The water-snake *Erythrolamprus miliaris* (Linnaeus, 1758) is a medium-sized aglyph snake of the family Dipsadidae (Giraudo, 2001), which is active at both day and night (Marques et al., 2004). It is commonly found in aquatic environments such as rivers and lakes in forested or open areas, where it preys mainly on anurans and fish (Sazima and Haddad, 1992; Pombal, 2007), although some Gymnophiona (Lema et al., 1983), lizards (Machado et al., 1998) and even snakes (Bonfiglio and Lema, 2006) were also reported as prey of *E. miliaris*. It is a voracious species, for which there are reports of feeding on fish in mangroves and even within the sea (Marques and Souza, 1992).

Necrophagy is not common amongst snakes, as they prefer live prey (Sazima and Strüssmann, 1990; Parker and Grandison, 1997; Greene, 1997), and literature records on necrophagic snakes are rather rare: e.g. *Bothrops jararaca* (Wied, 1824), *E. miliaris*, *Helicops modestus* Günther, 1861, *Hydrodynastes gigas* (Duméril, Bibron and Duméril, 1854) and *Micrurus surinamensis* (Cuvier, 1817) (Sazima and Strüssmann, 1990), and *Micrurus frontalis* (Duméril, Bibron and Duméril, 1854) (Marques et al., 2017).

On October 16th, 2011, in the municipality of Cachoeiras de Macacu, Rio de Janeiro State, Southeastern Brazil (-22.519148, -42.727685; 45 m elev.; WGS 84), we found an individual of *Erythrolamprus miliaris* (adult female, SVL 394 mm, TL 94 mm) on the Funchal road (also known as Guapiaçu rd.) leading to the Guapiaçu Ecological Reserve (REGUA). The snake was feeding on a road-killed tree frog (*Scinax* sp.), which was not intact but smashed and torn apart into several pieces on the road. The snake localized each one of the tree frog’s fragments through tongue-darting, and collected and swallowed most of the pieces (Figure 1). It was a rainy night and the 12-km road that connects REGUA to the main road RJ-122 was full of amphibians and snakes crossing it, several of them road-killed. Eleven other *E. miliaris* were sighted on that night on Funchal road, seven out of them were road-killed. The snake specimen is deposited at the Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, RJ, under the number MNRJ 20726.

Marques et al., (2017) listed the presence of necrophagy in about 40 snake species, including some that search for dead prey. Although these numbers represent only about 1% of the world’s snake diversity (Uetz et al., 2016), several studies suggest that scavenging may be more common amongst snakes, especially in aquatic/semi-aquatic species (Sazima and Strüssmann, 1990; Marques et al., 2017).

This is not the first report of scavenging for *Erythrolamprus miliaris* (Sazima and Strüssmann, 1990), but it is the first report of scavenging on non-intact prey. Eating non-intact prey is very rare amongst snakes as they have no masticatory specialisations for chewing their prey.

Only a few species naturally eat prey in pieces: e.g. the Crab-eating Water Snake *Fordonia leucobalia* (Schlegel, 1837) hunts for living crabs, but it has to break them into pieces before swallowing (Jayne et al., 2002).

During seizing prey, snakes expose themselves to injury risk, especially with aggressive prey (e.g. rats; Martins et al., 2002). On the other hand, carcasses pose...
no risk or resistance at all (Marques et al., 2017), and finding a carcass might be an excellent opportunity for a meal with low risk and energy expenditure (Sazima and Strüssmann, 1990). This would classify such events more as opportunistic (Marques et al., 2017), than preference. Although *Erythrolamprus miliaris* is a very common and well-studied species in Southeastern Brazil, many aspects of its biology still remain unknown. We emphasize the importance of field studies that bring to light this type of observation, which we would hardly obtain in the laboratory.

**References**


**Figure 1.** *Erythrolamprus miliaris* (MNRJ 20726) feeding on a torn apart road-killed *Scinax* sp. on Guapiaçu road, Cachoeiras de Macacu, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.


