

# Photographic Documentation of Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia sila*) Reproductive Behaviors

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The Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia sila*; Stejneger, 1890) is federally and California state-listed as “endangered” and has been protected since the 1960s. It is a medium-sized predatory lizard native to the San Joaquin Valley of California (Hammerson 2007) with an average snout to vent length of 87 to 120 mm and an average mass of 30 to 37 g (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1998). The species typically occupies arid grasslands, sandy washes, alkali flats and sinks, and salt bush (*Atriplex*) scrub habitats (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1998). The lizard consumes insect prey, including beetles and other large insects, as well as lizards and other small vertebrate prey. They occupy the burrows of arid-adapted mammals such as kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys*) and antelope squirrels (*Ammospermophilus*).

Breeding activity begins within a month of emergence from dormancy and lasts from April to June. During this period, and for a month or more afterward, the adults are often seen in pairs and frequently occupy the same burrow systems (Montanucci 1965, Germano and Williams 1994).

During the high Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard activity period (spring time and into the summer), we visit a reference population on the Pixley National Wildlife Refuge in Tulare County, CA. We take note of the number of lizards observed and any significant behaviors. On 6 May 2022, we observed a total of 8 lizards on our survey route and noticed two lizards engaging in what appeared to be reproductive behaviors. We observed a lizard aggressively pursuing another lizard and during a brief moment, the aggressive lizard was able to pin down another lizard by holding on to the skin of the throat and generally holding the lizard down with all four limbs. We surmised from the photographic evidence that the aggressive lizard was a male and the lizard

being pursued was female. The female lizard did not appear to be reproductively receptive of the male and continually attempted to slide out from under the male and otherwise attempted to escape.

Photographic documentation of Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard reproductive behaviors is not common and herein we provide 8 photos of these behaviors and hope our observations inspire others to further investigate the reproductive ecology of the Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizard.

## Literature Cited

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**Photo 1.** Behavioral interactions between two Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizards. Note the finger digits in the mouth of the top lizard.





**Photo 3.** Additional repositioning and throat latching behavior. **Photo 4.** Note here that the bottom lizard is covering the eyes of the top lizard.



**Photo 5.** Additional repositioning and throat latching behavior. **Photo 6.** Additional struggling behavior exhibited by the bottom lizard.



**Photo 7.** A few seconds after this photo the bottom lizard escaped. **Photo 8.** Top lizard after bottom lizard escaped. Note the lifting of the body for optimizing visual searching of nearby lizards.



**Photos A and B.** Other Blunt-nosed Leopard Lizards in the vicinity independent of the lizards photographed in images 1-8. Click link for a video [https://youtu.be/JBHQE\\_fZGxs](https://youtu.be/JBHQE_fZGxs) of the interaction.