



Predation on a Yellow-spotted Night Lizard (*Lepidophyma flavimaculatum*) by a Misquito Coralsnake (*Micrurus mosquitensis*) in Upala, Costa Rica

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The Yellow-spotted Night Lizard, *Lepidophyma flavimaculatum* (Xantusiidae), inhabits the lowlands from Veracruz, Mexico, south to the Panama Canal. In Costa Rica, it is found in rainforests on the Caribbean slope at elevations from sea level to 750 m asl (Leenders 2019). It is a small spe-

cies of lizard (up to 27 cm in length) with a body covered by granular scales. These secretive night lizards can usually be found under logs, rocks, accumulations of vegetation or debris, and in small caves or abandoned nests in primary and secondary forests (Savage 2002).



Figure 1. An adult Misquito Coralsnake (*Micrurus mosquitensis*) ingesting an adult Yellow-spotted Night Lizard (*Lepidophyma flavimaculatum*). Photograph by Pablo Camacho.

Largely terrestrial venomous coral snakes (Elapidae) feed mainly on other elongated-bodied vertebrates, due to the osteological characteristics of the skull that limit their capacity to swallow large-volume prey (Rozé 1996; Vuolo Marques and Sazima 2021). Their diet includes a wide variety of small snakes, lizards, amphisbaenids, caecilians, and fish such as swamp eels, although some species are known to take onychophorans (Rozé 1996; Campbell and Lamar 2004; Greene 1997; Vuolo Marques and Sazima 2021).

The Misquito Coral snake (*Micrurus mosquitensis*) is distributed along the Caribbean slope of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama; in Costa Rica it is relatively common in rainforests at elevations from sea level to 1,500 m asl (Solórzano 2022). This species, like other members of the genus, actively searches for its prey mainly at night on the forest floor, and is known to prey on lizards (e.g., *Scincella cherriei*, *Holcosus* sp.), small snakes (mostly colubrids and dipsadids), lizard eggs, as well as swamp eels (*Synbranchus marmoratus*) and caecilians (Rozé 1996; Solórzano 2022).

At 2117 pm on 27 April 2011, on the path in a secondary forest at Finca Verde Lodge in Bijagua de Upala, Alajuela Province, in northern Costa Rica (10.719972 N, -85.060028 W), we encountered an adult *Micrurus mosquitensis* (ca. 65–70 cm in total length), beginning to ingest an adult *Lepidophyma flavimaculatum* (Fig. 1). The lizard was immobile, presumably due to the action of the neurotoxic venom of species in the genus *Micrurus*.

This is the first report of predation on this lizard species by *M. mosquitensis*, and the second record of predation on the species by a Central American coral snake (*M. diastema*) in Guatemala (Rozé 1996; West et al. 2019).

Acknowledgment

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