

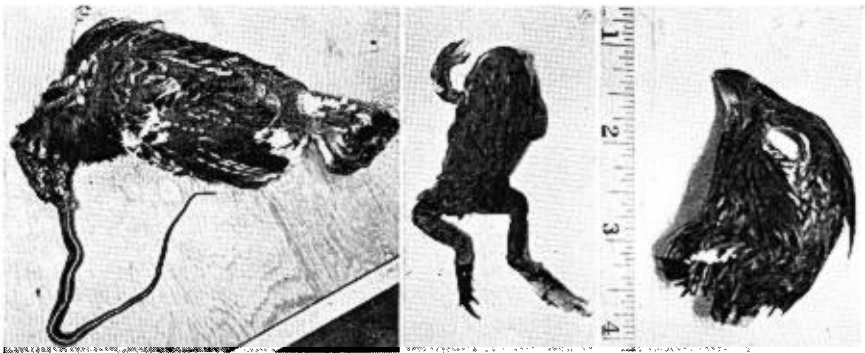
Amphibians and snakes as Ruffed Grouse food.—In the extensive literature pertaining to the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) there are few references to the species' eating of snakes and amphibians. Bump *et al.* (1947. "The Ruffed Grouse," pp. 191-192), Petrides (1949. *Wilson Bulletin*, 61: 49), and Findley (1950. *ibid.*, 62: 133) have reported recent records of grouse eating Common Garter Snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) in New York, Michigan, and Minnesota, respectively. Chaddock (1940. "Report of the Ruffed Grouse, Pinnated Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse Crop Investigation," Wisconsin Conservation Department mimeographed bulletin) has reported finding a garter snake and a frog (*Rana* sp.), respectively, in the crops of two Ruffed Grouse shot in northern Wisconsin in the fall of 1939. Scott (1947. *Auk*, 64: 140) has reported finding a small Red-bellied Snake (*Storeria occipitomaculata*) in the crop of a Ruffed Grouse collected in Taylor County, Wisconsin, in October, 1942.

We wish to publish here two more interesting records for Wisconsin which came to light in 1950 during our Ruffed Grouse population studies for the Pittman-Robertson grouse research project (13-R) of the Wisconsin Conservation Department. A Ruffed Grouse collected September 20, 1950, in Forest County, Wisconsin, had an American Toad (*Bufo americanus*) in its crop. The toad was 96 mm. long (with legs extended), weighed 9.6 grams, and had been swallowed whole. The grouse, a male, weighed 552 grams, and showed no ill effects, either in behavior or in physical condition, from eating the toad. The postjuvinal wing-molt stage indicated that the bird was 13 weeks old. To the best of our knowledge no one has heretofore reported the toad as Ruffed Grouse food.

In late October, 1950, Harry Rousch of Webster, Wisconsin, while hunting in Burnett County, happened upon a Ruffed Grouse which was trying to swallow a large garter snake. The grouse flushed with the snake dangling from its mouth, and Rousch shot the bird on the wing. The grouse and half-swallowed snake were forwarded to us for examination. The grouse was an immature male. The snake was 23 inches long. About ten inches of it had been swallowed. Its head had been lacerated, presumably by the grouse.

A third record, previously unpublished, concerns a Ruffed Grouse shot by Wendt in Oneida County, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1942, that had eaten whole a small garter snake. No measurements of either the bird or snake were recorded.

It is our belief, based on Wisconsin records, that Ruffed Grouse in all areas eat snakes and amphibians more often than the literature indicates. The fact that most snakes reported



Left: Ruffed Grouse (shot on the wing in Burnett County, Wisconsin, in October, 1950) with half-swallowed garter snake. Right: Toad and head of Ruffed Grouse which swallowed it. Forest County, Wisconsin, September 20, 1950. Photographs by Arthur Doll.

as grouse food have been garter snakes probably reflects the abundance and availability of that species rather than the grouse's preference for it over other snakes. There is also the strong probability that absence of spring and summer records of snake- and amphibian-consumption by grouse indicates not an autumnal preference or need for food of this sort but rather a lack of investigation of grouse specimens at any season aside from fall hunting seasons.—JAMES B. HALE AND ROBERT F. WENDT, *Wisconsin Conservation Department, Madison*.

Barn Owl in Montana.—On June 9, 1950, I found a dead Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) under a bridge approximately one half mile south of 20-Mile Ranger Station, near Ashland, Powder River County, Montana. The carcass was about a foot and a half from the ground, hanging by one wing from a large splinter projecting from one of the principal vertical supports of the bridge. The splinter was between the bones and tendons of the second joint. The bird apparently had impaled itself while stooping to catch prey. The specimen was so badly decomposed that only the head and feet were saved. These are now in the collection of Montana State College.

On the ground beneath the bridge I found many rodent skulls. A later examination (June 28) of the cubbies formed by the beams at either end of the bridge disclosed a two- to three-inch layer of matted bones, droppings, pellets, and rodent skulls. Among this debris were the remains of a male Sparrow Hawk (*Falco sparverius*), but of course I had no way of knowing how that bird had met its death. Although I spent two months in the immediate vicinity of the bridge in the summer of 1950, and passed it several times a day, I never saw a living owl of any sort there. Two Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) lived in the vicinity, however, and these were seen by various persons from time to time.

The above-discussed record seems to be the first for the Barn Owl in Montana. Neither A. A. Saunders (1921. "A Distributional List of the Birds of Montana," *Cooper Orn. Club. Pac. Coast Avif.* 14) nor Harlow B. Mills (1945. "Some Montana Birds. Their Relationship to Insects and Rodents," *Montana State College Agric. Extension Service Bull.* 229) mention the species. I wish to thank Dr. Gustav A. Swanson for pointing out to me the value of this record.—ROBERT L. ENG, *Department of Zoology and Entomology, Montana State College, Bozeman*.

A nest of *Chaetura vauxi richmondi* in central Honduras.—On July 3, 1948, near the summit of Cerro Uyuca (at an altitude of 6200 feet) in the Department of Francisco Morazán, central Honduras, I noticed a small swift entering an opening twenty to thirty feet above ground in the bole of an immense avocado tree (*Persea* sp.). The upper 2000 feet of this mountain is clothed with the "hardwood cloud forest" described by Carr (1950. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 94: 582). The opening into which the swift disappeared was about eighteen inches in diameter. All attempts to flush the bird from the cavity were unsuccessful. On climbing to the opening, I heard faint chirpings and flutterings inside and discovered that the cavity extended to the ground.

On July 5 I returned to the peak. The opening to the cavity was covered, and two local laborers cut a hole large enough to allow me to crawl into the tree near its base. Finding that I could stand up and move about, I located the swift nest about eighteen feet above ground-level. The adult swifts were flying about within the cavity. The nest contained three young birds about four days old. The nest was very similar to that of the Chimney Swift (*C. pelagica*) in shape and structure—a half-cup made of short lengths of small dead twigs glued together. It was fastened to the vertical wall of the tree and measured approximately 10 by 6 cm. by 4 cm. deep. Both adults escaped from the cavity, but I collected the male later as he flew about the tree.

Dr. George M. Sutton has identified this specimen (J. C. D. Jr. No. 456) as *C. v. richmondi*