



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

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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)



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 Avila Province, Cuba. Photograph by YuneY Hamedh Cruz Antigua.

when the two animals fell from an Octopus Tree (*Shefflera actinophylla*, Araliaceae) in the “Humedal Grande” Local Development Project, Morón, Ciego de Avila Province, Cuba (22.122778 N, 78.63111 W). The snake was coiled around the lizard’s body and was biting its head while the lizard was biting the snake behind its head (Fig. 1). They held this position for five minutes before an area worker separated them and the lizard ran back to the tree from which they had fallen. Although the snake bore the marks of the lizard’s bite, it moved fluidly when released.

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