

Hunting Tamacoré, *Uranoscodon superciliosus*

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Brown Tree Climbers (*Uranoscodon superciliosus* Linnaeus 1758), known locally as Tamacoré, occur throughout the Amazon Basin, and often



Fig. 1. Brown Tree Climbers (*Uranoscodon superciliosus*) occur throughout Amazonia, often along water courses perched on branches of trees and vines.

are found along the edges of water courses perched on branches of tree and vines (Fig. 1; Vitt et al. 2008). These lizards also are called “Diving Lizards” because they dive into the water to escape danger. They are model sit-and-wait predators. The diet has been studied in Brazil by Hoowland et al. (1990), Vitt et al. (1991), and Gasnier et al. (1994) and in Surinam by Hoogmoed (1973). The species spends most of its time on tree-trunks, but feeds mainly on prey that occur exclusively or much more abundantly on the ground (Gasnier et al. 1994). The main prey items are orthopterans, cockroaches, earthworms, small frogs, and lepidopteran larvae. The higher consumption of larvae was coincident with or soon after oviposition in July–November (Gasnier et al. 1997).

Here, we report illegal hunting of *U. superciliosus* in the Brazilian Amazon. On 13 August 2008, near Cururu Lake near the Solimões River (3° 34' 30.4" S, 60° 40' 03.3" W; datum: WGS84; elev. 80 m), State of Amazonas, a local resident captured and killed 18 individual juveniles and adult *U. superciliosus* (Fig. 2). Lizards on tree branches and vines in flooded forest (igapó) around Cururu Lake were captured by hand. A buyer had ordered 30 individuals. Each animal was eviscerated and stored in alcohol. The following day, the buyer went to the hunter's house and paid R\$1.00 (about US \$0.60) per lizard. He said that the lizards were to be used in an Umbanda (an Afro-Brazilian religion that blends African religions with Catholicism) ritual as part of a treatment for male sexual inadequacy.

The species also is commonly found in the market in the city of Belém, State of the Pará, and such rituals might be part of the popular culture in much of Amazonia. All wildlife has been protected in Brazil since 1967, except that taken for subsistence — and trade for aphrodisiacs is unlikely to be considered subsistence. Although the species has an enormous range, lizards are captured during the reproductive period, and collection could affect local populations, especially in areas where much of the riparian vegetation has been cleared.

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Fig. 2. *Uranoscodon superciliosus* killed by a market hunter at Cururu Lake, Brazilian Amazon, August 2008.

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Alligator Snapper Stuck in the Mud: Evidence of Aestivation

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The Alligator Snapping Turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) is the largest freshwater turtle in North America, capable of reaching a weight of 113 kg with a carapace length of 80.0 cm (Ernst et al. 1994). These turtles are confined to river systems of the lower Mississippi Basin and rivers that drain the northern Gulf of Mexico (Ernst et al. 1994, Trauth et al. 2004). The Alligator Snapping Turtle is highly aquatic, and only the female leaves the water to nest (Ernst et al. 1994, Pritchard 1989). Little is known of the behavior of this species under natural conditions, especially during low water when individuals might become stranded.

On 3 September 1993, while working on Panther Creek (Yazoo County, Mississippi) during low-water conditions, I observed an Alligator Snapping Turtle that appeared to be aestivating while buried deeply in mud. After encountering the turtle, my coworker and I returned the following day to take pictures and collect data. The sediment depth of the buried turtle was 35.6 cm, and the turtle had moved 17.8 cm since first observed 16 h earlier. The sediment surrounding the turtle was soft mud that contained seepage from a spring. The temperature of the seepage was 22 °C. The maximum carapace length of the turtle was 66 cm. The individual was a male and weighed just over 45.3 kg.

On 24 October 2003, while sampling fishes in the Quiver River upstream from Hwy 3 in Sunflower County, Mississippi, a coworker and I observed a second Alligator Snapper stranded in mud. Only the upper half of the turtle's body was exposed. Apparently the turtle had been stranded during low-water conditions and was waiting for a rise in the river to initiate movement. Ernst et al. (<http://nlbif.eti.uva.nl/bis/turtles.php>) reported turtles aestivating in drying riverbeds to prevent desiccation. Although other colleagues also have observed Alligator Snapping Turtles stranded or aestivating during low water conditions (Bill Lancaster, retired turtle trapper, Sunflower County, Mississippi; Brent Harrel, USFWS, pers. comm.), this account appears to be the first published documentation of *Macrochelys temminckii* stranded or aestivating in natural habitat.

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Excavating an Alligator Snapping Turtle from the mud during low-water conditions in Panther Creek, Yazoo County, Mississippi.