

## ELAPIDAE

**PSEUDOHAJE GOLDII (Boulenger, 1895); Goldie's Tree Cobra  
DIET**

Bogert (1942, *American Museum Novitates* 1174: 1-9) found the remains of a large arboreal frog in the stomach of a *Pseudohaje goldii* from Cameroon (MCZ 7853). Laurent (1960, *Annales du Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Tervuren* 84: 1-86) recorded a specimen which had eaten a terrestrial anuran, *Bufo sinereus* Bocage, 1866. Isemonger (1962, *Snakes of Africa. Southern, Central and East*. Nelson, Cape Town: pp. i-viii + 1-236) specified that this largely arboreal snake feeds on lizards and small mammals. Fitzsimons (1962, *Snakes of Southern Africa*. MacDonald, London: pp. 1-423) called the *Pseudohaje* the Frog-eating Arboreal Cobras. Roux-Estève (1965, *Cahiers de la Maboké* 3(1): 51-92) mentioned that the stomach of the specimen MNIIN 1964.520 contained a frog, without further indication on its specific identity (we unfortunately could not trace the frog in the MNIIN collections). Pitman (1974, *A Guide to the Snakes of Uganda*. Codicote, Wheldon & Wesley, pp. i-xxii + 1-290) reported that *P. goldii* feeds principally, if not entirely, on amphibians. Courtois and Chippaux (1977 *Serpents venimeux en Côte d'Ivoire*. Institut Pasteur de Côte d'Ivoire: 1-79) stated that it feeds on rodents and birds. Stueckli-Stim (1979, *Snake Report* 72). Herpeto-Verlag, Teuffenthal: pp. vii + 1-650) reported that this snake feeds on amphibians and fishes. Phelps (1984, *Poisonous Snakes*. Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset: pp. i-viii + 1-237) said that its diet consists almost entirely of amphibians and specified that it is an expert swimmer. Although, according to the above-mentioned literature, *P. goldii* species preys on five vertebrate classes, Spawls & Branch (1995, *The Dangerous Snakes of Africa. Natural history. Species directory. Venoms and snakebite*. Blandford, London: pp. 1-192) mentioned that it is known to eat only amphibians. We here add two documented cases of predation on fish and amphibian preys, respectively.

In the stomach of the specimen IRSNB 3759 (deposited on April, 18, 1946), an adult female (SVL 875 mm, tail length 270 mm, ventrals 192, subcaudals 84) collected by Rev. Father Van Woensel in Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Uele, Zobia, we found a fish *Xenomystus nigri* (Günther, 1868) (Osteoglossiformes, Notopteriidae) (IRSNB 22172; standard length from tip of snout to base of caudal fin 83.6 mm). The fish had been ingested head first. This fish species, occurring in the Upper and Lower Guinea basins, the Niger-Tchad basin, Nile basin and Central Congo basin, lives in slow-moving waters and in swamps.

The stomach of the specimen MNIIN 1895.354 (entered in the collections on July, 24, 1895), a female (SVL 595 mm, tail length 174 mm, ventrals 193, subcaudals 84), collected by M. Viancin in Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Haut-Oubanghi, Abiras, Yakomia, contained an adult male *Bufo cf. regularis* Reuss, 1834 (SVL 45.5 mm), a terrestrial anuran, ingested head first.

The compilation of these records illustrates the eclecticism of the food of *P. goldii*. It also shows that this otherwise largely arboreal species has, at least occasionally, both a terrestrial and aquatic behaviour. As *X. nigri* is usually met close to muddy bottoms, this prey may indicate that *P. goldii* is likely to show an active foraging behaviour under water.

We take the opportunity of this note to point out that this species was described in honour of Sir George Taubman Goldie (Boulenger, 1895, *Annals Mag. Nat. Hist.* (6) 16: 34). Therefore the very often encountered common name "Goldie's Tree Cobra" is inappropriate. We suggest to use the English common name "Goldie's Tree Cobra" (see David & Ineich,

**BIBLIOTHÈQUE  
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1999, Les Serpents venimeux du monde: systématique et répartition. *Dumerilia*, Paris, 3: 3-499).

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**PSEUDOHAJE NIGRA (Günther, 1858)  
Black Tree Cobra  
DIET**

Very little is known about the biology and the diet of *Pseudohaje nigra*. Cansdale (1961, *West African Snakes*. West African Nature Handbooks. Longmans, London: pp. i-vi + 1-74) reported that it appears to feed mostly on amphibians, and that a specimen from Ghana kept for several years at London Zoo fed entirely on frogs and toads. According to Hughes (1976, *Bull. I.F.A.N.* (A), 38 (2): 457-466), this Ghanaese specimen was not traced in collections, so that its specific identity could not be checked, as *Pseudohaje goldii* (Boulenger, 1895) also occurs in that country. Spawls & Branch (1995, *The Dangerous Snakes of Africa. Natural history. Species directory. Venoms and snakebite*. Blandford, London: pp. 1-192) stated that it "probably eats amphibians, maybe mammals".

We here present a documented case of predation by *P. nigra* on a bufonid species. The stomach of the specimen MNIIN 1809.1809, an adult male (SVL 1576 mm, tail length 428 mm, ventrals 186, subcaudals 81, dorsal scale rows at midbody 13) collected by Madame Françoise Xavier (Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) in Liberia, Nimba, "grassfield savanna, Nimba research" on July, 17, 1969, contained the partly digested remains of two specimens of *Bufo maculatus* Hallowell, 1854, ingested head first. The stomach also contains a dozen of large black ants and a beetle which were certainly ingested by the toads.

The grassfield savanna at Nimba is a very open environment with few trees. According to Laurent (1972, Amphibiens. Exploration du Parc National des Virunga. *Fondation pour favoriser les Recherches scientifiques en Afrique, Brussels*: 1-125 + pl. 1-XI), *Bufo maculatus* inhabits open environments, like forest clearings, sides of rivers and outskirts of villages.

The predation on a terrestrial amphibian in a grassfield savanna by a tree cobra seems to offer an interesting contribution to the biology of this little known species.

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