



Predation Record of a Common Chuckwalla, *Sauromalus ater* (Iguanidae), by a Giant Desert Centipede, *Scolopendra heros* (Scolopendridae)

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The Common Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater*) is widely distributed in arid zones of the USA and Mexico (Uetz et al. 2023). It is a large (up to 23 cm in length) iguanid lizard with

loose, baggy skin on the sides of the body and neck. Adults have dark coloration, sometimes with a red trunk, while the young are gray with black or dark gray crossbands. The diet



Figure 1. An adult Giant Desert Centipede devouring a juvenile Common Chuckwalla. Photo credit: Martin Ertner.

of this species consists of a variety of plants and occasionally insects. Chuckwallas may retreat into narrow rock crevices when threatened. They use body inflation to wedge themselves in these crevices (Holycross et al. 2022).

At approx. 0640 h On 9 September 2022, we encountered an adult Giant Desert Centipede (*Scolopendra heros*) feeding on a juvenile Common Chuckwalla. The observation was made in a locality in the Tinajas Altas Mountains, Arizona, USA, 1 mile south of Raven Butte at the bottom of a wash formed of granite. Air temperature was already approx. 32 °C (89.6 °F). The lizard seemed to be freshly killed. When disturbed, the centipede furiously defended its prey. We observed this scene for 40 min in which the centipede separated the lizard's head and started to feed on it from inside. Invertebrates preying on vertebrates are events generally considered as rare. According to a review by Valdez (2020), arthropods prey-

ing on Iguanidae were documented only in one case. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first documented case of an invertebrate preying on a Common Chuckwalla.

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Literature Cited

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