Predation attempt on the tree frog *Hypsiboas faber* (Wied-Neuwied, 1821) by the snake *Thamnodynastes hypoconia* (Cope, 1860)

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*Hypsiboas faber* (Wied-Neuwied, 1821) is a large tree frog that inhabits forested and open areas near streams and large permanent ponds from eastern Brazil to northeastern Argentina (Martins and Haddad, 1988). This tree frog is the target of different kinds of predators throughout their ontogeny and adults are mainly preyed upon by snakes (Martins et al., 1993).

The coastal house snake, *Thamnodynastes hypoconia* (Cope, 1860), is a nocturnal opisthoglyph snake (Dipsadidae) that is widely distributed in Brazil (Franco and Ferreira, 2002). This species lives in open areas, near lentic aquatic environments, and its diet is mainly comprised of leptodactylids, hylids, and very occasionally, lizards (Bellini et al., 2013; Dorigo et al., 2014).

On 11 November 2014, at 20:40 h, we saw a *Thamnodynastes hypoconia* trying to prey on an adult tree frog *Hypsiboas faber* (Fig. 1) in a pond (22.8866°S, 48.4999°W, 875 m) in the city of Botucatu, State of São Paulo, southeastern Brazil. The animals were found on the surface of the water where the snake had swallowed approximately half of the posterior left leg of the frog (Fig. 2). The frog was trying to escape, moving its body and issuing a release call. After ca. 40 minutes, the snake released the frog’s leg and the frog ran away. In order to not interfere in the behaviour of the animals, the snake cannot be collected. Thus, the identification was made based on the geographic distribution of genus *Thamnodynastes* in São Paulo State and comparison between the photography and animals of zoological collections of the region (Museu de Zoologia/Universidade Estadual de Campinas - ZUEC and Coleção Herpetológica “Alphonse Richard Hoge” - IBSP-Herpeto).

This is the first record of *Hypsiboas faber* as prey of *Thamnodynastes hypoconia*. Once this snake usually preys on small-sized anurans, such as *Chiasmocleis albopunctata* (Maffei et al., 2011), *Dendropsophus elianae* (Moya and Maffei, 2012), *Scinax perereca*, and *Scinax rizibilis* (Pombal Jr, 2007), and normally ingests the head first (Bellini et al., 2013), the reported predation attempt may have failed due to the huge size of the prey and the way that the snake tried to swallow it. According to Sazima and Martins (1990), the behaviour of trying to ingest very large preys are common in juvenile snakes and may involve waste of time and energy, and increase the risk of chocking and predation. Besides that, this behavior can be related to learning in the optimization of energy acquisition and availability of prey.

Figure 2. *Thamnodynastes hypoconia* trying to swallow the posterior left leg of an adult of *Hypsiboas faber* in southeastern Brazil.
References


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Figure 1. *Thamnodynastes hypoconia* trying to prey on an adult of *Hypsiboas faber* in southeastern Brazil.