

**Predatory behaviour of Slaty-breasted wood-rail (*Aramides saracura*)
(Gruiformes: Rallidae) on the Wrestler-frog (*Leptodactylus luctator*)
(Anura: Leptodactylidae)**

Comportamento predatório da saracura-do-mato (*Aramides saracura*)
(Gruiforme: Rallidae) sobre a rã-manteiga (*Leptodactylus luctator*)
(Anura: Leptodactylidae)

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Abstract: Although the literature suggests a broad diet, detailed data on the diet and predatory behaviour of *Aramides saracura* (Spix, 1825), particularly involving vertebrates, remain scarce. In this study, we describe the predatory behaviour of a Slaty-breasted Wood-rail preying on an adult of *Leptodactylus luctator* (Hudson, 1892). The event was captured using a Bushnell® camera trap set at ground level. The records reported here demonstrate that *A. saracura* is capable of capturing and subduing amphibians, including larger anuran species. This behaviour highlights the bird's use of its beak as a versatile tool for capturing, shaking, and piercing prey.

Keywords: Diet. Bird. Amphibians. Atlantic Forest. Camera trap.

Resumo: Embora a literatura sugira uma dieta ampla, dados detalhados sobre a dieta e o comportamento predatório de *Aramides saracura* (Spix, 1825), principalmente em relação aos vertebrados, permanecem escassos. Neste estudo, descrevemos o comportamento predatório de *Aramides saracura* ao capturar um indivíduo adulto de *Leptodactylus luctator* (Hudson, 1892). O evento foi registrado por meio de armadilha fotográfica Bushnell®, colocada ao nível do solo. Os registros aqui relatados demonstram que *A. saracura* é capaz de capturar e subjugar anfíbios, incluindo espécies de anuros de grande porte. Esse comportamento destaca o uso do bico como uma ferramenta versátil para capturar, sacudir e perfurar suas presas.

Palavras-chave: Dieta. Aves. Anfíbios. Mata Atlântica. Armadilha fotográfica.

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The Slaty-breasted Wood-rail (*Aramides saracura* Spix, 1825) is a member of the Rallidae family (order Gruiformes) found in southeastern and southern Brazil, eastern Paraguay, and the extreme northeast of Argentina (Sick, 1997; WikiAves, n.d.). *Aramides saracura* is primarily associated with the Atlantic Forest biome but has also been recorded in portions of the *Pampa* biome. It inhabits forested areas associated with swampy environments, streams, ponds, mangroves, or lagoons (Stotz et al., 1996; Sick, 1997; Favretto, 2021). According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, it is classified as Least Concern; however, its population trend is decreasing (BirdLife International, 2025).

Members of the Rallidae family are known for their omnivorous and opportunistic feeding habits, consuming the most available and abundant resources in their environment (Sick, 1997). Species of the genus *Aramides* primarily feed on invertebrates (insects, annelids, and crustaceans) but occasionally consume small vertebrates (amphibians and fish), as well as leaves, fruits, and seeds (Stotz et al., 1996; Sick, 1997; Ramos et al., 2011; Marcon & Vieira, 2017). Although the literature suggests a broad diet, detailed data on the diet and predatory behaviour of *A. saracura*, particularly involving vertebrates, remain scarce.

Here, we describe the predatory behaviour of a Slaty-breasted Wood-rail *Aramides saracura* preying on an adult of a Wrestler Frog *Leptodactylus luctator* (Hudson, 1892). *Leptodactylus luctator* is a species with a wide geographical distribution, occurring from south-central Bahia to Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, as well as in Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia (Frost, 2024). It is a large species, with adults measuring between 7.2 and 12.6 cm. Populations of this species occur in the Atlantic Forest and open formations within the *Pampa*, *Chaco*, and *Pantanal* biomes in Brazil (Magalhães et al., 2020, 2022).

The record was made in a small pond formed around a spring-fed stream within a forest remnant on the campus of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul,

Campus Erechim (27° 54' 46" S, 55° 49' 32" W), in the northern region of Rio Grande do Sul state, southern Brazil. The area is characterized by Mixed Ombrophilous Forest, part of the Atlantic Forest biome, and comprises a fragmented landscape of small forest remnants interspersed with agricultural and cattle farming areas. On 31 October 2024, an individual of *A. saracura* was recorded preying on an adult *L. luctator*. The event was captured using a Bushnell® camera trap set at ground level to monitor medium- to large-sized mammals.

Two 20-second videos documented the predatory behaviour of *A. saracura*, revealing the following sequence of actions: 1) It captured the anuran with its beak, holding it by the left hind limb (Figure 1A). 2) The bird shook the anuran laterally near the bottom of the pond as the prey struggled to escape. After approximately 15 such motions, the anuran ceased its escape attempts, appearing stunned (Figures 1B-1C). 3) The bird released the hind limb, grabbed the anuran by the mid-body, and positioned it on the ground with its belly facing down (Figure 1D). 4) The bird vigorously struck the dorsal region of the amphibian near the head six times with its beak, piercing the skin and ultimately causing the prey's death (Figures 1E-1F). The anuran's ingestion was not captured on video, possibly because it occurred outside the camera's field of view. Previous records in the same area (from 16 to 23 September 2023) documented *A. saracura* foraging in the pond and using its beak to overturn vegetation at the pond.

The diet and feeding behaviour of *A. saracura* are poorly documented. Ramos et al. (2011) reported the consumption of Coleoptera, seeds, and plants, while Lautenschlager et al. (2024) indicated that *A. saracura* occasionally forages in lowland tapir latrines, although the specific food items consumed were not identified. Luciano et al. (2020) described a predation attempt by *A. saracura* on an individual of *Rhinella* sp. Photographic records on WikiAves (n.d.) show *A. saracura* holding small vertebrates in its beak, including a rodent (Moura, 2013;



Figure 1. Predatory behaviour of a Slaty-breasted Wood-rail *Aramides saracura* preying upon a Wrestler-Frog *Leptodactylus luctator*, Northern region of Rio Grande do Sul State, southern Brazil: A) the bird captured the anuran with its beak; B-C) the bird shook the anuran laterally; D) the bird released the hind limb, grabbed the anuran by the mid-body, and positioned it on the ground with its belly facing down; E-F) the bird vigorously struck six times the dorsal region of the amphibian. White circle = *Leptodactylus luctator*. Photos: Authors (2023).

Dias, 2019), an anuran (Luccia, 2010), and a lizard (Costa, 2017; Neder, 2024). The records reported here demonstrates that *A. saracura* is capable of capturing and subduing amphibians, including larger anuran species. This behaviour highlights the bird's use of its beak as a versatile tool for capturing, shaking, and piercing prey. We emphasize the relevance of passive methods of recording fauna as a tool for elucidating little-known aspects of the ecology and natural history of species (see the supplementary files in Hartmann, 2025).

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

P. A. Hartmann contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, writing and review (original draft); M. L. E. Leite contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, writing and review (original draft); M. Hartmann contributed to conceptualization, validation and writing (review and editing).

