

**MICRURUS FRONTALIS** (Coral Snake). **MALE COMBAT.**

Combat rituals have been observed in numerous snake genera, including several elapids (Shine 1994. *Copeia* 1994:326–346). One explanation for such behavior is male-male competition for access to reproductive females (Bogert and Roth 1966. *Amer. Mus. Novit.* 2245:1–27; Kelleway 1982. *Br. J. Herpetol.* 6:225–230).

*Micrurus frontalis* is an elapid whose reproductive behavior is largely unknown. We report the first observation in the field of a combat ritual between two male *M. frontalis* (SVL = 875 and 836 mm). On 12 April 1994 (ca. 1230 h) in Santa Rita city (29°51'S, 51°16'W), Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the snakes were found sheltered under rocks. They were aligned horizontally with their bodies and tails intertwined and their heads raised slightly (Fig. 1). The two males kept their heads side by side while moving forward and trying to hover over each other. When captured, one everted the hemipenis. Subsequently, these males were deposited in the Museum Collection of the Museu de Ciências Naturais, Fundação Zoobotânica do Rio Grande do Sul (MCN 11424, 11435).

In addition to our field observation, two captive males were twice observed engaging in a combat ritual in the same season. In every case, the postures were very similar to those of *Austrelapis superbus* (Shine and Allen 1980. *Victorian Nat.* 97:188–190), but different from those reported for other elapids. The horizontal intertwining of the body without vertical posturing of the head and anterior trunk appears similar to the behavior of colubrids such as *Pituophis melanoleucus affinis* (Bogert and Roth, *op. cit.*).

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FIG. 1. Combat ritual between male *Micrurus frontalis*.

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