



Second Report of Ophiophagy in a Cat-eyed Snake (*Leptodeira* sp.) in Costa Rica

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The Northern Cat-eyed Snake, *Leptodeira septentrionalis* (Kennicott 1859), as traditionally known, ranged from the southern United States through Mexico and Central America to northern South America (Uetz et al. 2020). However, recent taxonomic revisions (Barrio-Amorós 2019; Torres-Carvajal et al. 2020) left Costa Rica with one or more undescribed species, a clade referred to *Leptodeira* sp. (Fig. 1).

These nocturnal semi-arboreal snakes feed primarily on lizards, frogs, and frog eggs (Savage 2002). Cantor and Pizzatto (2008) reported ophiophagy in this genus in what was most likely a captive situation. The first confirmed report of ophiophagy in nature occurred in Tortuguero, Limón, Costa Rica, in which a male *Leptodeira* sp. (as *L. septentrionalis*)

(TL 61.3 cm) regurgitated a live female Red Coffee Snake (*Ninia sebae*) (TL 25.9 cm) (McKelvy et al. 2013).

Herein we document a second instance of ophiophagy in *Leptodeira* sp. at 0915 h on 12 September 2020 in Los Planes, Puntarenas, Costa Rica (8°39'44.4"N, 83°40'40.2"W). CAA discovered a *Leptodeira* sp. (TL 41 cm) with a bulge in its body on the ground near a chicken coop (Fig. 2). After being placed in a plastic container, the snake regurgitated its prey, which was a young partially digested Sipo (*Chironius flavopictus*) (TL 52.5 cm) (Fig. 3).

The Sipo is a fast-moving strictly diurnal snake that sleeps coiled on branches of small trees at night (Leenders 2019). We believe that this predation event most likely occurred at



Fig. 1. A cat-eyed snake (*Leptodeira* sp.) on vegetation at Sierpe, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. Photograph by Raby Nuñez Escalante.



Fig. 2. A cat-eyed snake (*Leptodeira* sp.) from Los Planes, Puntarenas, Costa Rica, with a bulge in its body. Photograph by Cinthia Alvarado Acuña.



Fig. 3. A cat-eyed snake (*Leptodeira* sp.) regurgitated a Sipo (*Chironius flavopictus*) in Los Planes, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. Photograph by Alex Alvarado Acuña.

night while the Sipo was sleeping. After ingesting its disproportionately large prey, the cat-eyed snake sought a refugium in which to digest its meal.

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