

PREY ITEMS OF THE TZOTZIL MONTANE PITVIPER  
(*CERROPHIDION TZOTZILORUM*)

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ABSTRACT—Only one species, *Sceloporus variabilis*, previously has been recorded in the diet of *Cerrophidion tzotzilorum*. Here I report 2 new prey items for this little known species of montane pitviper. I examined stomach contents from a juvenile *C. tzotzilorum* and found a skink (*Sphenomorphus incertus*) and an orthopteran in the family Acrididae. These prey species are similar to those eaten by other species of *Cerrophidion*.

RESUMEN—Solamente una especie, *Sceloporus variabilis*, ha sido registrada previamente en la dieta de *Cerrophidion tzotzilorum*. Aquí reporto dos nuevas presas para esta poco conocida especie de viperido montano. Examiné el contenido estomacal de un espécimen juvenil de *C. tzotzilorum* y encontré una lagartija scíncida (*Sphenomorphus incertus*) y un ortóptero de la familia Acrididae. Estas especies de presa son similares a las ingeridas por otras especies de *Cerrophidion*.

*Cerrophidion tzotzilorum* occurs in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, with a vertical distribution of 2,050–2,500 m (Campbell, 1985). Little is known about this pitviper other than its morphology and geographic range. The only published information on diet of *C. tzotzilorum* is from Campbell and Lamar (2004), who stated that *Sceloporus variabilis* was regurgitated from several captured snakes. Here I report two additional prey items for this species, Stuart's forest skink (*Sphenomorphus incertus*) and a short-horned grasshopper of the family Acrididae. I removed these two items from the stomach of a juvenile *C. tzotzilorum* (SVL = 20.7 cm/length of tail = 2.2 cm). The specimen (CAS 163770) was collected in pine-oak forest about 8 km NW of Teopisca (ca. 2,130 m elevation) by D. E. Breedlove on 15 November 1972.

The *S. incertus* specimen (length of trunk = 31 mm/length of tail = ca. 79 mm) was eaten headfirst. Although most of the head was digested, I found a minute region of the head containing an intact frontoparietal scale, crucial for identifying the lizard to genus (Cope, 1864; Köhler, 2003). The specimen was distinguished from *S. assatus* by having <67 dorsal scales between the parietal and base of tail and having 26 scales at midbody (Köhler, 2003). J. A. Campbell (pers. comm.) has collected *S. incertus* both east and west of Teopisca. The orthopteran had

been ingested prior to the lizard and few exoskeleton fragments remained, including most of a head, an entire hind limb, parts of leg structures, and pieces of abdomen. I was able to identify the grasshopper only to the family Acrididae.

The great majority of prey items taken by species of *Cerrophidion* appear to be small mammals, lizards, and arthropods, while only a small percentage of amphibians and birds have been reported (Campbell, 1988; Campbell and Solórzano, 1992; López-Luna et al., 1999; Campbell and Lamar, 2004). Juvenile and subadult *Cerrophidion* appear to feed more on orthopterans, switching to larger prey items (e.g., mammals and lizards) as they mature (Campbell and Lamar, 2004). Although ground skinks are known to be conspicuous and common in much of the range of *C. godmani*, Campbell and Solórzano (1992) stated that few were eaten and only one skink, *Sphenomorphus incertus*, was recovered in their dietary study. The restricted range of *C. tzotzilorum* contributes to the rarity of specimens in museum collections, currently precluding a comprehensive study of the diet of this species. Examination of additional museum or field specimens would provide further insight into the natural history of this species.

I thank J. V. Vindum, A. E. Leviton, and A. H. Harper of the California Academy of Sciences (CAS) for

loaning specimens of *C. tzotzilorum* and granting permission to examine this specimen's stomach contents. Reviews and comments from J. A. Campbell, J. L. Coleman, A. M. Modra, S. A. Orlofske, and 2 anonymous reviewers were helpful. I thank M. Solis for writing the Spanish translation of this abstract.

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*Submitted 27 July 2006. Accepted 5 February 2007.*  
*Associate Editor was Geoffrey C. Carpenter.*