



A Great Black Hawk (*Buteogallus urubitinga*) Preying on a Marine Toad (*Rhinella marina*) in Yasuni National Park, Ecuador

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The Marine Toad (*Rhinella marina*) is a large bufonid known for the potent toxic secretions released from its enlarged parotid glands (Jared et al. 2009). Native to Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela (Frost 2025), this anuran has become an invasive species in many tropical and subtropical regions worldwide, including the southern United States and northern Australia (Shine 2011; Candler and Bernal 2015; Frost 2025). Marine Toads often reach high population densities and pose a threat to native wildlife in areas where they have been introduced (Shine 2010; Candler and Bernal 2015).

Reptiles, birds, and mammals are known predators of Marine Toads in both native and introduced ranges (Goebel et al. 2023). Despite this species' potent bufotoxins, which render them unappetizing to most potential predators, an increasing number of observations document predation on *R. marina* by local wildlife in places like Australia (Cabrera-Guzmán et al. 2015). Many predators handle toads in ways that avoid contact with the parotid glands (Beckman and Shine 2009, 2011). Documenting such interactions provides valuable insights into how predatory animals navigate the toxic secretions of these and other amphibians.

The Great Black Hawk (*Buteogallus urubitinga*) (Accipitridae), which ranges from Mexico south to northern Argentina (Brown and Amadon 1968), is known to prey on mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish (Bierregaard 1998; da Frota et al. 2021). Amphibians (mostly anurans) comprise 7% of the diet, with prey including bufonids such as the Mottled Giant Toad (*Rhaebo guttatus*), Southern Gulf Coast Toad (*Incilius valliceps*), Cope's Toad (*Rhinella ditycha*), and Marine Toad (*R. marina*) (da Frota et al. 2021), the last reported by Beebe (1925) from Kartabo, Guyana.

At 1611 h on 1 August 2019, I observed a Great Black Hawk perched on a large dead tree consuming a Marine Toad (Fig. 1) on the bank of the Yasuni River in Yasuni National Park, Ecuador (-0.6562, -76.0705). I observed the hawk for



Figure 1. A Great Black Hawk (*Buteogallus urubitinga*) preying on a Marine Toad (*Rhinella marina*) in Yasuni National Park, Ecuador. Photograph by Dakotah T. Henn.

20 minutes and watched as it manipulated the anuran, flipping it on its back, and exposing its venter before consuming it. The hawk focused on the entrails of the toad, avoiding the dorsal region and thus contact with the parotid glands.

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