



ROBERT POWELL

Dominican Racers (*Alsophis antillensis sibonius*) may use either active foraging or sit-and-wait foraging strategies.

A Predation Attempt Gone Awry: Defensive Constriction of a Predator by a Dominican Racer

Adam Mitchell¹ and Lyndon Prince²

¹24 London Road, Widley, Portsmouth, Hampshire, U.K., PO7 5BS (adammitche23@hotmail.com)

²Salisbury Village, Commonwealth of Dominica, West Indies

Alsophis antillensis is a diurnally active snake found on the islands of Guadeloupe, Monserrat, and Dominica in the Lesser Antilles. The subspecies *A. antillensis sibonius* is found on Dominica, the most southerly of the three islands, where it is widely distributed, particularly in dry forests on the leeward slopes and coast (Malhotra and Thorpe 1999).

Buteo platypterus (Broad Winged Hawk) is a small (ca. 34–45 cm tall), forest-dwelling hawk found throughout eastern North America, northern South America, and the Caribbean

Basin, where it feeds on a wide variety of small vertebrates (BirdLife International 2004).

While radio-tracking *Iguana delicatissima* on Dominica in June 2008, we encountered a *B. platypterus* struggling on the forest floor in the Batali River Valley. Upon closer inspection, we discovered a large *A. antillensis sibonius* defensively constricting the bird's neck, right leg, and right wing. After several minutes of watching, the hawk's struggles became weaker and it could no longer stand. In an attempt to observe the head of the snake,



ADAM MITCHELL

A large *Alsophis antillensis sibonius* defensively constricting the neck, right leg, and right wing of a young Broad Winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*).

which was hidden under the litter, we moved a leaf and accidentally startled the *Alsophis*, which struck at us several times before releasing the hawk and moving into the litter, revealing a superficial head wound as it fled.

After release, the hawk stumbled on an apparently numbed right leg and seemed unable to flex its right wing; upon returning to the site approximately three hours later, however, we observed the bird, seemingly unharmed, flying between trees.

Acknowledgements

We thank Bob Powell and Bob Henderson for providing com-

ments on this note. This observation was made while conducting research on *Iguana delicatissima* in Dominica. That project is funded through the Center for Conservation and Research for Endangered Species (CRES) at the Zoological Society of San Diego.

Literature Cited

BirdLife International 2004. *Buteo platypterus*. In: IUCN 2007. 2007 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <www.iucnredlist.org>.

Malhotra, A. and R.S. Thorpe. 1999. *Reptiles & Amphibians of the Eastern Caribbean*. Macmillan Education, Ltd., Oxford and London, UK.

Exploitation of the Night-light Niche by a Dominican Racer

Robert Powell¹ and Robert W. Henderson²

¹Department of Biology, Avila University, Kansas City, MO 64145, USA (robert.powell@avila.edu)

²Section of Vertebrate Zoology, Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee, WI 53233, USA (henderson@mpm.edu)

Normally diurnal West Indian anoles (Polychrotidae: *Anolis*) are known to exploit insects attracted to artificial lights well into the night (e.g., Perry and Fisher 2006, Henderson and Powell 2009). Secondary exploitation of nocturnal anoles by a typically diurnal predator, the Puerto Rican Racer (*Alsophis portoricensis*), has been reported on hotel grounds on Guana Island, British Virgin Islands (Perry and Lazell 2000).

At 1915 h (transition to full dark) on 18 June 2008, we observed a male Dominican Racer (*Alsophis antillensis sibonius*; SVL 525 mm, tail 247 mm) in a foraging position at the base of a light frequently used by a nocturnally active Dominican Anole (*Anolis oculatus*). The observation occurred on the grounds of the Sunset Bay Club at Batali Beach, on the leeward coast of Dominica, Lesser Antilles.

Based on our experiences, exploitation of the night-light niche has become commonplace among West Indian anoles associated with urban areas and other situations in which artificial lighting is prevalent at night (e.g., hotels, resorts). However, both situations in which snakes have been observed exploiting the night-light niche (Guana Island, Batali Beach) have been “snake-friendly”; that is, guests and personnel of the hotels are instructed not to harm snakes that enter areas frequented by humans. Under more typical circumstances (i.e., where snakes would be killed or, at least, removed from the area), we doubt that snakes would have the opportunity to learn to exploit this potentially productive trophic niche.

Acknowledgements

Marcella and Roger Dutrieux Cools, owners of the Sunset Bay Club tolerated our eccentricities. Mr. Arlington James, Forest Officer, Forestry, Wildlife, and Parks Division, Ministry of



A Dominican Anole (*Anolis oculatus*) exploiting the night-light niche on the grounds of the Sunset Bay Club at Batali Beach, Dominica.