



# Aggregating Behavior in the Cuban Short-tailed Racerlet, *Arrhyton vittatum* (Squamata: Dipsadidae)

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Reproductive behavior in Cuban snakes has been widely documented (Schwartz and Henderson 1991; Powell et al. 1996; Rodríguez-Schettino 2000; Fong 2004; Henderson and Powell 2009; Rodríguez-Schettino et al. 2013). Nevertheless, little is known about the reproduction of snakes in the Cuban endemic genus *Arrhyton* beyond a record of *ex situ* oviposition in *A. vittatum* and *A. taeniatum* (Amaro-Valdés and Morell-Savall 2017). Herein we present a putative reproductive behavior unreported for this genus.

At 0937 h on 28 February 2021, we observed six Cuban Short-tailed Racerlets (*Arrhyton vittatum*) under a rock in an area of the “Humedal Grande” Proyecto of the “Grupo Empresarial Flora y Fauna” in Moron, Ciego de Avila, in central Cuba (22.1289°, -78.6247°). All were entangled and presumably trying to mate. We were unable to verify if any were mating because, when we turned the rock, three individuals escaped and the remaining snakes became immobile (Fig. 1). We replaced the rock and checked it and the surrounding area 10 min later, but found no snakes. Some species of the superfamily Colubroidea are known to engage in behavior during which several males compete with each other to mate with a female, forming what have been termed “mating balls” (e.g., Joy and Crews 1988; Luiselli 1996; Friessen et al. 2013; Johnson 2021). We suspect that the aggregation we observed might have been an example of such behavior.

### Literature cited

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**Fig. 1.** Cuban Short-tailed Racerlets (*Arrhyton vittatum*) aggregated under a rock in Morón, Ciego de Ávila, Cuba. Photograph by Sergei Alexander López Pérez.

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