L@CERTIDAE
EIDECHSEN ONLINE

2022 Artikel article 1

Autor / Author:
Félix Manuel Medina, Unidad de Biodiversidad, Consejería de Medio Ambiente, Cabildo Insular de La Palma, Spain
E-Mail: felix.medina@cablapalma.es

Zitat / Citation:
Medina, F.M. (2022): New report on heterospecific coprophagy in the Canary Islands lizard, *Gallotia galloti palmae*. – L@CERTIDAE (Eidechsen online), 2022 [1]: 1–3.

Gallotia galloti palmae. Photo: A. & S. Troidl.

New report on heterospecific coprophagy in the Canary Islands lizard, *Gallotia galloti palmae*

Félix Manuel Medina, 2022

Recently, Mamin & Rodríguez (2021) have reported several cases of heterospecific coprophagy in the endemic genus *Gallotia* from the Canary archipelago as an unusual feeding behaviour in this group. However, most of the cases observed involved the consumption of human excrement by lizards from Gran Canaria (*G. stehlini*) and La Gomera (*G. caesaris gomerae*). Another case was recorded in the north of Tenerife, where a lizard (*G. galloti eisentrauti*) was observed eating the faeces of an unidentified bird species.

This note presents a new case of heterospecific coprophagy in endemic lizard to the Canary Islands. On 4 April 2022, at about 16:30 hours, a young male of La Palma lizard (*Gallotia galloti palmae*) was observed feeding on the faeces of a bird, the red-billed chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), at Roque de los Muchachos, Caldera de Taburiente National Park (28º45‘09.79“ N; 17º52‘57.21“ W), at an altitude of approximately 2,395 m a.s.l.

Young male of La Palma lizard (*Gallotia galloti palmae*) feeding on the faeces of a bird, the red-billed chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*). Photo: Félix M. Medina, 2022.

This is one of the few data available on this rare feeding behaviour in this archipelago. In addition to the cases discussed by Mamin & Rodríguez (2021), in the Canary Islands some observations have been made in the cases of giant lizards of La Gomera (*G. bravoana*) (see Fariña & Martín 2013), Tenerife (*G. intermedia*) (Albaladejo et al. 2015) and El Hierro (*G. simonyi*) (see Siverio & Felipe 2009). In these places, as well as in the high mountain habitat of the island of La Palma, where the consumption of bird faeces has been reported, lizards live in harsh environmental conditions with scarce food resources. This fact could explain this opportunistic foraging activity in order to obtain the necessary nutrients in a habitat with unpredictable and limited food resources (Braxter-Gilbert & Riley 2019). Within lizards, coprophagy has also been suggested as a mechanism for obtaining the gut microbiome, where juveniles eat the faeces of adults of the same species (Braxter-Gilbert 2014).

References

Albaladejo, G., A. Martín, J. Sämann & B. Pfau (2015): *Gallotia intermedia* Barbadillo, Lacomba, Pérez-Mellado, Sancho & López-Jurado, 1999 – Die Rieseneidechse von Teneriffa. – Die Eidechse, **26**(2): 33–48.

Baxter-Gilbert, J. (2014): Heterospecific coprophagy in an Eastern Water Dragon, *Intellagama lesueurii lesueurii* (Gray, 1831). – Herpetofauna, 44: 34–37.

Baxter-Gilbert, J. & J.L. Riley, (2019): *Platysaurus broadleyi* (Augrabies Flat Lizard). Heterospecific coprophagy. – Herpetological Review, 50: 376.

Fariña, B. & A. Martín (2013): Ornitofagia de *Gallotia intemedia* en Guaza (Tenerife, Islas Canarias). – Boletín de la Asociación Herpetológica Española, 24: 43–45.

Mamin, A. & C. Rodríguez (2021): Heterospecific coprophagy within the genus *Gallotia*. – L@certidae (Eidechsen online), 5: 69–73.

Siverio, F. & P. Felipe (2009): Comensalismo entre lagarto gigante de El Hierro (*Gallotia simonyi*) y gaviota patiamarilla (*Larus michahellis*) en el roque Chico de Salmor. – Boletín de la Asociación Herpetológica de España, 20: 40–44.