

food availability. Mockingbirds are primarily insectivorous in May, and vegetarians in December and January (Horwich, Wilson Bull. 77:264–281, 1965). Red-winged Blackbirds show similar behavior (Alcock 1973). Thus, in juveniles and young adults, a period of exploratory feeding combined with some tolerance to unpleasant-tasting prey probably gives them familiarity with many possible food types and enables them to learn to avoid many poisonous foods.

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Bull snake kills and attempts to eat Long-eared Owl nestlings—On 22 June 1976, we were attracted by loud shrieks to a dense stand of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) in Big Horn County, Montana. There we saw a pair of Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) hovering over their nest located 7.4 m up in a ponderosa pine. During the next several minutes, we saw a 1-m long bull snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*) kill and attempt to swallow 2 owlets. However, the snake seemingly found them too large to swallow and so rejected them. The adult owls alternately fluttered above the nest and perched 3–10 m away for 20 min and then left the area. Neither adult approached closer to the snake than 1 m, and the snake did not visibly respond to their presence. The snake remained in the nest, but was only partly visible, until we left 1 h after the start of this observation. Examination of the nest early the next morning revealed 4 dead 15- to 18-day-old owlets. Feather disturbance suggested all 4 had been partially swallowed headfirst and then rejected.

On 3 June 1977, at another Long-eared Owl nest in Big Horn County, we found 2 dead 13- to 16-day-old owlets. One owlet was found dead in the nest 6.8 m up in a ponderosa pine and the other at the base of the nest tree. Appearance of both owlets was similar to those found the previous year, indicating attempted snake predation.

Rat snakes (*Elaphe* sp.) and racers (*Coluber* sp.), as well as bull snakes, have frequently been reported as predators of birds, their eggs and young (Uhler et al., Trans. N. Am. Wildl. Conf. 4:605–622, 1939; Imler, J. Wildl. Manage. 9:265–273, 1945; Laskey, Wilson Bull. 58:217–218, 1946; Clapp and Abbott, Wilson Bull. 78:321, 1966; Jackson, Wilson Bull. 82:329–330, 1970; Niedrach, Wilson Bull. 83:317–318, 1971; Best, Condor 79:509, 1977). Although Strange, Cunningham and Goertz, (J. Wildl. Manage. 35:786–793, 1971) and Kalmbach (Trans. N. Am. Wildl. Conf. 4:591–604, 1939) reported snake predation on Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) and medium sized ground nesters, most available information relates to predation on small species which are probably incapable of effective defense against snake-sized predators. The killing of a bull snake by Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) (Beasom and Pattee, Wilson Bull. 87:281–282, 1975) is the only report we could find of an encounter between a snake and a more formidable bird than the owls. Our report is apparently the first of snake predation on a raptorial species.—STEVEN C. AMSTRUP AND TERRENCE P. McEENEANEY, *Fish and Wildlife Service, P. O. Box 916, Sheridan, Wyoming 82801. Accepted 28 July 1979.*