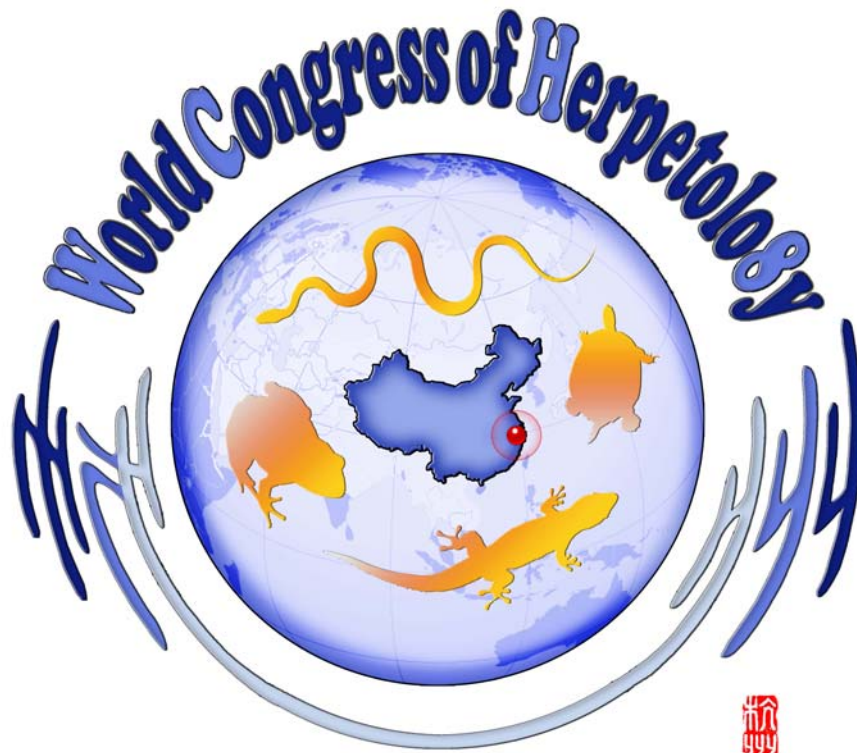


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Behavioural responses of reptiles to visitors of protected areas in Costa Rica

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Tourists can have a strong impact on the behaviour of wild animals, modifying foraging strategies, diet and habitat use, increasing stress, and altering communication and escaping behaviour. Such behavioural changes have been documented for several taxa, although less commonly studied in reptiles. We aim to determine whether reptiles in protected areas with different visitation frequency modify their escaping behaviour. We propose that sites with high visitation frequency will cause animals to habituate to human presence, making them less wary to approaching humans. We visited six sites, three on the Caribbean coast and three on the Pacific coast. Each site has been visited at least twice, although two more visits are contemplated to complete data collection. We recorded the following data for each individual observed: Species, Sex/Age class, Flight initiation distance (FID), Flight distance, and Distance to a refuge. We have recorded data for 286 individuals of 19 species of reptiles, with most observations based on *Anolis* and *Ameiva*. Our preliminary analysis shows that a significant shorter FID has been detected at one site with high visitation frequency, although no differences have been observed at the other sites. Similarly, flight distance was significantly shorter at one site with low visitation frequency. This suggests that reptiles, specifically lizards, also suffer, as well as better known examples such as mammals, alterations in their escaping behaviour.

Keywords: habituation, Costa Rica, escaping behaviour, lizards, tourism.