

Encounter between a Striped Racer (*Coluber lateralis*) and a Southern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*)

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On 27 August 2014 at around 1300, while conducting wildlife surveys in the Angeles National Forest in Los Angeles County, California, I heard rustling in some leaves up slope from where I was parked. Something fell down to the road cut onto the dirt road (an approximate 25 ft [7.6 m] drop). I recognized it as a snake and a few seconds later saw something else thrashing about. Upon closer inspection I discovered that the snake was a Striped Racer (*Coluber lateralis*) and the other animal was a Southern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*). The lizard was missing its tail (I found it in the leaves later) and the snake was periscoping its head searching for its prey item. The tail was likely lost during the skirmish above. The snake lunged forward and grabbed the lizard, but at the same time the lizard opened its mouth and latched onto the snake's bottom jaw. The snake, with lizard attached, then crossed the dirt road and rested on a soil berm. Both reptiles remained locked together with little further struggle and remained that way until 1500,

when I had to leave. I checked the area the following morning and no sign of either species could be found, however the lizard tail piece was still present.

UTM of encounter: 11S 0405946 3789288; elevation 3545 ft (1080 m). Approximate length of snake: 37 inches (~94 cm); Approximate length of lizard—snout to tail termination: 5 inches (~12 cm). Detached tail length: 4 inches (~10 cm). Temperature in broken shade: 82°F (28°C).

Although Striped Racers have been previously documented predating on Southern Alligator Lizards (Cunningham 1959), photo-documentation of the attempted event is noteworthy.

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Literature Cited

Cunningham, J.D. 1959. Reproduction and food of some California snakes. *Herpetologica* 15:17–19.

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Photo sequence of the encounter between a Striped Racer (*Coluber lateralis*) and Southern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*). All photos by Howard Clark.