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## NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

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**LERISTA BOUGAINVILLII** (Bougainville's skink): **PREDATION, DIURNAL ACTIVITY.** There are few published records of predators of Australian lizards identified to species level, or of predation by invertebrates, and little on times of activity in the genus of small semi-fossorial lygosomine scincids *Lerista*, the most speciose terrestrial vertebrate genus in Australia. This note documents an instance of diurnal activity and invertebrate predation on *Lerista bougainvillii*. At 15:50 h (Australian Eastern Standard Time), 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1990, the first author was searching through leaf litter and loose grey sandy soil at the base of a low dome granite rock outcrop in remnant dry sclerophyll forest dominated by *Eucalyptus caliginosa* with a mixed heath/grassland understorey on top of a small hill at Lot 10 Kirby Road, Armidale, New South Wales, at 30°28'.397S 151°38'.561E, 1073m elevation (GARMIN GPSII, WGS84 grid), and disturbed an adult *Lerista bougainvillii* with a complete original tail; the *L. bougainvillii* was apparently active in the litter when detected, rather than inactive in a refugium, hence demonstrating diurnal activity. The lizard ran under the loose litter along the base of the rock for ca. 0.5 m and was then seized by a large (ca. 100 mm) adult scolopendrid centipede *Erythmostigma rubripes* situated under the litter adjacent to the rock; this predatory action was noticed due to the violence of the disturbance in the litter and partial emergence of the protagonists to view. Removal of some of the leaf-litter and closer examination revealed that the lizard had been seized by the centipede with its jaws and anterior three pairs of legs in such a manner as to grip the lizard ventrolaterally over the anterior

body and neck region, with more posterior pairs of legs apparently being used to hold and subdue the body and tail of the writhing lizard and maintain a grip on the substrate, although there was no continuous grip maintained with these posterior legs such as that of the anterior three pairs; the lizard had been deeply bitten at least twice in the ventral neck and left ventrolateral axillary region, with a considerable amount of blood-loss evident; tail autotomy did not occur. The lizard was beyond aid and was left with its predator.

This predatory interaction was induced by disturbance of the lizard by the observer, but there can be no doubt as to the predatory response of the centipede, which on this account would appear to be a 'lie-in-wait' rather than an 'active-search' type of predator, at least of small scincids active in litter by day. It is probable that large scolopendrid centipedes are a significant predator of *Lerista* spp. wherever they coincide; they themselves occasionally fall prey to large *Urodacus manicatus* scorpions at the above site (eg., pers obs., earlier the same day at 14:00 h, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1990, a large adult *U. manicatus* was observed consuming a ca. 80 mm *E. rubripes* in a short chamber excavated beneath a 20 cm diameter stone at ca. 70 m south of the above locality).

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