Failed Predation by a Cuban Giant Trope, *Tropidophis melanurus* (Squamata: Tropidophiidae), on a Cuban Giant Anole, *Anolis equestris* (Squamata: Dactyloidae)

Daylon Fundora Caballero¹ and Yuney Hamedh Cruz Antigua²

¹Delegación Territorial del CITMA de Ciego de Ávila, Joaquín de Agüero no. 116, entre Maceo y Simón Reyes, Ciego de Ávila, Cuba (daylonfc22@gmail.com)
²Empresa Provincial Flora y la Fauna, Ciego de Ávila, Prolongación Martí no. 611, entre Pedro Méndez y La Guajira, Ciego de Ávila, Cuba

The Cuban Giant Trope, *Tropidophis melanurus* (Schlegel 1837), is the largest species in the genus and also the most abundant in Cuba (Domínguez and Moreno 2003). It has a wide distribution throughout the island and several associated archipelagos (Rodríguez Schettino et al. 2013). The diet of this species consists of frogs (*Osteopilus septentrionalis, Eleutherodactylus* spp.), lizards (*Anolis* spp., *Leiocephalus* spp.), birds, and small mammals (Schwartz and Henderson 1991). However, no report to date documents any *Tropidophis* attempting to prey on a “crown-giant” ecomorph.

The Cuban Giant Anole, *Anolis equestris* Merrem 1820, is the largest species in this “crown-giant” genus and is widely distributed throughout the Cuban Archipelago (Garrido et al. 2001). Although reports indicate that snakes and mammals take it as prey, the only confirmed predators of *A. equestris* are birds (*Coccyzus merlini, Falco sparverius, and Turdus plumbeus*) (Henderson and Powell 2009).

“Failed predation” (*sensu* Begon et al. 2006) occurs when one animal captures another without ingesting it and therefore without receiving an energetic reward. In the case of snakes, which consume their prey whole, the size of the snake relative to its prey can result in a failed predation attempt (e.g., Vincent et al. 2006). Such events have been reported three times in Cuba. Two of those occasions involved *T. melanurus* (Fong G. et al. 2013; Torres López et al. 2014) and the third was by *Cubophis catherigerus* (Rodríguez-Cabrera et al. 2016). Herein we report a failed predation attempt by *T. melanurus* on *A. equestris*. This constitutes the second case of a Cuban snake trying to feed on a giant anole (see Rodríguez-Cabrera et al. 2016) and the first instance in which the unsuccessful predator was a tropidophiid.

At 1120 h on 19 July 2022, we documented attempted predation by an adult male *T. melanurus* (825 mm SVL) on an adult male *A. equestris* (approximately 280 mm SVL) when the two animals fell from an Octopus Tree (*Shefflera actinophylla*, Araliaceae) in the “Humedal Grande” Local Development Project, Morón, Ciego de Ávila Province, Cuba. Photograph by Yuney Hamedh Cruz Antigua.

**Fig. 1.** A failed predation attempt by an adult male Cuban Giant Trope (*Tropidophis melanurus*) on an adult male Cuban Giant Anole (*Anolis equestris*) in the “Humedal Grande” Local Development Project, Morón, Ciego de Ávila Province, Cuba. Photograph by Yuney Hamedh Cruz Antigua.

**Acknowledgement**

We thank Tomás Michel Rodríguez Cabrera for providing literature.
Literature Cited


