

***LEIOLOPISMA TELFAIRII* (Telfair's Skink) CAUDAL LURING.**

Caudal luring is a technique employed by sit-and-wait foragers from a number of squamate lineages (e.g., Simon *et al.* 1999. Herpetol. Rev. 30:102-103.), and typically involves the use of tail movement to attract potential prey within striking distance (Pough *et al.* 2004. Herpetology. Pearson Education Inc. New Jersey, USA. 726 pp.). Among lizards, caudal luring has only ever been recorded in *Lialis burtonis* and was observed to occur only when the prey evaded an initial strike (Murray *et al.* 1991. Copeia 1991:509-516.). Hence, here we report observations made during a field study that suggest that *Leiopisma telfairii* may employ caudal luring as an opportunistic technique to enhance predation on other lizards.

Telfair's skink, a historically common species, throughout the island assemblage associated with Mauritius, has decline markedly due to ship-facilitated introduction of black rats (*Rattus rattus*), which have resulted in the species now being confined to Round Island, 22.5 km off the NE coast of Mauritius (Jones 1993. Proc. Roy. Soc. Art. Sci. Mauritius V:71-92). *Leiopisma telfairii*, the largest living skink in Mauritius, attains a size over 160 mm SVL (Pernetta 2004. Microhabitat and dietary preferences of Telfair's skinks (*Leiopisma telfairii*): Implications for their translocation. MSc thesis, University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom. 41 pp.). Fecal analysis of 59 individuals recorded 20 different food items and confirmed its omnivorous status (Pernetta 2004. Microhabitat and dietary preferences of Telfair's skinks (*Leiopisma telfairii*): Implications for their translocation. MSc thesis,

University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom. 41 pp.). Evidence of saurophagy, in the form of scales and bones of Bojer's skinks (*Gongylomorphus bojerii bojerii*), was recorded in three separate fecal samples and occurs from a young age (FIG 1.).

While collecting data on *L. telfairii* ecology, we made observations of 3 adults (≥ 100 mm SVL) employing a novel behavior in attempting to capture Bojer's skinks. On all three occasions (22 April, 15 May and 1 June 2004), adult Telfair's skinks had been observed making an initial unsuccessful attempt to capture adult (ca. 60 mm SVL) Bojer's skinks. Despite the fact that an attempt at predation was made, the Bojer's skinks remained within view of the pursuing *L. telfairii*. Each *L. telfairii* then stopped, curled their tail around until the tip was parallel to their head, and undulated the last ca. 5 cm of their tail several times while remaining otherwise motionless. Each Bojer's skink exhibited an obvious attraction to the tail undulation and moved to within 10-15 cm of the Telfair's skinks. Once within this distance, all the Telfair's skinks made a lunge at the Bojer's skinks, but no episode resulted in the successful capture of the smaller skinks.

Our observations of this behavior suggests that Telfair's skinks may be using an opportunistic form of caudal luring similar to that employed by *Lialis burtonis*. Notably, *L. telfairii* exhibits few characteristics common among species that frequently employ caudal luring. Caudal luring has generally been associated with sit-and-wait foragers with differently colored tail tips (Pough *et al.* 2004. Herpetology. Pearson Education Inc. New Jersey, USA. 726 pp.). *Leiopisma telfairii* is an omnivore that employs both sit-and-wait and active foraging modes (Pernetta, pers. observ.) and lacks

variation in tail tip color. Saurophagy by *L. telfairii* is a deviation from the usual diet of arthropods observed among Scincidae (Greer 2001 *J. Herpetol.* 35:383-395), and may result from these island lizards broadening their diets to compensate for limited prey availability (Cooper and Vitt 2002. *J. Zool. (London)* 257:487-517). These observations constitute the second recorded use of caudal luring by a member of the Sauria and the first record of its use by a Scincidae. As a result further work may help to

establish whether this behavior occurs in other Scincidae, or if it is unique to *Leiopisma telfairii*.

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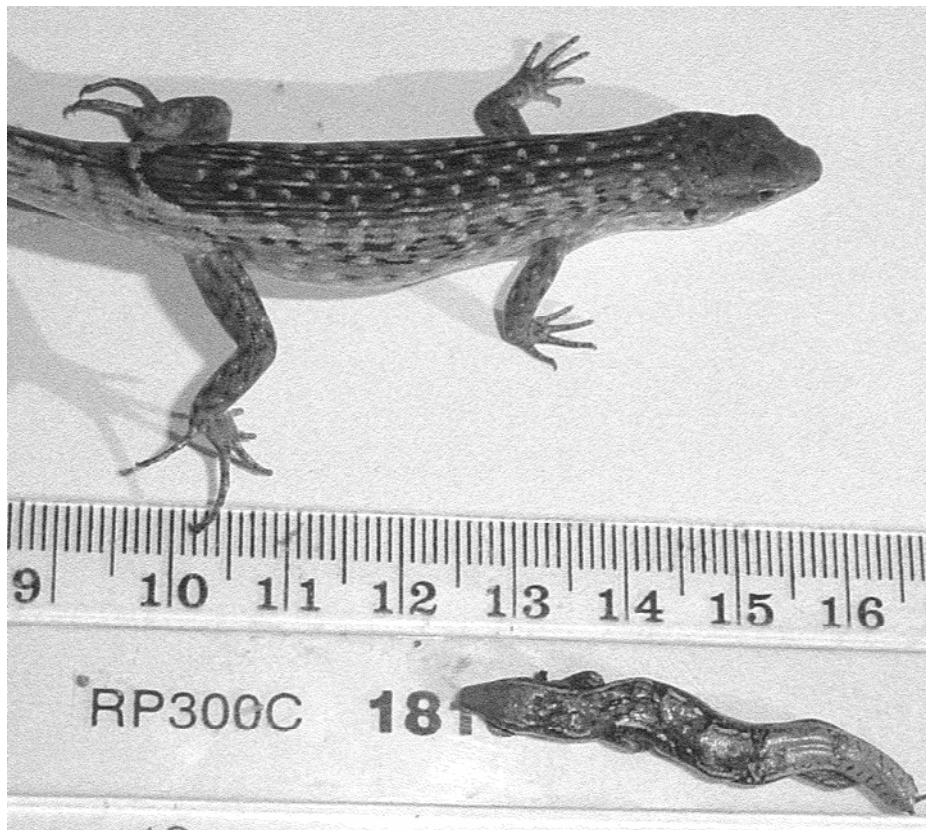


FIG.1. A juvenile *Leiopisma telfairii* (56mm SVL) with *Gongylomorphus bojerii* regurgitated during handling on Round Island, Mauritius (Photograph by A.P. Pernetta).