

**Chuck-Will's-Widow in Connecticut.**—On 26 June 1969 I found a Chuck-Will's-Widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) dead on a road near Stoney Creek, New Haven County, Connecticut. This is the second specimen record of this species for Connecticut. The first specimen was found in New Haven, 10 miles west of Stoney Creek, on 17 May 1889 (Sage and Bishop, *The birds of Connecticut*, Connecticut Geol. and Nat. Hist. Survey, Hartford 1913). The bird is now in the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University (No. 85435).

The bird was an adult female with the ovary slightly enlarged (five ova measured 2 mm in diameter) and it had little fat. It showed no body or tail molt but the first three primary flight feathers on each wing were new. The stomach was filled with 68 small white geometrid moths (*Ennomos subsignarius*) and six June beetles (*Phyllorhaga* sp.). The stomach contents reflect the unusually high population peak of this geometrid moth that occurred in Connecticut during late June.—EUGENE S. MORTON, *Department of Biology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, (Present address: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Box 2072, Balboa, Canal Zone), 12 August 1969.*

**Predation of a Black Rat Snake on Yellow-shafted Flicker Nestlings.**—At 18:45 on 10 June 1968, five miles north of Burlington, Des Moines County, Iowa, I observed the predation of a black rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*) on a nest of half-grown Yellow-shafted Flickers (*Colaptes auratus*). Predation of rat snakes on birds is not unusual and predation on nestling woodpeckers has been previously mentioned (Nolan, *Wilson Bull.*, 71:381-382, 1959; Noland, *The Kentucky Warbler*, 36:29-30, 1960; Stickel, *Auk*, 79:118-119, 1962). Of particular interest in this case is the extraordinary climbing ability exhibited by this snake and the apparent passivity with which the adult bird let its nest be robbed.

The nest tree, a dead American elm (*Ulmus americana*) approximately four feet in diameter at breast height, had no bark and was worn quite smooth by weather. There were no branches on the tree between the ground and the nest branch, though the trunk was much convoluted near the base. There were no evident holes other than the nest hole and the tree did not appear to be hollow. The nest was about 20 feet above the ground in a branch extending southeast from the trunk at a 45 degree angle. At the nest entrance the diameter of the limb was approximately 15 inches. The only apparent way for the snake to have reached the nest was by climbing the smooth, featureless surface of the tree.

When first observed, the snake was in the nest with only the last eight inches of tail extending from the hole. A female flicker, presumably one of the parent birds, was perched quietly in a second dead elm 30 yards away in line of sight with the nest hole. This bird remained in its position for 45 minutes before it quietly left, never approaching the nest tree.

About five minutes after I discovered the nest the snake's head appeared in the hole with a young flicker in its mouth. The bird, being swallowed tail first, was about half the size of an adult, had contour feathers just emerging from their sheaths, and appeared to have just opened its eyes. The nestling was lifeless. At first staying tight against the surface of the limb, the snake slowly began weaving back and forth and slightly up and down from one side of the limb to the other. Two large swollen areas evidenced previous victims, presumably other flicker nestlings. The weaving and contortions about the nest hole appeared to be aiding in the swallowing of the third victim, though 20 minutes later the head and one wing still protruded from the snake's mouth. At this

point the snake withdrew into the hole (19:15) and did not emerge while it was still light enough to observe.

Black rat snakes are noted for their climbing ability (Johnston and Gaunt, Kansas Ornithol. Soc. Bull., 12:22-23, 1961; Fitch, Copeia, 1963:649-658, 1963) and Surface (Bull. Div. Zool., Pennsylvania State Dept. Agr., 4:113-208, 1906) found 30 per cent and Fitch (op. cit.) found 23 per cent of black rat snake food consists of birds or their eggs. Though normally adult birds would be difficult prey for a snake, an incubating or brooding adult, as well as nestlings and eggs, would be easier prey. A hole-nesting bird such as a woodpecker, while having a safer nest in many respects and an easier nest to defend, has no avenue for escape if surprised by an arboreal snake. Birds are not totally helpless in the face of such an adversary, and, may at times be successful in repelling the predator. Boone (1960. Masters Thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas) observed a male Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Centurus carolinus*) defending its nest against a black rat snake. Nolan (op. cit.) and Noland (op. cit.) describe possibly fatal attacks on arboreal snakes by nesting Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*). Fitch (op. cit.) mentions that Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) have also been seen attacking black rat snakes.

A second defense against arboreal snakes, or at least a distraction for the snake is a mobbing reaction by birds. Once a snake has been observed by a bird, cries of alarm generally attract other birds. Fitch (op. cit.) reported such aggregations involving several species.

In the case of the Yellow-shafted Flicker, there was no evidence of nest defense or mobbing, but either or both may have occurred before the snake reached the hole. Though the snake was completely hidden within the nest hole from 19:15 to dusk, knowledge of the snake's presence or fright from an earlier encounter with the snake apparently kept the flicker from returning to the nest to feed or brood its young.—JEROME A. JACKSON, *Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 5 May 1969. (Present address: Dept. of Zoology, Mississippi State University, State College, Mississippi 39762.)*

**Wing flashing in a Brown Thrasher and Catbird.**—Wing flashing has been frequently reported for Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*) and occasionally for other Mimidae (Whitaker, Wilson Bull., 69:361, 1957; Batts, Auk, 79:112, 1962; Horwich, Wilson Bull., 77:264, 1965; Ricklefs, Wilson Bull., 78:47, 1966). Horwich stated that this behavior is a response to a strange situation or potential predator. This has been supported by Hicks (Auk, 72:296, 1955) who observed wing-flashing by a Mockingbird in response to a blacksnake (*Coluber constrictor*) and by Selander and Hunter (Wilson Bull., 72:341, 1960) in response to a Screech Owl (*Otus asio*).

On 29 June 1969 a Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) was first seen as it scolded a 32-inch long buttermilk snake (*Coluber constrictor anthicus*) in Nacogdoches County, Texas. Within 3 minutes six Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), three Cardinals (*Richmondia cardinalis*), two Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*), and two Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) joined the Brown Thrasher. The Brown Thrasher extended its wings outward and slightly upward at the rate of once every 14 seconds. The extension was accomplished with a slight hitch when the wings were two-thirds extended. The tail was spread and held straight out behind.

The two Catbirds both spread their tail and extended their wings while hopping around excitedly near the Brown Thrasher. Both Catbirds extended their wings in a