

A remarkable case of cannibalism in juvenile Leopard Geckos, *Eublepharis macularius* (Blyth, 1854) (Squamata: Eublepharidae)

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The leopard gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) is a nocturnal ground dwelling gecko distributed in North East Afghanistan, Pakistan and West India, while only a single locality record has been reported from southern Afghanistan (Szczerbak and Golubev, 1996). Due to extensive selective breeding, particularly colour morph breeding, it has become one of the most popular and widely distributed reptiles in captivity. As all members of the family Eublepharidae, *E. macularius* is a predator that predominantly feeds on arthropods, but is also reported to prey occasionally on small vertebrates, including other lizards (Henkel et al., 2000). In this context, the authors report that allospecific lizards being offered as prey items may readily be consumed by *E. macularius*. In eublepharid geckos, at least one case of cannibalism was reported for *Eublepharis hardwickii* (Singh, 1984), while cannibalism is otherwise rather rare in reptiles compared to amphibians (Pough, 2001). Herein, we describe an incidence of cannibalism between two juvenile specimens of *E. macularius*.

Together with a third specimen, both individuals were kept in a layer (45 cm length, 28 cm width and 13 cm height) of a commercial reptile rack-system. All geckos were captive bred by the senior author. Hatch dates varied between late October and middle of November 2010. All three specimens came from different clutches of different parental couples. Despite the fact that certain body proportion differences of the geckos were obvious, no signs of infraspecific stress-related behaviour were observed until the date of the incidence.

The lacking of one specimen was recognized on the 4th of January 2011 while cleaning up the rack-system. Another gecko showed a greatly enlarged girth and

further investigation revealed that the lacking specimen had been entirely swallowed. For further analyses radiographs of the specimens' dorsal- and lateral sides were made, which provided a detailed view on the swallowed gecko inside the abdominal region of its predator (Fig. 1A). For size comparisons the swallowed gecko was removed with a pincette and placed laterally beside its predator (Fig. 1B). The total length of the predator was 13.4 cm (SVL 7.6 cm / TL 5.8 cm), whereas its body mass comprised 8.85g. It has to be noted that the predated and swallowed specimen showed a slight injury on top of its head putatively caused by shedding problems. Since the injury caused no impairment to health, a separation of the specimens was not indicated.

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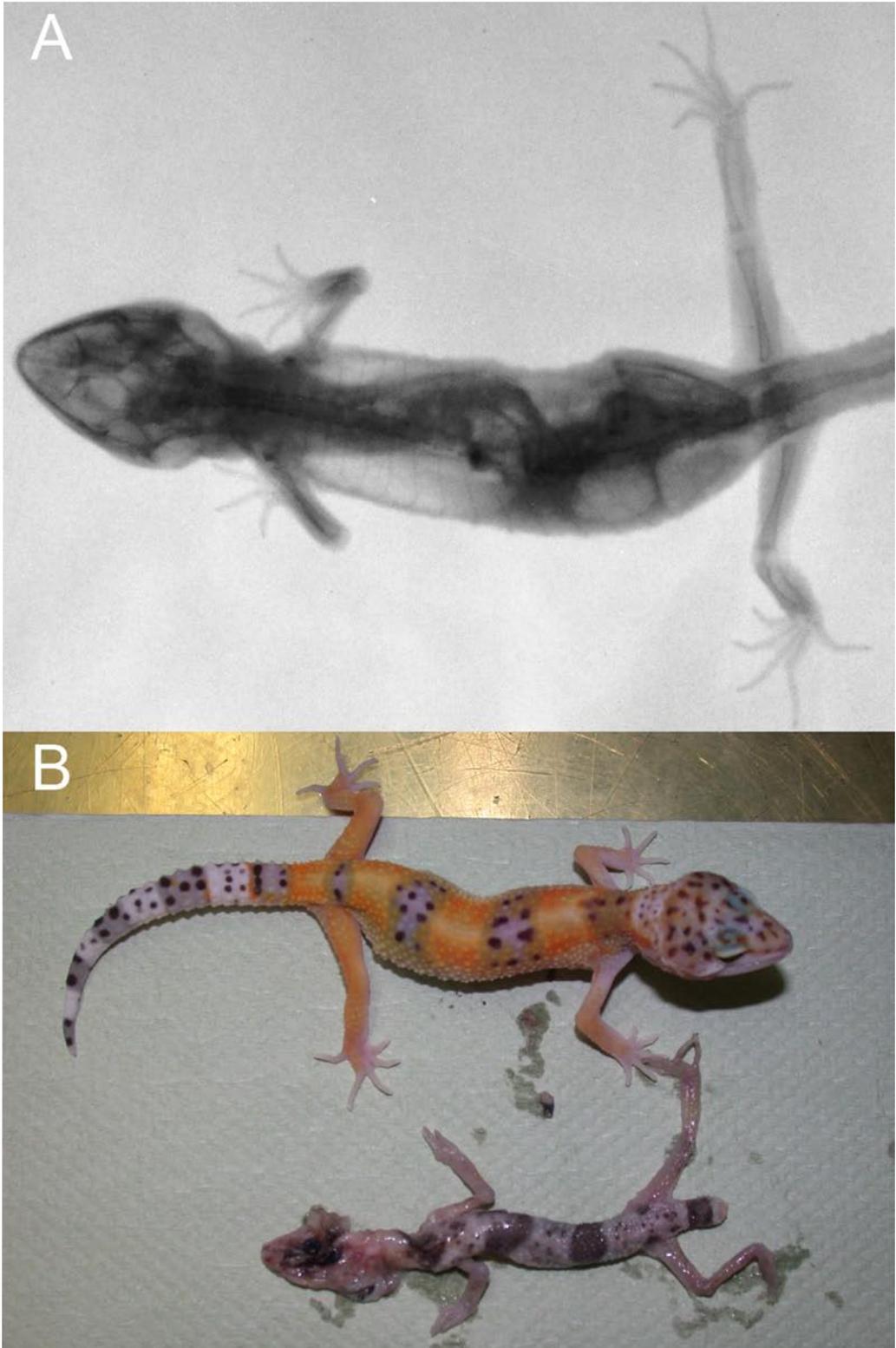


Figure 1. Radiograph (A) and photo (B) showing the proportions of the ingested *Eublepharis macularius* relative to its conspecific predator.