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Eastern coachwhip predation on nestling Blue Jays.—Snakes are considered major predators of birds' eggs and young (Skutch 1976) but the act of predation is so brief that it usually is not witnessed and the identity of the predator remains unknown. Thus this record of eastern coachwhip (*Masticophis f. flagellum*) predation on nestling Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) at a nest 5 km south of Lake Placid, Highlands County, Florida, seems worthy of note.

At 1600 on 24 June 1979, a hot sunny day, Blue Jay alarm calls in my back yard led me to discover a 2 m eastern coachwhip at a nest 4 m high in a 8 m heavily-branched sand pine (*Pinus clausa*). A bulge in the snake's body about 0.3 m from the head indicated that probably at least one nestling had been eaten before I arrived. I watched the snake remove two well-feathered nestlings (primaries ca. 2-3 in. long), one by one, keeping its head concealed within the densely-needled branch as it swallowed between visits to the nest. The four adult Blue Jays and four Scrub Jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) scolding in the tree repeatedly struck the snake's body with their bills and occasionally pulled at its tail. However, these attacks did not appear to bother the snake. After emptying the nest, the snake dropped from branch to branch almost straight down to the ground, where it crawled a short distance to coil under a dense saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*). When the snake was thus concealed only two Blue Jays continued to scold it; the other jays departed. Two Mockingbirds (*Mimus polyglottos*), a House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), a male Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*), and a male Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) were attracted to the tree by the scolding jays but did not attack the snake and left the tree when the snake left.

Nicholson (1936) commented that many fledgling Blue Jays in Florida "fall easy prey to cats and various snakes" perhaps based in part on his (1929) record of black racer (*Coluber constrictor*) predation on a fledgling Blue Jay.

The diurnal coachwhip, active and agile, is considered an excellent climber (Ditmars 1946). Prey includes mammals, lizards and snakes, as well as "birds and (their) eggs" (Ditmars 1946, Wright and Wright 1957, Collins 1974, Mount 1975). Birds recorded as prey of this species include "a young dove" (Van Denburg 1922), nestling (Westcott 1970) and juvenile (Webber 1980) Scrub Jays, nestling Brown-headed Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*, (Carpenter 1958), nestling House Finches, *Carpodacus mexicanus*, (Miller and Stebbins 1964) and Savannah Sparrow, *Passerculus sandwichensis*, (Hamilton and Pollack 1957).

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Eastern coachwhip predation on juvenile Scrub Jays.—On two successive days in mid-June 1979 I saw eastern coachwhips (*Masticophis f. flagellum*) attack juvenile Florida Scrub Jays (*Aphelocoma c. coerulescens*) at the Archbold Biological Station, 13 km south of Lake Placid, Highlands County, Florida.

Both victims were members of a family group that occupies a territory composed chiefly of sparse scrubby oaks (*Quercus* spp.) 1-2 m high, palmettos (*Serenoa repens*, *Sabal etonia*), and scattered slash pines (*Pinus elliotii*). At the time of the predation this group consisted of: a breeding pair; a male and a female yearling helper; the two juveniles (J1 and J2), about two months out of the nest and strong fliers with full-length tails; and two non-flying fledglings about one week out of the nest. See Woolfenden (1973) and Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick (1978) for details of Florida Scrub Jay habitat and family structure.

The first attack occurred on 17 June. At 1733, as I watched the unattended fledglings, vigorous scolding came from other members of the family 50 m away in a dry grassy pond. Upon arrival about 20 sec. later I found J1 on the ground in the grip of a 2 m coachwhip (snake #1). The snake had its mouth around the bird's chest. J1 lay on its side with its bill open and its tongue moving in and out as if gasping for breath. In the next 12 min J1 tried unsuccessfully to break away several times, by jerking its body and flapping its wings. Occasionally it uttered some muffled distress screams. Twice in this time, though not in direct response to the jay's struggles, the snake released its grip on the bird and then immediately struck sharply at it, seizing it as before. The snake never coiled around the bird.

When I arrived, the male breeder and male yearling were scolding the snake from about 70 cm away, while J2 watched silently from a distance of 1.5 m. No other members of the family were present during the entire incident. At 1736 the male breeder suddenly flew directly to the fledglings and perched within 15 cm of them, inspecting them, as though to check their condition and be prepared to defend them. One minute later the male yearling stopped scolding and joined the male breeder near the fledglings, while J2 flew 20 m away to perch quietly in a tree.

At 1745 J1 relaxed and closed its eyes, presumably dead. During the next 15 min the snake worked at swallowing the bird head first. Several times the snake draped part of its body over the bird to assist in pushing it into its mouth. During this period the male breeder and male yearling returned to scold the snake for about one min, again remaining about 70 cm from it. They then flew more than 70 m away, not to return. At no time did the snake make any apparent response to the jays' mobbing, or to my presence, 1.5 m away. By 1800 the snake had swallowed J1 as far as the base of the wings. I then captured the snake for