



Predation Attempt by a Venezuelan Snouted Treefrog (*Scinax x-signatus*) on a Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*) in Northeastern Brazil

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The Tropical House Gecko, *Hemidactylus mabouia* (Moreau de Jonnés 1818), is native to Africa and has become established in the Americas (Rocha et al. 2011). Apparently, the successful establishment of *H. mabouia* is in part related to its close association with humans and it is now a well-adapted species in urban environments (Carranza and Arnold 2006; Rocha et al. 2011). The Tropical House Gecko is nocturnally active and commonly uses artificial light sources to obtain food, mainly insects, arachnids and other invertebrates (Howard et al. 2001; Borroto-Paéz and Pérez 2020). The species also is common prey for a number of vertebrate predators (73 documented records), of which the most frequent are snakes (41), followed by lizards (13), birds (11), mammals (5), and frogs (3) (Borroto-Paéz and Pérez 2020).

Predator-prey relationships are important ecological factors in how vertebrate and invertebrate assemblages are structured (Vitt and Caldwell 2009), and can alter the utilization of resources among several groups of species (Toft 1985). Reports of predation on Tropical House Geckos usually are based on fortuitous observations of ephemeral nocturnal events. Herein, I report the second observation of predation on *H. mabouia* by the Venezuelan Snouted Treefrog *Scinax x-signatus* (Spix 1824).

The Venezuelan Snouted Treefrog is an endemic South American frog with a wide geographical distribution mainly in Venezuela, Colombia, Guiana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Brazil (Frost 2024), where it inhabits tropical savannahs, forest edges, and open areas, occurring in abundance in temporary bodies of water during the wet season, and it is well adapted to human disturbance (Rodrigues et al. 2010). Regarding its feeding ecology, adult *Scinax* sp. are considered generalist predators with predominately arthropod-based diets composed of insects (Kittel and Solé 2015; Silva et al. 2021).

At 2022 h on 9 September 2023, I observed a *Scinax x-signatus* trying to ingest a Tropical House Gecko (Fig.

1) outside of my house in Boca da Barra, Municipality of Pacatuba, Sergipe, Brazil (-10.571570, -36.599330; elev. 4 m asl). The gecko was almost completely ingested by the treefrog, with only its legs and tail remaining. After several seconds, the treefrog dropped its prey and escaped, apparently disturbed by my camera flash. The gecko also escaped.

Predation on *H. mabouia* by *Scinax x-signatus* was previously documented by Zanchi-Silva and Borges-Nojosa (2017) in a residence at Maracaraú Municipality, Ceará, also in northeastern Brazil. According to the authors, these



Figure 1. Venezuelan Snouted Treefrog (*Scinax x-signatus*) preying on a Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*) at Boca da Barra, Pacatuba, Sergipe, Brazil. Photograph by Leonardo Cruz da Rosa.

events could be common in areas where human occupation facilitates interactions between these species that would not occur naturally in sympatry. The predation attempt described herein corroborates the statement in Zanchi-Silva and Borges-Nojosa (2017) that such interactions between Venezuelan Snouted Treefrogs and Tropical House Geckos likely are common, especially at perianthropic areas, where *Scinax x-signatus* tends to be most abundant.

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