



Scavenging of a Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*) by Carpenter Ants in Northeastern Brazil

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Native to Africa, the Tropical House Gecko, *Hemidactylus mabouia* (Moreau de Jonnés 1818), has become widely established throughout the Americas (Kluge 1969; Carranza and Arnold 2006; Weterings and Vetter 2018; Agarwal et al. 2021). In Brazil, the species is widespread, typically functioning as a human commensal mainly in anthropized environments (Vanzolini 1978; Carranza and Arnold 2006; Anjos and Rocha 2008; Rocha et al. 2011).

Hemidactylus mabouia is a generalist predator (Bonfiglio et al. 2006; Rocha and Anjos 2007) that achieves high population densities in many parts of its non-native range. It also is prey of a variety of vertebrates (Pedroso-Santos et al. 2019; Borroto-Páez and Pérez 2020). Spiders are the most frequently documented invertebrate predators of *Hemidactylus mabouia* (e.g., Pedroso-Santos et al. 2019; Borroto-Páez and Pérez 2020; Reyes-Olivares et al. 2020). Aware of only one published report of predation by ants (Army Ants, *Eciton burchellii*) on

Tropical House Geckos (Sazima 2015), we herein document scavenging by carpenter ants (*Camponotus* sp.).

At 1910 h on 12 January 2022, we observed a juvenile *Hemidactylus mabouia* being dismembered by three carpenter ants (*Camponotus* sp.) between the trunk lid and rear bumper of a car parked in a house garden in *São Miguel do Gostoso, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil* (-5.12100, -35.63300; elev. 5 m asl), a typical urban area in the Restinga, a coastal shrub forest. Two ants were dismembering the lizard and a third was carrying its tail (Fig. 1). The lizard was dead at the time of our observation, and we do not know if the ants had killed it. The lizard was readily identified by its divided subdigital lamellae. After watching the ants for eight minutes, we moved the lizard and ants from the car to the ground in the backyard, at which time the ants dispersed.

To our knowledge, this is the first report of carpenter ants feeding on *H. mabouia* or any lizard. Carpenter ants feed



Figure 1. Carpenter ants (*Camponotus* sp.) dismembering (left) and carrying the tail (right) of a Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*). Photographs by Raone Beltrão-Mendes and Míriam Plaza Pinto.

mainly on honeydew, extrafloral nectar, and vegetal secretions (to 90% of the diet) (Josens et al. 1998; Pfeiffer and Linsenmair 2000; Josens 2002; Soares and Oliveira 2021), although they are known to complement their diet with invertebrates and vertebrates, capturing or scavenging remains and carrion (Beck et al. 1967; Yamamoto and Del-Claro 2008).

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