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Consumo de frutos de *Bactris gasipaes* por *Caracara plancus* en el municipio de Brasiléia, suroeste de la Amazonía, Brasil

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Abstract

The Southern Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) is a South American falconid that over the years has been colonizing open areas of the Southwestern Amazon. Regarding food habits, it is considered an opportunistic/generalist species. *Caracara plancus* has a varied diet, composed of animal protein, including carcasses. It also consumes plants, although this behavior appears less frequently in the scientific literature. Here we present a report of a Southern Caracara feeding on peach-palm fruits (*Bactris gasipaes*) in the rural area of Brasiléia, state of Acre, Brazil. The peach-palm tree is a common species, cultivated for obtaining heart of palm ("palmitos") and fruits for consumption and regional marketing. Besides being a new food item in the Southern Caracara diet, the observed behavior indicates that *C. plancus* can potentially become a plague to the regional culture of peach-palm.

Resumen

El caracara carancho (*Caracara plancus*) es una especie de falcónido sudamericano que ha venido colonizando áreas abiertas del suroeste de la Amazonia. Presenta un hábito alimenticio considerado como oportunista/generalista; su alimentación es variada, compuesta básicamente de proteína animal; incluyendo carcasas. El Caracara carancho también consume materia vegetal; aunque este comportamiento aparezca con menos frecuencia en la literatura científica. Aquí reportamos un individuo de Caracara carancho alimentado de frutos de chontaduro (*Bactris gasipaes*) en la zona rural de la ciudad de Brasiléia; Estado de Acre; Brazil. El chontaduro es una especie cultivada comúnmente para la obtención de palmitos y frutos para consumo y comercialización regional. El presente reporte, además de ser un nuevo ítem alimentario para el *C. plancus*, también sugiere que *C. plancus* podría convertirse en una plaga para el cultivo regional del chontaduro.



Figure 1 Interaction of the Southern Caracara (*Caracara plancus*) vs peach-palm (*Bactris gasipaes*) in the southwest of the Brazilian Amazon (Acre State). A – Individual perched in the bunch; and B – the same individual feeding on the pulp of a unripe fruit.

The Southern Caracara (*Caracara plancus* (J. F. Miller, 1777)) occurs in South America from northern Peru until Argentina (Bierregaard & Marks 2018). It is a common species in the Northeast and Central and Southern regions of Brazil. Although occupying open areas in all Brazilian biomes the Southern Caracara is less common in the Amazon where its congener species; the Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*); occurs (Sick 1997, Hoyo et al. 2018). However; it has been gradually expanding its geographical distribution in Brazil; toward the north; occupying deforested areas in the Amazon along the major rivers and roads in the region (Guilherme & Czaban 2015). Regarding the diet; the Southern Caracara is an opportunistic/generalist species (Sazima 2007, Bierregaard & Marks 2018). It feeds on dead animals (carcasses) (Sazima 2007) but can also prey live animals; including invertebrates and vertebrates; such as mollusks; insects; fish; newborn turtles; amphibians; birds and mammals (Rodríguez-Estrella & Rodríguez 1997, Sick 1997, Travaini et al. 2001, Vargas & Bó 2007).

On February 27, 2015 at 06H:28min a.m; a young individual of *C. plancus* was observed feeding on *Bactris gasipaes* Kunth fruits in a peach-palm culture located in a side road adjacent to the BR-319; locally known as "Ramal do 13"; in the rural zone of Brasiléia city; near the Brazil and Bolivia border (10°55'20.8"S; 68°51'18.9"W). The bird; which was in a group of four individuals; flew and perched at the base of a bunch of peach palm (Figure 1A). Then; began pecking and tearing off pieces from the mesocarp of an unripe fruit (Figure 1B). Around 15 minutes this individual fed on the pulp of the fruit until noticing my presence and fly to a distant tree.

Studies have shown that; proportionally; the Southern Caracara feeds more on animals than plants (Rodríguez-Estrella & Rodríguez 1997, Sazima 2007; Travaini et al. 2001, Vargas & Bó 2007). However, reports of the Southern Caracara ingesting fruits are not uncommon (Sick 1997). Hempel (1949) observed this species in

peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*) culture; and after examining the stomach content of an individual; he detected the presence of the seed of this herbaceous plant. Guimarães and Galetti (2004) reported the Southern Caracara feeding and dispersing fruits of the urucuri-palm (*Attalea phalerata*) in Pantanal. Besides the plants already reported; a review of the plant species consumed by *C. plancus* showed fruits of palm *Elaeis* sp.; coconuts and "beans" (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) (Guimarães & Galetti 2004). Therefore; this is the first report of *C. plancus* using *Bactris gasipaes* as a food resource.

The peach-palm; known in Portuguese as "pupunha;" is a palm tree typical of the Amazon; domesticated by pre-Columbian indigenous people from Peru and Bolivia (Clement 1987, Lorenzi et al. 2010). Nowadays it is cultivated for commercial purposes in different regions of Brazil. From this tree; one can consume the heart of palm (palmito) and also the fruits (Clement & Santos 2002). The pulp of the fruit is rich in lipids and carotenoids (Carvalho et al. 2013). By the damage observed in other fruits of the bunch (Figure 1); it is possible to conclude that this individual and probably others of the group had been visiting this peach-palm tree in other opportunities. While feeding on the pulp; the bird damages the fruit making it useless for commercial purpose or human consumption. This means that this invasive and newly arrived species in the region (DeLuca 2012, Guilherme & Czaban 2015, Guilherme 2016); can potentially cause damage to small producers who cultivate the peach-palm for subsistence; food production or to sell the fruits *in natura* at fairs and trades of the surrounding cities.

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Ethics / legal aspects:

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