Predation is part of the ecological dynamics of living organisms, and it is based on the effort that an animal uses to find prey and feed on it (Curio, 1976). Feeding habits of snakes are of great interest because the mechanism varies considerably between and within the different taxa due to differences in ontogeny and evolutionary history (Rojas-Morales et al., 2021), and also because snakes are among the less known reptiles regarding their biology.

*Imantodes cenchoa* is an arboreal species that can be found foraging and feeding at night (Henderson & Nickerson, 1976; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2003). Records of its diet include four frog species, of the genera Eleutherodactylus and Craugastor, and 12 lizards species, predominantly *Anolis*, *Gonatodes*, *Baliscus*, and their eggs (Myers, 1982; Martins & Oliveira, 1998; Campbell, 1999; Savage, 2002; Gutiérrez-Cárdenas & Arredondo, 2005; de Sousa et al., 2014; Clause & Clause, 2016; González-Acosta et al., 2023).

Rojas-Morales et al. (2021) performed a small experiment on the feeding behavior of *I. cenchoa* where authors offered an *Anolis antonii* to the snake and compared with a natural observation of predation on an individual of *Craugastor metriosistus*. In both cases the prey was considerably wider than the snake, however, once the event began, both snakes did not give up until they swallowed their preys completely (Rojas-Morales et al., 2021).

In this contribution we present an event in which an *I. cenchoa* preyed on an *Enyalioides praestabilis*. This lizard is a terrestrial to semi-arboreal diurnal species with a snout-vent length (SVL) measurement ranging from 117 mm to 128 mm. Found in primary and secondary evergreen forests on Amazonian slopes...
of Colombia and Ecuador, may sleep within tree cavities or perch on leaves, stems, branches, and tree trunks less than 1.7 m above the ground, usually near ponds and streams (Torres-Carvajal et al., 2011; Cisneros-Heredia et al., 2016; Pazmiño-Otamendi, 2018; Arteaga & Aguilar, 2023).

This depredation case was recorded near San Miguel de Conchay (3.123022° S; 78.433633° W, WGS84, 1,175 m a.s.l.), in the Limón Indanza canton, Morona Santiago province, Ecuador. The environment was a wooded area with tropical humid forest vegetation with a closed canopy. We observed an individual of

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**Figure 1.** Interaction of the predation event of *Imantodes cenchoa* on a juvenile of *Enyalioides praestabilis* in San Miguel de Conchay, Limón Indaza, Morona Santiago. A) *Imantodes cenchoa* biting *Enyalioides praestabilis* by the waist. B) *I. cenchoa* accommodates the prey to ingest it anteroposteriorly. C) The immobile prey begins to be swallowed from the head. D) After 59 minutes of the event starting, half of the prey's body has been ingested. E) Finally, after 83 minutes, *I. cenchoa* has completely devoured its prey.
I. cenchoa (SVL: ~700 mm) preying a juvenile of E. praestabilis (SVL: ~90 mm) on September 29, 2021 at 23:41 h. The interaction occurred near a bush (125 cm tall) while it was drizzling.

We found a specimen of I. cenchoa biting the lizard by the waist, which was already motionless when we found it. Then slowly with its jaw and body it began to accommodate the prey to be able to ingest it by the head (Figure 1A,B). Anteroposterior (head first) ingestion is the most common way to swallow prey by snakes according to de Sousa et al. (2014), in which 77% of the individuals of I. cenchoa analyzed showed this feeding behavior. This also seems to be related to a decrease in the probability of injuries during feeding (Palmuti et al., 2009). The prey did not move while being swallowed, so it was presumably dead because I. cenchoa saliva has been reported to be cytotoxic (Pazmiño-Atamendi & Rodríguez-Guerra, 2022). After 22 minutes I. cenchoa had positioned its prey and began to swallow it vertically while hanging in the bush (Figure 1C); At 59 minutes, half of the prey’s body had been ingested (Figure 1D). After 83 minutes, I. cenchoa had completely consumed its prey (Figure 1E), then climbed up some branches to a tree at a height of 3 m and the event was no longer observed.

This type of information helps to better understand the ecological interactions of this species with potential prey, and the effort involved during ingestion. Additionally, diet observations for snakes in nature are valuable because predation events are rare to observe (Dias-Silva et al., 2021), for which there are few records. Such as in the works of Myers (1982) and González-Acosta et al. (2023), in which they report individuals of I. cenchoa preying on an Anolis frenatus and a juvenile Basiliscus galeritus respectively. Our observation represents the first documented record of interaction between I. cenchoa and E. praestabilis, adding this snake species to the list of predators of this lizard. This helps to better understand the ecological interactions of this genus of lizards that does not have much ecological information even though it is in the category of Least Concern according to the IUCN (2023).

CITED LITERATURE


Cruz-García et al.- Predation of *Enyalioides praestabilis* by *Imantodes cenchoa*


