Predation attempt of *Tropidurus torquatus* (Squamata, Tropiduridae) on *Phalotris matogrossensis* (Serpentes, Dipsadidae)

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*Phalotris matogrossensis* Lema, D’Agostini & Cappelari, 2005 is a medium-sized opisthognphous snake distributed from Southwestern Brazil to the East of Paraguay. This nocturnal snake inhabits open areas of the Brazilian Savannah and the Chaco (Leynaud & Bucher 1999). Its diet is composed of invertebrates, frogs, lizards and amphibiaenians (Bernerde and Macedo 2006, De Souza 2014). *Tropidurus torquatus* Wied-Neuwiedi 1820 is a very common and widely distributed lizard that can be often found in open areas, including the Brazilian Cerrado, and sandy open habitats along the Atlantic coast (Rodrigues 1987, Rocha 2000). It is a diurnal species with “sit-and-wait” foraging behaviour (Bergallo & Rocha 1994, Vitt et al 1996). *Tropidurus torquatus* has a very wide diet composition characteristic for opportunistic predators (Rodrigues 1987, Colli et al 1992).

On the 10th of October 2014 at 09:40 am at Fazenda Ipiranga, Pousada Piual locality (16.3789ºS, 56.6045ºW, 142m above sea level), in the municipality of Poconé, state of Mato Grosso, Brazil, we spotted a big male *T. torquatus* on a tree (50cm above the ground), observing an individual of *P. matogrossensis* active at the base of the tree, unaware of the lizard’s presence. Suddenly, the lizard ran to the ground and captured the snake, grasping the snake in about the middle of its body. After catching the snake the lizard climbed on the tree again where it killed the snake by vigorously shaking it (Figure 1 and 2). Then the lizard dropped the

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Figure 1. A male of *Tropidurus torquatus* holding the snake in the middle of the body. Poconé, Mato Grosso, Brazil. Photo: Pedro Guilherme.
snake without devouring it, perhaps because the snake was too large.

Although there are many records of *Tropidurus* spp. being preyed by snakes (e.g. Alencar et al 2012, Gaiarsa et al 2013, Meneses et al 2013, Maia-Carneiro et al 2016), snakes may have unusual predators in South America, such as spiders (Malta-Borges et al 2016).

*Tropidurus* lizards are common predators of arthropods (including ants, beetles, insect larvae, arachnids and termites), showing a dominance of ants in their diet (Meira et al 2007, Pontes et al 2008, Kolodiuk et al 2010, Ribeiro and Freire 2011). They also often include small vertebrates in their diet, including frogs, birds and lizards (Ribeiro and Freire 2009, Guedes et al 2017). However, we are not aware of reports of *Tropidurus* lizards preying upon snakes, and the documented predation attempt by *T. torquatus* on the dipsadid snake *P. matogrossensis* has not been previously recorded. We assume that other large *Tropidurus* species may also prey on small snakes, but direct field observations are still to be reported.

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**References**


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