

**PREDATION OF *Boa constrictor* LINNAEUS, 1758 BY *Eunectes murinus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
IN CAPTIVITY (SERPENTES: BOIDAE)**

**PREDAÇÃO DE *Boa constrictor* LINNAEUS, 1758 POR *Eunectes murinus* (LINNAEUS, 1758)  
EM CATIVEIRO (SERPENTES: BOIDAE)**

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### ABSTRACT

The eating habits of anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*) have always inspired thematic films of fiction and have aroused the curiosity of people all over the world. Sometimes exaggerated, the diet of these animals is far from limited to just a few species described in literature. For the first time, this article describes the observation in captivity at the Instituto Vital Brazil, of the predation of an adult specimen of *Boa constrictor*. The process of predation was recorded through photos and expands the knowledge about the feeding of the anacondas.

**Key Words:** snakes; predation; captivity; feeding; Boidae.

### RESUMO

Os hábitos alimentares das sucuris (*Eunectes murinus*) sempre inspiraram filmes temáticos de ficção e despertaram a curiosidade de pessoas em todo o mundo. Por vezes exagerada, a dieta desses animais está longe de se limitar a apenas algumas espécies descritas na literatura. Pela primeira vez, este artigo descreve a observação em cativeiro, no Instituto Vital Brazil, da predação de um exemplar adulto de *Boa constrictor*. O processo de predação foi registrado por meio de fotos e amplia os conhecimentos sobre a alimentação das sucuris.

**Palavras-Chave:** cobras; predação; cativeiro; alimentação; Boidae.

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### INTRODUÇÃO

The Vital Brazil (IVB) Institute was created on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1919 in Niteroi/RJ, Brazil, and founder by the scientist Vital Brazil Mineiro da Campanha. The institution primary's objective is the production of the antiophidic serum, vaccines and veterinary products, and development of environmental education programs as well as scientific projects.

As part of the Institution environmental education programs, the Vital

Brazil Institute possesses a permanent exhibition of venomous snakes and arthropods for public viewing and environmental education. One of the exhibition halls shelters several species of constrictors snakes, such as boas (*Boa constrictor*), pythons (*Python molurus*, *P. reticulatus*), and since January 2014 a 4 meters male of anaconda *E. murinus* from Lauro de Freitas, Bahia state of Brazil. The precinct measures 17 square meters by 2.3 meters high and has in its interior a 4.5 square meters pool.

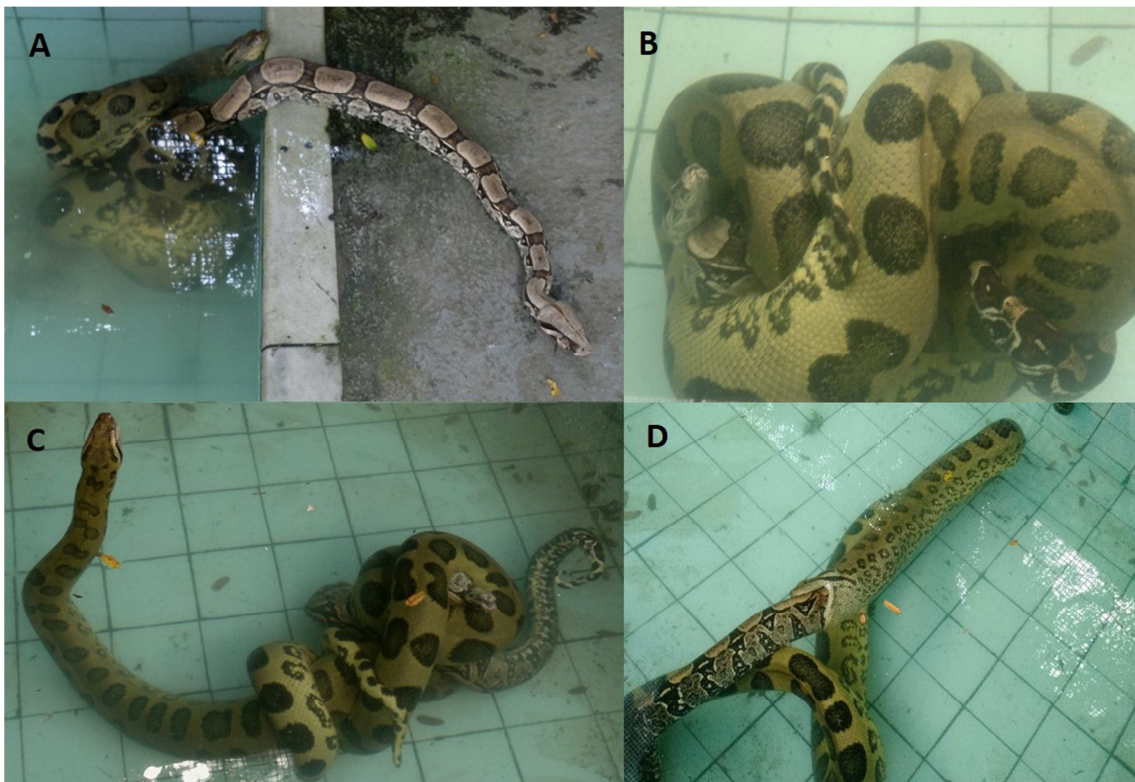
The snake anaconda *Eunectes murinus* (LINNAEUS, 1758) inhabits large hydrographic basins in tropical America, from Colombia to Brazil, between  $\sim 10^{\circ}\text{N}$  and  $26^{\circ}\text{S}$  (1). The anaconda is a constrictor snake which usually seeks a point of anchorage on land, e.g. coiling its tail around tree trunks, to strangle its victims (2). The species are viviparous snakes that produce litters of 20-40 hatchlings, although litters of up to 82 individuals have been recorded (11). On August 17, 2015 the specimen of *E. murinus* of the IVB precinct preyed on two specimens of *B. constrictor* measuring up to 1,20 meters each and the week after it preyed another boa.

The observed predatory behavior consisted on an ambush by the *E. murinus*, which was inside the pool, and identified the *B. constrictor*, which went inside the pool, as prey. The anaconda struck the boa tangling itself on the boa's tail, hindering its escape from the pool and restraining its movements. After 20 hours of tiresome and frustrated attempts of releasing itself, the anaconda then proceeded to roll the boa's body and drag it to the bottom of the pool. It took approximately one hour to the anaconda

release the dead *B. constrictor* and about five hours to start the ingestion process. The ingestion of the boa was performed head first, and took about 25 minutes.

Snakes are carnivorous animals which prey on a great variety of food including mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fishes and even invertebrate such as mollusks and spiders (7,12). Their predation stages are localization, identification, approach, subjugation, ingestion and digestion (13). Active during the day and night, *E. murinus* lives on the water edge or submerged in rivers and lakes (3,4), where prey mostly on mammals rodents (5-7), birds (5,7), fishes (8), anurans and lizards (7), and crocodilians (9). Nevertheless, analyses of stomach contents have also reported larger mammals such as dogs *Canis familiaris* and young individuals of the cattle *Bos taurus* (10).

These are the first records of predation on *B. constrictor* by *E. murinus*. The few references on the feeding habits of the genus *Eunectes*, only suggest that snakes may consist its diet, however, ophyophagy reports on this genus are rare, as much on the wild as in captivity (11).



**Figure 1.** Predation of *B. constrictor* by *E. murinus* in captivity. A- Subjugation in water. B- Submersal subjugation. C- Death for drowning. D- Ingestion.

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