *Corallus* exhibit both active and sit-and-wait (ambush) foraging strategies (e.g., *C. cookii*, *C. grenadensis*, *C. hortulanus*, *C. ruschenbergerii*), it has been suggested that at least two species (*C. batesii*, *C. caninus*) likely employ ambush foraging throughout their lives (Henderson, 2015). The species that exhibit both foraging modes are relatively slender compared to those species that might employ only the ambush mode, and they display an ontogenetic shift in diet from either diurnally quiescent lizards (for *C. cookii* and *C. grenadensis*) or birds (*C. hortulanus*) to one comprised mainly of nocturnally active rodents and/or marsupials. The large-headed, heavy-bodied *C. batesii* and *C. caninus*, on the other hand, prey predominantly on rodents and marsupials throughout their lives (although small, nocturnally active reptiles have been documented in their diets) (Henderson and Pauers, 2009; Henderson et al., 2013; Henderson, 2015).

Previous observations in the field have documented adult *C. batesii* (Henderson, 2015: Fig. 210), *C. grenadensis* (Henderson, 2015: Fig. 221), and *C. hortulanus* (Henderson, 2015: Fig. 242) in what we consider to be typical sit-and-wait ambush postures. In all cases, the tail and posterior body were anchored to a slender tree trunk or branch and the head was angled downward and usually within 1.0 m of the ground (and sometimes much closer). We have assumed that, like other species of *Corallus*, not all foraging in *C. batesii* and *C. caninus* occurs near ground level.

On 31 January 2015 at 2055 h, one of us (VP) encountered an adult *C. caninus* near a creek in secondary forest at a site near Kourou, French Guiana.

Figure 1. An adult *Corallus caninus* in an ambush posture close to ground level near Kourou, French Guiana. Photo by Vincent Premel

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It was perched at about 1.0 m above the ground on a small tree which the snake could reach only by moving at ground level. The site was one at which mammal species of several genera (*Didelphis*, *Marmosa*, *Philander*, *Proechimys*) were regularly observed; species from three of these genera have previously been recovered from *Corallus* stomachs; Pizzatto et al., 2009; Henderson and Pauers, 2012; Henderson, 2015). Although observed for only several minutes, the boa’s attention was obviously focused on the ground with its head and neck in an S-posture, presumably in order to make a quick strike.

On 5 June 2014 at about 2300 h, MD observed an adult *C. caninus* perched at a height above ground of about 12 m in the canopy of primary rainforest at Piste de Saut Maripa, St. Georges, French Guiana. The boa’s body was anchored to a slender branch and its head and the forepart of its body were angled downward in an S-posture, almost identical to that of the boa hunting near ground level in Fig. 1. Although we had assumed that species of *Corallus* employed a sit-and-wait strategy in the canopy, this is the first photographic documentation we have of a snake doing so. The boa was situated on a branch in close proximity to flowers and fruit that might have attracted a variety of potential prey.

That *Corallus caninus* utilized the canopy is well known (e.g., Starace, 1998), but we were uncertain if that microhabitat was used for activities other than as a reasonably safe diurnal retreat. In French Guiana, Starace (1998) has observed *C. caninus* descend from the canopy in order to forage, and to ascend again to assimilate prey. By utilizing ambush sites both close to the ground and in the canopy, *C. caninus* expands its prey base and may also avoid competition with congenerics (*C. caninus* and *C. hortulanus*).

**References**


