

BOIRUNA MACULATA (Mussurana, Víbora luta, Mamona). PREYS AND PREDATION BEHAVIOR. *Boiruna maculata* has a large distribution in southern South America, from Mendoza, southwestern Argentina to southern Bolivia, western Mato Grosso do Sul and southern Goiás, and southern Brazil. It is also found in Paraguay and Uruguay (Giraudo and Scrocchi, 2002. Argentinean Snakes: an annotated checklist. Smithsonian Herpetological Information Serv. 132: 53 pp.; Achával and Olmos, 1997. Anfibios y Reptiles del Uruguay. Montevideo. 128 pp.; Zaher, 1996. Boll. Mus. Reg. Sc. Nat. Torino 14 (2): 289-337). Because of its distribution, coloration, food habits and myths about their behavior, the species is one of the best known in the region, both by specialists and non-specialists.

In spite of this, here we describe an unknown behavior and food habit. On January 10th, 2004 at 0030 h, while conducting a herpetological survey in the Reserva Ecológica El Bagual (26°10'53"S, 58°56'39"W), Formosa, Argentina, we observed an adult "Zorzal" (*Turdus rufiventris*) fall out from its nest in a "Espina Corona" tree (*Gleditsia amorphoides*) at 1,5 m from the ground. The reason was a male of *Boiruna maculata* (SVL 1298 mm; 525 g; Herpetological collection Fundación Miguel Lillo, Tucumán, Argentina, FML 15421) that was climbing the tree and began eating one of the three chicks (45,0 g; 39,5 g and 40,3 g; approximately 9 days old) in the nest. Another specimen was captured on November 18th, 1996, during the morning, resting in a nest of "Boyero ala amarilla" (*Cacicus chrysopterus*) that was hanging at the end of a thin branch of a "Guayacán" (*Caesalpinia paraguayensis*) at 3,5 m from the ground and 5 m from the trunk; the snake regurgitated two chicks and in the nest rested two others, one dead and another alive (estimated age and weight of the chicks: 16-18 days; 30-34 g). Another snake from the same locality (FML 11560, female, SVL 1180mm) has a slightly digested chick (86 g, 160 mm TL; estimated age 7 days) of "Chajá" (*Chauna torquata*) in the stomach, nests of this species are large accumulation of plant matter and debris in the border of swamps; chicks are nidifugous.

Previous information about the feeding habits of *Boiruna maculata*, mention snakes, lizards, mice and eventually fishes as their preys (see Carreira Vidal, 2002, Alimentación de los ofidios de Uruguay, Monografías de Herpetología, Vol.6. Asociación Herpetológica Española. Barcelona, España, 126 pp. and the abundant literature mentioned in it). Our observations indicate that *Boiruna maculata*, at least at

this locality, habitually predated on chicks, and climbs trees searching for nests and chicks, in spite of its stout body and relatively short tail, typical of ground-dwelling species.

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