

CHIRONIUS FLAVOLINEATUS (NCN). PREDATION.

Chironius flavolineatus is a medium-sized colubrid snake with a wide distribution, from northern Brazil to northeastern Paraguay and central Bolivia, but little is known about its natural history (Dixon et al. 1993. Revision of the Neotropical Snake Genus *Chironius* Fitzinger [Serpentes, Colubridae]. Monografie XIII. Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali. 279 pp.). It is a semiarboreal species (pers. obs.), and feeds mainly on frogs (Dixon et al., *op. cit.*). On 9 December 2001, during a diurnal road sampling of snakes at about 1030 h, we observed a white-tailed hawk, *Buteo albicaudatus*, perched on a tree branch ca. 2 m above ground, holding a snake. The observation was made on an unpaved road in a pristine shrubby grassland of Cerrado (savanna-like vegetation) at Itirapina Ecological Station (IES; 22°13'24"S, 47°54'03"W; ca. 750 m elev.), southeastern Brazil. Just after we spotted the hawk, it flew away with the snake in its talons. We followed the hawk by car and foot, whereupon the hawk released the snake and flew away. We found the dead snake on the ground. It was an adult female *Chironius flavolineatus* (estimated SVL 680 mm; SVL remaining 564 mm; tail length 375 mm; 155 remaining ventral scales) lacking the head and anterior portion of the body. The snake had several cuts and punctures along the body (N = 20) and a puncture on the tail, indicating that the hawk might have fought with the snake to subdue it. On the anterior portion of the body there were only cuts, and on the posterior portion there were

punctures and cuts, indicating that the hawk directed its strikes to the snake's head, probably to minimize the risk of injuries.

The voucher specimen of *C. flavolineatus* is deposited in the Museu de História Natural, Universidade Estadual de Campinas (ZUEC 2650). D. Zanchetta and the staff of Instituto Florestal allowed and facilitated our fieldwork at IES. FAPESP provided funds (00/12339-2) and grants to RJS (99/05664-5) and CAB (99/06245-6). We thank M. Martins and C. Nogueira for suggestions on the manuscript. This is publication number 9 of the project Ecology of the Cerrados of Itirapina.

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