



Canid News

Copyright © 2010 by the IUCN/SSC Canid Specialist Group. ISSN 1478-2677

The following is the established format for referencing this article:

Novaes, R. L. M. et al. 2010. Opportunistic predation of bats by crab-eating fox in Atlantic Forest, southeastern Brazil. *Canid News* 13.2 [online]

URL: http://www.canids.org/canidnews/13/Bat_predation_by_crab-eating_fox.pdf.

Field Report

Opportunistic predation of bats by crab-eating fox in Atlantic Forest, southeastern Brazil

Roberto L. M. Novaes^{1*}, Camila Sant'Anna¹, Luis F. Menezes Jr. ¹, Ana C. S. Façanha¹, Mariana S. A. Louro¹, Tatiane S. Cardoso¹, Saulo Felix¹, Raphael Silveiras¹, André C. Siqueira¹, Renan F. Souza¹ and Luis F. C. Dias-de-Oliveira¹

¹ Laboratório de Mastozoologia, Instituto de Biologia, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Km 47 da antiga estrada Rio- São Paulo, 23892-000, Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

* Address for correspondence: Sessão de Pesquisa e Conservação, Projeto Pró-Morcegos. Rua Quaxima, 45, CEP 21310-250, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. E-mail: promorcegos@yahoo.com.br

Keywords: crab-eating fox, canid, *Cerdocyon thous*, diet, feeding habits.

Abstract

The crab-eating fox *Cerdocyon thous* (Linnaeus 1766) has a varied diet, feeding on a wide variety of plant parts, small vertebrates, insects and even carrion. Here we report the opportunistic consumption of bats *Carollia perspicillata* and *Pygoderma bilabiatum*, which were captured in mist nets used during a bat survey in the Parque Natural Municipal de Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. At least three bats of the two species were captured in the mist nets and predated by *C. thous*. The opportunistic diet is reported in the literature, however this is the first record of the consumption of bats by this species of canid.

Article

Known popularly as “graxaim”, the crab-

eating fox has one of the largest distributions among canids, occurring in much of South America. In Brazil, it has already been registered in virtually all the biomes (Cheida et al. 2006). It is found in forested areas, the *cerrado*, open areas altered by human action, and agricultural regions (Berta 1982, Marinho-Filho 1992, Wozencraft 1993, Fonseca et al. 1996, Nowak 1999, Câmara and Murta 2003, Silva et al. 2004, Lim et al. 2006). Canids can be exclusively carnivorous predators or scavengers, but some species also feed on fruits and insects (Ewer 1973). The diet of these animals may vary depending on the type of habitat and climatic conditions (Redford and Eisenberg 1992). Reproductive patterns may be affected in the same way (Bekkof et al. 1984). *C. thous* has an omnivorous generalist diet (Facure and Monteiro-Filho 1996). Depending on the habitat its diet may be predominantly carnivorous, consuming rodents and birds in high percentages (Pedó et al. 2006), or may be

frugivorous (mainly *Syagrus romazofianum* (Rocha et al. 2004, 2008), or even omnivorous, depending on available resources (Facure and Monteiro-Filho 1996). This paper reports the opportunistic consumption of bats by *C. thous*.

The opportunistic observations of predation were made in an urban fragment of Atlantic forest in the Parque Natural Municipal (PNM) de Nova Iguaçu. The PNM de Nova Iguaçu is located in the Baixada Fluminense, in the Gericinó-Mendanha massif between the municipalities of Mesquita, Nova Iguaçu and Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. It has an area of approximately 1,100ha of Atlantic Forest, characterized by a Dense Rainforest Montana and Lower Montana (Veloso et al. 1991). The park is bordered by other conservation units in the same massif, with a total area of almost 5,000ha of Atlantic Forest in excellent condition. The region has an altitude range of 150m at the entrance of the park to 965m at the highest point, the peak of Gericinó-Mendanha (SEMAM 2001).

Since June 2008, research on the species diversity and feeding ecology of bats has been conducted in the PNM de Nova Iguaçu by the staff of Projeto Pró-Morcegos / UFRRJ. Bats are captured by placing eight to ten Zootech® mist nets (6-, 9- and 12 x 3m) in trails, forest edges, clearings and water courses. The mist nets are weighted between 18:00hrs to 06:00hrs the following day to ensure that the lower line remains at 0.5m above the ground and the upper line more than 3.5m above the ground. The nets are inspected approximately every 30 minutes.

Between 15-16 August 2009, at least three individuals of *C. thous* were sighted in the areas where the mist nets were weighted. On 15 August, 2009 at 10:48hrs a male bat *Pygoderma bilabiatum* (Wagner 1843) (Family Phyllostomidae) was found dead in the mist net with signs of abrasion on his legs and a bleeding nose. The animal was trapped in the mist net about 1.2m above the ground. Two large holes were found in the same mist net. On the same day at 02:12hrs a male fox was observed removing a bat from the mist net with its mouth. The fox was balancing on its hind legs and biting the mist net, trying to remove the bat. On our approach the fox ran towards the forest edge, taking the bat that was trapped in the net. On 16 August 2009 at 16:08hrs, a pair

of foxes was observed attacking a bat stuck in the mist net, approximately 0.7m above the ground. The pair remained at the mist net until the approaching researchers were less than two metres from them. At the mist net we found the wing (arm and forearm) of an individual bat *Carollia perspicillata* (Linnaeus 1758), and two large holes in the net where the bat had been.

Although *C. thous* has a generalist diet, energy gain is low (Facure 1996), and in some areas, this species has a predominantly carnivorous diet (Pedó et al. 2006). However, it is possible that bats are not common in their diet, as they would not normally encounter them. Most studies indicate that rodents represent the most commonly consumed vertebrates, and are most frequently encountered by *C. thous* (Facure and Monteiro-Filho 1996). However, carcasses are also a common resource (Bisbal and Ojasti 1980; Facure and Monteiro-Filho 1996). Therefore, under natural conditions the consumption of bats by foxes would only occur if the foxes encountered bat carcasses on the ground.

In general, canids are not considered as potential predators of bats, which are mainly consumed by birds of prey (Twente 1954, Vernier 1994) and snakes (Martins and Oliveira 1998, Esbérard and Vrcibradic 2007), although they may also be consumed by primates, felids, opossums, rodents and other bats (Wroe and Wroe 1982, Gardner et al. 1992, Fischer et al. 1997, Souza et al. 1997, Fellers 2000). Opportunistic predation of bats caught in mist nets has been recorded for other mammal species with generalist habits, such as the white-eared opossum *Didelphis albiventris* Lund, 1840 (Gazarini et al. 2008) and the omnivorous bat *Phyllostomus hastatus* (Pallas 1767) (Oprea et al. 2006).

Therefore, it is clear that *C. thous* has a generalist and opportunistic diet, which corroborates with the cited literature. Its diet may also include bats, although these are not live-caught.

References

Bekoff, M., Daniels, T.J. and Gittleman, J.L. 1984. Life history patterns and the comparative social ecology of carnivores. *Annual Revi-*

- sion in *Ecology and Systematic* 15: 191-232.
- Berta, A. 1982. *Cerdocyon thous*. Mammalian species 186: 1-4.
- Bisbal, F. and Ojasti, O. 1980. Nicho trófico del zorro *Cerdocyon thous* (Mammalia, Carnívora). *Acta Biologica Venezuelana* 10 (4): 469-496.
- Câmara, T. and Murta, R. 2003. *Mamíferos da Serra do Cipó*. Editora PUC-Minas & Museu de Ciências Naturais, Belo Horizonte. 129p.
- Cheida, C.C., Nakano, E., Fusco-Costa, R., Rocha-Mendes, F. and Quadros, J. 2006. Ordem Carnívora, pp. 231-275. In: Reis, N.R., Peracchi, A.L., Pedro, W.A. and Lima, I.P. (Eds.). *Mamíferos do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade Estadual de Londrina.
- Esbérard, C.E.L. and Vrcibadic, D. 2007. Snakes preying on bats: new record from Brazil and a review of recorded cases in the Neotropical region. *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia* 24: 848-853.
- Ewer, R.F. 1973. *The Carnivores*. Cornell University, New York, USA. 494p.
- Facure, K.G. 1996. *Ecologia alimentar do Cachorro-do-Mato, Cerdocyon thous (Carnívora-Canidae), no Parque Florestal do Itapetinga, Município de Atibaia, Sudeste do Brasil*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Universidade Estadual de Campinas. 61p.
- Facure, K.G. and Monteiro-Filho, E.L.A. 1996. Feeding habits of the Crab-eating fox, *Cerdocyon thous* (Carnívora, Canidae), in a suburban area of Southeastern Brazil. *Mammalia* 60(1): 147-149.
- Fellers, G.M. 2000. Predation on *Corynorhinus townsendii* by *Rattus rattus*. *The Southwestern Naturalist* 45: 1-4.
- Fischer, E., Fischer, W., Borges, S., Pinheiro, M.R. and Vicentini, A. 1997. Predation of *Carollia perspicillata* by *Phyllostomus* cf. *elongatus* in Central Amazonia. *Chiroptera Neotropical* 3: 67-68.
- Fonseca, G.A.B., Herrmann, G., Leite, Y.L.R., Mittermeier, R.A., Rylands, A.C. and Patton, J.L. 1996. *Lista anotada dos mamíferos do Brasil*. Nº4. Conservation International & Fundação Biodiversitas, Belo Horizonte. 38p.
- Gardner, A.L., Handley, C.O. and Wilson, D.E. 1992. Survival and relative abundance. In: Handley, C.O., Wilson, D.E. and Gardner, A.L. (Eds.). *Demography and Natural history of the common fruit bat, Artibeus jamaicensis on Barro Colorado Island, Panama*. Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology, Washington D.C., USA.
- Gazarini, J., Brito, J.E.C. and Bernardi, I.P. 2008. Predações oportunísticas de morcegos por *Didelphis albiventris* no sul do Brasil. *Chiroptera Neotropical* 14(2): 408-411.
- Lim, B.K., Engstrom, M.D. and Ochoa, J.G. 2006. *Preliminary checklist of the mammals of the Guianas Shield (Venezuela: Amazonas, Bolívar, Delta, Amacuro, Guyana; Surinam; French Guiana)*. Biodiversity Program, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., USA.
- Marinho-Filho, J. 1992. Os mamíferos da Serra do Japi. In: Morellato, C. (Org.). *Historia Natural da Serra do Japi: Ecologia e preservação de uma área florestal do sudeste do Brasil*. Campinas, Editora da UNICAMP, FAPESP. p.264-286.
- Martins, M. and Oliveira, M.E. 1998. Natural history of snakes in forest of Manaus region, Central Amazonia, Brazil. *Herpetological Natural History* 6: 78-150.
- Nowak, R.M. 1999. *Walker's mammals of the world*. 6th Ed. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA. 836p.
- Oprea, M., Vieira, T.B., Pimenta, V.T., Mendes, P., Brito, D., Ditchfield, A.D., Knegt, L.V. and Esbérard, C.E.L. 2006. Bat predation by *Phyllostomus hastatus*. *Chiroptera Neotropical* 12(1): 255-258.
- Pedó, E., Tomazzi, A.C., Hartz, S.M. and Christoff, A.U. 2006. Diet of crab-eating fox, *Cerdocyon thous* (Linnaeus) (Carnívora, Canidae) in a suburban area of southern Brazil. *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia* 23(3): 637-641.
- Redford, K.H. and Eisenberg, J.F. 1992. *Mammals of the Neotropics*. 2 Ed. University of Chicago, Chicago, USA. 450p.
- Rocha, V.J., Aguiar, L.M., Silva-Pereira, J.E., Moro-Rios, R.F. and Passos, F.C. 2008. Feeding habits of the crab-eating fox, *Cerdocyon thous*

(Carnivora: Canidae, in a mosaic área with native and exotic vegetation in Southern Brazil. *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia* 25(4): 594-600.

Rocha, V.J., Reis, N.R. and Sekiama, M.L. 2004. Dieta e dispersão de sementes por *Cerdocyon thous* (Linnaeus) (Carnivora, Canidae) em um fragmento florestal no Paraná, Brasil. *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia* 24(4): 871-876.

SEMUAM. 2001. *Plano de manejo do Parque Municipal de Nova Iguaçu*. Secretaria de Urbanismo e Meio Ambiente, Prefeitura da Cidade de Nova Iguaçu. 102p.

Silva, J.M.C., Tabarelli, M., Fonseca, M.T. and Lins, L.V. 2004. *Biodiversidade da caatinga: áreas e ações prioritárias para a conservação*. MMA, UFPE, Brazil. 382p.

Souza, L.L., Ferrari, S.F. and Pina, A.L. 1997. Feeding behaviour and predation of a bat by *Saimiri sciureus* in a semi-natural Amazonian environment. *Folia Primatologica* 68: 194-198.

Twente, J.W. 1954. Predation on bats by hawks and owls. *The Wilson Bulletin* 66: 135-136.

Veloso, H.P., Rangel-Filho, A.L.R. and Lima, J.C.A. 1991. *Classificação da vegetação brasileira adaptada a um sistema universal*. IBGE: Departamento de Recursos Naturais e Estudos Ambientais. 123p.

Vernier, E. 1994. Predazione di chiroterti da parte del barbagianni (*Tyto alba*) in Italia. *Hystrix* 5: 105-107.

Wozencraft, W.C. 1993. Order Carnivora. p. 279-348. In: Wilson, D.E. and Reeder, D.M. (Eds.). *Mammals species of the world*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., USA.

Wroe, D.M. and Wroe, S. 1982. Observation of Bobcat predation on bats. *Journal of Mammalogy* 63: 682-683.

Roberto Novaes is currently Section Leader of Research and Conservation of the Pro-Bats Project for the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ), researching the ecology of neotropical mammals.

Camila Sant'Anna is a researcher with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, studying the mammalian ecology of Atlantic Forest.

Luis Menezes Jr. coordinates research on the ecology of neotropical bats with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ.

Ana Façanha is a researcher with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, studying the biodiversity and systematics of neotropical bats.

Mariana Louro is a researcher with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, studying the diversity and conservation of Atlantic Forest mammals.

Tatiane Cardoso conducts surveys of Atlantic Forest mammals.

Saulo Felix is a trainee with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, working on the feeding ecology of neotropical mammals.

Raphael Silveiras is a trainee with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, working on the feeding ecology of neotropical mammals.

André Siqueira is a trainee with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, working on the ecology of neotropical mammals.

Renan Souza is a trainee with the Pro-Bat Project for UFFRJ, working on the ecology of neotropical mammals.

Luis Dias-de-Oliveira is a trainee in mammal ecology in the Department of Zoology at UFFRJ.