



First Record of a Domestic Cat (*Felis catus*) Preying on a Spotted Brown Trope (*Tropidophis pardalis*)

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Introduced mammals are among the most destructive invasive alien species (IAS) on native wildlife populations (Bellard et al. 2016a, 2016b). That effect is exacerbated on native insular fauna, where most extinctions in the last two centuries have been caused by invasive mammalian predators (Jones et al. 2016; Russell et al. 2017). One of most destructive of these invasive species is the Domestic Cat (*Felis catus*), which has been listed among the 100 worst IAS in the world (Loss and Boughton 2022). Feral cats are thought to have been a major driver of biodiversity loss on islands (Nogales et al. 2013), causing about 14% of extinctions of endemic species of mammals, birds, and reptiles (Medina et al. 2011). West Indian islands are no exception, and several reports document the impact of cats on various reptilian species, especially snakes that have been listed in threatened categories: *Chilabothrus subflavus* (Lynn and Grant 1940), *C. monensis* (Tolson and Henderson 1993; Tolson 1996), *Tropidophis*

bucculentus (Powell 1999), and *Borikenophis portoricensis* (García et al. 2001).

The Spotted Brown Trope (*Tropidophis pardalis*) (Fig. 1), a Cuban endemic dwarf boa (Boundy 2021), is widely distributed in western and central Cuba, with some reports from the eastern region (Rodríguez-Schettino et al. 2013). It is a mainly nocturnal ground-dweller that occurs in mesophilic forests and rainforests, often sheltering under rocks in cave mouths, on the ground among dead palm fronds in wooded areas of shaded wet forests, and even buildings in urban localities (e.g., Henderson and Powell 2009; Armas and Iturriaga 2017). The only documented natural predator of the Spotted Brown Trope is the Great Lizard-Cuckoo, *Coccyzus merlini santamariae* (Cuculidae) (Pedro Regalado in Garrido 1976).

We herein report the first record of a Domestic Cat preying on a Spotted Brown Trope. Early in the morning of 3 February 2025, we observed a cat eating an adult Spotted



Figure 1. A Spotted Brown Trope (*Tropidophis pardalis*) from Western Cuba (left) and a Spotted Brown Trope killed by a Domestic Cat (*Felis catus*) in the backyard of an urban residence in San Antonio de los Baños, San Antonio de los Baños Municipality, Artemisa Province, Cuba. Photographs by Raimundo López-Silvero (left) and L.F. de Armas.

Brown Trope on the terrace of an urban residence in San Antonio de los Baños, San Antonio de los Baños Municipality, Artemisa Province, Cuba (22.89347, -82.50978; 75 m asl). When the cat perceived the human presence, it abandoned the snake after having eaten about the posterior fourth of the snake's body (Fig. 1).

The negative effects of cats on native Cuban fauna have been poorly studied (e.g., Borroto-Páez et al. 2013; Armas 2021). *Tropidophis pardalis* is listed as being of Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Powell et al. 2010; Fong 2021); the latter, however, listed predation by exotic mammalian species among the threats facing these snakes. This report provides clear evidence that cats can pose a threat to *T. pardalis* in both urban and natural areas. According to Borroto-Páez (2011), the presence of cats in several protected areas of Cuba constitutes a serious problem for the native fauna, although this has not been formally evaluated. In a global assessment, cats were responsible for 16.5% of biodiversity loss (Lepczyk et al. 2023). We strongly recommend implementation of efforts to mitigate the negative impact of cats not only on Cuban fauna but throughout the West Indies and the world.

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