REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Curassow at the Street Fair: Attempted Consumption of a Red Wormlizard, *Amphisbaena alba* (Squamata: Amphisbaenidae), by a Bare-faced Curassow, *Crax fasciolata* (Galliformes: Cracidae)

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The lack of information about interactions between species — the Eltonian shortfall — is one of the principal knowledge gaps regarding biodiversity (Hortal et al. 2015; Caron et al. 2022). This problem is greater in the tropics (Poisot et al. 2021), which paradoxically are the most biodiverse areas on the planet (Jenkins et al. 2013). In recent years, the compilation of databases has allowed the exploration of various aspects of biotic interactions, such as trophic interactions (e.g., Toledo et al. 2007; Ceron et al. 2019; Hurlbert et al. 2021; Nyffeler and Gibbons 2021; Lintulaakso et al. 2023). Taking squamate reptiles as an example, much of the information presented in these databases comes from natural history notes (Schalk and Cove 2018; Grundler 2020), which reinforces the importance of scientific communications reporting what are frequently fortuitous observations (Martins 2021; Teodoro et al. 2022), such as that presented herein.

At 1725 h on 8 February 2024, a cloudy afternoon following a rainy day, we spotted an adult male Bare-faced Curassow (*Crax fasciolata* Spix 1825) while walking through a street market in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil (-20.5071, -54.5774). The bird was on the sidewalk in front of a small patch of approximately 5.35 hectares of native Cerrado vegetation. Upon closer observation, we noticed it pecking and releasing an inert, snake-like animal while remaining vigilant of its surroundings. Our approach to ~2 m caused the curassow to walk away, abandoning its potential meal, which we recognized as an amphisbaenian and subsequently identified as a Red Wormlizard, *Amphisbaena alba* Linnaeus 1758 (Fig. 1; YouTube video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0DT64Tw2NQ). The second third of the wormlizard's body was flattened, indicating that it likely was roadkilled. The head scales were mostly intact, but its skull was absent. We were unable to determine whether the skull was removed by the curassow or by another animal that had previously accessed the carcass.

Amphisbaena alba, the largest Neotropical amphisbaenian, reaching 810 mm SVL (Colli and Zamboni 1999; Assis et al. 2022), ranges from Venezuela to southern Brazil (Gans 2005), with questionable records in Panama (Jaramillo et al. 2010). Although primarily fossorial, this species frequently forages on the surface, making it susceptible to attacks (Honório et al. 2022, 2023). After the heavy rains earlier in the day, the wormlizard's underground galleries likely were flooded, prompting it to surface to avoid drowning (Gans 1969; Bates 1993), and where it was road-killed before being detected by the curassow. We collected the dead amphisbaenian (285 mm SVL, 23 mm tail length), deposited it in the Coleção Zoológica da Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (ZUFMS-REP 5159), and gathered the following morphological data that agree with the diagnosis of *Amphisbaena alba*: 210 body annuli, 3 lateral annuli, 12 caudal annuli, tail without autotomy annulus; 32 dorsal segments to a midbody annulus, 36 ventral segments to a midbody annulus, and 5 precloacal pores (Gans 1962; Vanzolini 1968).

Crax fasciolata, a large, widely distributed bird species, ranges from eastern Amazonia south to Bolivia, Paraguay, and northern Argentina, where it inhabits humid evergreen, semideciduous, and gallery forests (Kirwan et al. 2020). Cracids feed primarily on fruits, but also consume foliage, flowers, and opportunistically and occasionally animal matter (Muñoz and Kattan 2007; Bertsch and Barreto 2008; Leite 2020). Lizards, snakes, and carcasses of vertebrates have been reported in the

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Figure 1. A male Bare-faced Curassow (*Crax fasciolata*) attempting to eat a dead (probably road-killed) Red Wormlizard (*Amphisbaena alba*) at the edge of a patch of Cerrado vegetation in Campo Grande, Brazil. The curassow attempting to eat the worm lizard (A–B), the bird walking away after our approach (C), and the dead wormlizard (D). Photographs by Henrique C. Costa (A, B, and D) and Diego J. Santana (C).

diet of *Crax alector* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Muñoz and Kattan 2007; del Hoyo et al. 2020), but the dietary habits of *C. fasciolata* are poorly studied. A review of cracid diets reported only flowers as food items for this species (Muñoz and Kattan 2007), whereas a study in the Pantanal wetlands documented Bare-faced Curassows consuming fallen fruits and invertebrates from the leaf litter (Desbiez and Bernardo 2011).

On 9 February 2024, using the 'advanced search' feature on the citizen science website *WikiAves* (https://www.wikiaves.com.br/), we conducted a search for records of feeding *Crax fasciolata*. The search yielded 501 records, with most lacking clear information about the consumed items, some indicating fruits, and none documenting vertebrates as food sources. To the best of our knowledge, our observation of a male Bare-faced Curassow attempting to consume a dead wormlizard represents the first record of a vertebrate carcass as a potential food item of *C. fasciolata*. Although infrequent, the ingestion of animals by *C. fasciolata* and other cracids may serve as an important source of energy and nutrition (Muñoz and Kattan 2007).

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