Predation on *Tropidurus torquatus* (Squamata: Tropiduridae) by the Guira Cuckoo *Guira guira* (Aves: Cuculiformes) in the state of Espírito Santo, Southeastern Brazil

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Small lizards are preyed upon by a variety of animals (Duellman and Trueb, 1986; Greene, 1988; Zug, 1993) and are a food source of many passerines and other bird species in neotropical forests (e.g., Wetmore, 1965, 1968, 1972; Wetmore et al., 1984; Stiles et al., 1989; Kokubum and Zacca, 2004; Oda et al., 2010; Figueiredo-de-Andrade and Silveira, 2012; Kupriyanov et al., 2012). Because of their low aerobic capacities relative to avian predators, lizards are expected to be cryptic and to rely on brief movements into inaccessible microhabitats for escape (Evans, 1947; Greene, 1988).

The genus *Tropidurus* Wied, 1825 (Tropiduridae) comprises 23 known species of heliothermic lizards that occupy tropical and subtropical South America (Carvalho et al., 2013). The group is broadly distributed along most of the open habitats of South America east of the Andes, from Venezuela to northern Argentina and Uruguay (Rodrigues, 1987; Frost et al., 2001).

*Tropidurus torquatus* (Wied, 1820) is the most widely distributed species of the genus and occupies the Cerrado of central Brazil, along the Atlantic Coast (Rodrigues, 1987; Rocha, 2000). *Tropidurus torquatus* presents territorial behavior, diurnal activity, and both sit-and-wait as well as opportunistic predation (Kohlsdorf et al., 2006). Its diet consists primarily of arthropods, small vertebrates and plant structures, such as leaves, flowers, and seeds (Teixeira and Giovanelli, 1999; Gomides et al., 2013).

The Guira cuckoo, *Guira guira* (Gmelin, 1788) (Cuculidae: Crotophaginae) is widely distributed throughout South America, occurring in Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina (Sick, 1997). This species inhabits open urban and rural areas whose vegetation comprises vast fields of grass with sparse trees and shrubs (Souza, 1995). Guira cuckoos feed primarily on arthropods (Schubart et al., 1965), but many studies also indicate consumption of small vertebrates, including amphibians and reptiles (Schubart et al., 1965; Beltzer, 1995; Soave et al., 2008; Mesquita, 2009; Repenning et al., 2009; Morais et al., 2013). Reports involving predation of *T. torquatus* by birds are scarce (e.g., Kokubum and Zacca, 2004; Oda et al., 2010), and herein we present the first report of *G. guira* preying on this lizard species.

During an avifaunal survey in the municipality of Linhares, state of Espírito Santo, southeastern Brazil (19°03’S; 39°58’W), on 24 August 2012 at 0925 h, we observed a group of four Guira cuckoos perched on a tree when suddenly three individuals flew towards the ground. Afterwards, one of them returned to the tree with a juvenile *T. torquatus* in its beak (Fig. 1). The lizard was eviscerated and partially eaten by the cuckoo. However, it was not possible to see the conclusion of this predation event, because the bird departed with the lizard in its beak.

Since *T. torquatus* is both abundant and widespread in the areas where it occurs, it can be expected that it is taken as prey opportunistically by at least some birds. Despite the serendipity of our observation, this record adds information about the dietary diversity of Guira cuckoos and their predation behavior, particularly considering the lack of such data. There generally is little information available on the natural history and

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ecology of many birds, even in the case of very common and well-known species like *G. guira*, which makes a fortuitous observation such as this significant as we work to increase our knowledge of neotropical species (Christianini, 2005).

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**References**


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