

Pygmy Owl attacks California Quail.—On 27 July 1968 in an unmanaged prune orchard 9 miles northeast of Gilroy, Santa Clara County, California, I noticed a dog playfully chasing a Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma grinnelli*) which was gripping the head of a live immature female California Quail (*Lophortyx californicus*). When I picked them up, the owl seemed unconcerned and continued to grip and bite at the head of the quail during a 45-minute ride home. A superficial examination of the quail for disease or deformities that might have elicited the attack was negative. Once home I gave the same quail to the owl, which again seized it by the head and killed it (Figure 1).

According to Bent (U. S. Natl. Mus., Bull. 170: 401-435, 1938), the food of the Pygmy Owl consists mainly of smaller birds, mammals, insects, also reptiles and amphibians, but the species may attack birds almost twice its own size, such as the Gambel's Quail (*L. gambelii*) Kimball (Condor, 27: 209-210, 1925) reports a Pygmy Owl (*G. g. pinicola*) killing in Arizona. The weight of the California Quail reported here was 119.0 g, nearly 2.3 times that of the Pygmy Owl, 52.0 g. Perhaps the immaturity of owl or prey and the owl's degree of hunger and aggressiveness may encourage it to attack such large prey. For their critical and insightful suggestions, I thank Oliver P. Pearson and Ned K. Johnson.—THOMAS G. BALGOOVEN, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.*



Figure 1. Pygmy Owl and prey California Quail.