

A case of predation of *Chacophrys pierottii* (Anura: Ceratophryidae) by *Philodryas psammophidea* (Squamata: Dipsadinae) in the chacoan saltflats of central Argentina

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On 4 December 2011 an adult male specimen of *Philodryas psammophidea* Gunther 1872 was observed preying on juveniles of *Chacophrys pierottii* (Vellard, 1948) in the locality of Salinas Grandes of the north-west of Córdoba province, Argentina (-29.596034° S, -64.853993° W; 187 m a.s.l.). The specimen of *P. psammophidea* was found at 13:00 pm, at the edge of a temporary pond (Fig. 1). The dominant vegetation of the area is composed of halophyte plants as “jumes” (*Allenrolfea patagonica* and *Heterostachys ritteriana*) and “retortuños” (*Prosopis strombulifera*). Other amphibian species that were registered in the same temporary pond included adults of *Lepidobatrachus llanensis*, adults and tadpoles of *Rhinella schneideri*, and males and nests of *Leptodactylus bufonius*.

The stomach content of the *P. psammophidea* specimen was extracted with the non-lethal technique of “regurgitation” (Carpenter, 1958). The obtained stomach content consisted of four juvenile *C. pierottii* with different degrees of digestion (Fig. 2 and 3). Once photographed and identified, the specimen of *P. psammophidea* was released at the same place of capture.

There is scarce data on the feeding ecology of the snake *P. psammophidea*, but Scrocchi et al. (2010) reported that their diet consists of rodents and lizards. Therefore, this would represent the first record of consumption

of amphibians in the diet of this species. Both species co-occur in a wide range of natural geographic distributions. *Chacophrys pierottii* is a characteristic species of saltflats of Dry Chaco eco-region in central and northern Argentina, also present in Bolivia and Paraguay (Cei, 1980; Lavilla and Heatwole, 2010). Meanwhile, *P. psammophidea* has a wider distribution range in Argentina, while it is also occurring in parts of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil (Scrocchi et al., 2010).

More feeding ecology data is required to determine if amphibians are frequent preys in the diet of this snake, or if the consumption of *C. pierottii* is a case of opportunistic predation due to the ephemeral nature of their reproductive activity.



Figure 1. Panoramic view of the temporary pond where the predation event was registered in the Salinas Grandes, Córdoba province, Argentina.

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Figure 2. Adult male specimen of *Philodryas psammophidea* with the stomach content obtained with the non-lethal technique of “regurgitation”



Figure 3. Metamorphic specimen of *Chacophrys pierottii*.

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