

Boyacá spiny rat, *Proechimys chrysaеolus* (Mammalia: Echimyidae), a new prey item of the banded calico snake, *Oxyrhopus petolarius* (Reptilia: Dipsadidae)

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Snakes are recognized as important predators that feed on a wide variety of prey, including vertebrates and invertebrates (Vitt and Cadwell, 2014). In spite of the high richness of snakes in Colombia (almost 270 species), little is known about their distribution, ecology, and natural history (Lynch, 2012; Lynch et al., 2016), with only a few reports on prey items available in literature (e.g. Bernal and Palma, 2011; Arévalo-Páez et al., 2015; Rojas-Morales et al., 2018). Most species are generalists, which seems to be the case of snakes of the genus *Oxyrhopus* (Caldeira et al., 2014). This snake group has been documented as consuming a wide variety of prey, ranging from lizards (Alencar et al., 2013; Crnobrna et al., 2017) to small mammals (Duellman, 1978; Alencar et al., 2012; Gaiarsa et al., 2013). Among *Oxyrhopus* species, the banded calico snake *Oxyrhopus petolarius* (Linnaeus, 1758) is a terrestrial, nocturnal, and relatively common snake that is distributed throughout Central and tropical South America (Lee, 1996; 2000; Lynch, 2009; McCrainie, 2011). In Colombia, it inhabits the Amazonian rainforest, the dry tropical forest of the upper Cauca River, the Caribbean lowlands, and the upper Magdalena River basin (Lynch, 2009). Diet items include small mammals including bats, lizards, birds, amphibians, other snakes and bird eggs (Rodríguez-França and Amorim, 2012; Gaiarsa et al., 2013; Nogueira et al., 2013; Caldeira et al., 2014;

Marín-Martínez et al., 2017). Diet reports in Colombia are only known for *O. petolarius* (Marín-Martínez et al., 2017), whereas the other three species found in the country (Lynch, 2009) currently lack information.

Here, we report evidence of an iteration between *O. petolarius* and the Boyacá spiny rat, *Proechimys chrysaеolus* (Thomas, 1898). On 25 May 2017, we received an adult female *O. petolarius* (SVL 885 mm, TL 195 mm; deposited at the Museo de Historia Natural, Universidad de Caldas, MHN-UCa 0287; Figure 1) that was found dead on the road in the municipality of Norcasia, Department of Caldas, Colombia (5.57269°N, -74.90402°W; elevation 810 m). The distended midsection of the snake indicated that it had recently swallowed a prey. Dissection revealed a juvenile (age class close to I, with only the premolar 4 erupted and the first molar not fully erupted; Martin, 1970) male *P. chrysaеolus* (Rodentia: Echimyidae; Total length 265 mm, TL 122 mm; MHN-UCa Mammals 1780; Figure 1) that was ingested headfirst. The estimated weight of MHN-UCa Mammals 1780 was 80-90 grams based on data of a similar-aged conspecific from the same municipality (MHN-UCa 744). The total prey length corresponded to 30% of the predator SVL, and as such it can be considered a medium size item. This Boyacá spiny rat qualifies as type III prey (*sensu* Cundall and Greene, 2000) which is fusiform or roughly spherical, as well as relatively heavy. This kind of prey requires compensation for both high handling cost and increased gape (Cundall and Greene, 2000).

The Boyacá spiny rat constitutes a new prey item in the diet of *O. petolarius*. Furthermore, it is the first time this endemic rodent is registered as a prey item of snakes, since this rodent species has not been studied in the wild (Patton and Leite, 2015). Therefore, this interaction represents novel information on this poorly known spiny rat. Other spiny rats (*Proechimys*), however, have been registered as prey of snakes in

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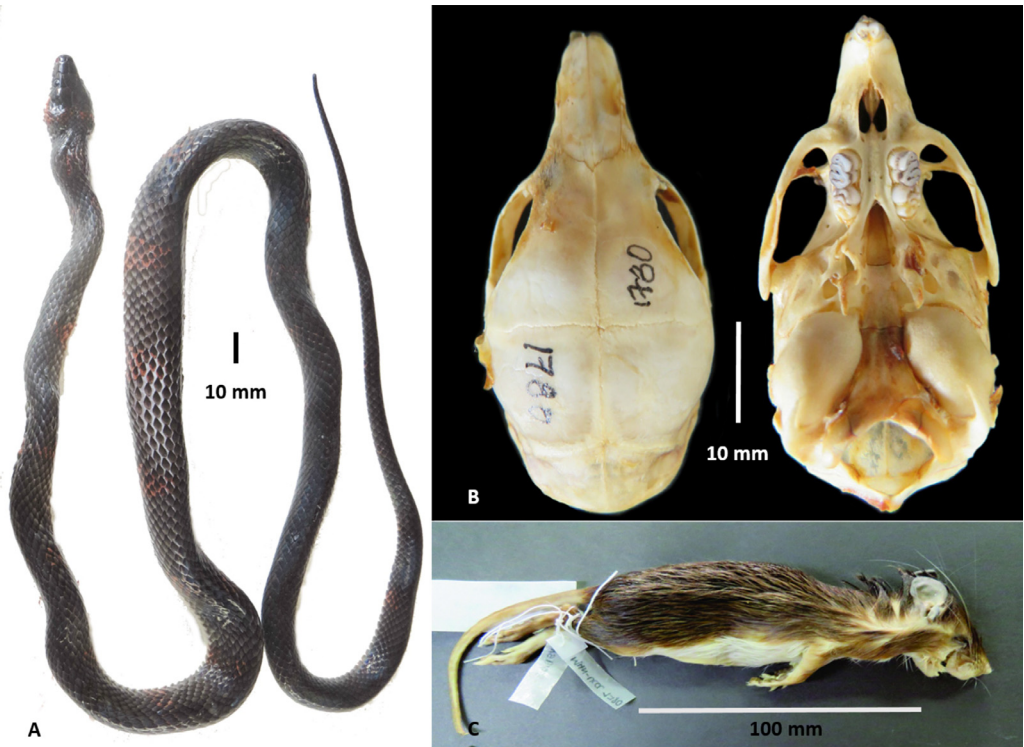


Figure 1. (A) Adult female of *Oxyrhopus petolarius* (SLV 885 mm). (B) Details of the cranium and (C) body of *Proechimys chrysaeolus*.

countries such as Brazil and Venezuela. For example, there is a report of predation of *Proechimys* sp. by *Boa constrictor*, *Epicrates cenchria*, and *Lachesis muta* in Manaus in Brazil (Martins and Oliveira, 1998); *Proechimys gardneri* has been recorded in the diet of *Spilotes pullatus* (Colubridae) in Brazil (de Mendonça *et al.*, 2011), and *Proechimys semispinosus* as a prey of *Bothrops asper* (Viperidae) in Ecuador (Segovia-Núñez *et al.*, 2014).

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