



# First Record of a Black Spiny-tailed Iguana (*Ctenosaura similis*) Preying on a Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*)

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The ranges of Black Spiny-tailed Iguanas (*Ctenosaura similis*) and Green Iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) overlap in Mexico and Central America (Krysko et al. 2007; Briggs-Gonzalez et al. 2023). Both species are habitat generalists. Black Spiny-tailed Iguanas are predominantly ground dwellers, although they do occur in trees, and they readily construct burrows into which they retreat at night (Briggs-Gonzalez et al. 2023). Green Iguanas are predominantly arboreal although they do forage on the ground; they excavate burrows for nesting (Krysko et al. 2007).

Once considered primarily herbivorous, Black Spiny-tailed Iguanas are known to eat insects and small vertebrates (Fitch and Henderson 1978; Briggs-Gonzalez et al. 2023). Recent studies show them to be true omnivores and highly opportunistic predators (Astorga-Acuña and Mora 2023). Black Spiny-tailed Iguanas have been recorded consuming a Mesoamerican Cane Toad (Pasachnik and Corneil 2011) and lizards (including *Sceloporous*, *Cnemidophorus*, *Ameiva*, *Anolis distichus*, and *Marisora brachypoda*) and their eggs (Fitch and Henderson 1978; Briggs-Gonzalez et al. 2023), as well as

juvenile congeneric iguanas (e.g. *Ctenosaura bakeri*) (Maryon et al. 2020).

A broad variety of species have been documented preying on Green Iguanas (Greene et al. 1978). Both *C. similis* and *I. iguana* are cannibalistic (Krysko et al. 2007; Briggs-Gonzalez et al. 2023).

At approximately 1030 h on 7 June 2024, while moving a coiled garden hose at the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, Indian Church, Orange Walk District, Belize (17.75207, -88.65368), DC observed a Black Spiny-tailed Iguana emerge from behind the coil with a live, wriggling, juvenile Green Iguana in its mouth (Fig. 1). The Black Spiny-tailed Iguana then proceeded to climb a Guanacaste Tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) and ate the Green Iguana. The entire encounter lasted approximately 10 minutes. Following consumption of the Green Iguana, the Black Spiny-tailed Iguana remained in the tree. Both species of iguana are common at the Lamani Outpost Lodge, with Black Spiny-tailed Iguanas found throughout the property and Green Iguanas located in trees next to the edge of the lagoon. This is the first recorded observation of a Black Spiny-tailed Iguana preying on a Green Iguana.



**Figure 1.** A Black Spiny-tailed Iguana (*Ctenosaurus similis*) preying on a Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) at the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, Indian Church, Belize. Photograph by Daniel Chaic.

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