

VIRGINIA VALERIAE VALERIAE (Eastern Smooth Earth-snake). **PREDATION.** Although many North American raptors include reptiles in their diets, reports of predation on snakes by passerine birds other than shrikes (Laniidae) and corvids are relatively uncommon (Ross 1989. Amphibians and Reptiles in the Diets of North American Raptors. Wisconsin Endangered Species Report No. 59). Most such incidents involve relatively large or mid-sized ground foragers such as thrashers (Browning 1973. Chat 37:107) and thrushes (Davis 1969. Wilson Bull. 81:471; Erickson 1978. Murrelet 59:26; Palmer and Braswell 1995. Reptiles of North Carolina. Univ. North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 412 pp.).

At ca. 1700 h on 31 January 2009, at Howell Woods, ca. 14 km ESE of Four Oaks, Johnston Co., North Carolina, USA (35.371°N, 78.307°W; datum WGS84), CEM heard rustling in the leaf litter 10 m away from and below his elevated position 5 m off the ground. The air temperature was ca. 6°C with a light wind (5–10 mph). Approximately 20 sec later, a Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) perched at the spot of the rustling in a small plant just above the ground surface. The bird then flew straight up to a tree branch ca. 5 m above the ground, carrying what later was identified as a *Virginia v. valeriae*. The titmouse immediately began pecking the snake and continued for 60 sec. The bird then flew to a branch 25 m above the ground while still carrying the snake, and resumed the pecking behavior. Between 5 and 10 min later, the bird was observed perched at the same spot, but without the snake. It swiped its bill as birds often do following predation. At ca. 1820 h, CEM scanned the area beneath the perch and located the remains of the snake. The head had been completely removed and punctures, likely from the bird's bill and claws, were scattered over the snake's body. The remains of the snake measured 19.69 cm in total length and weighed 2.1g.

This observation is particularly interesting because the Tufted Titmouse is such a small bird—averaging 17 cm long, 20 g in weight (Grubb and Pravosudov 1994. In A. Poole [ed.], The Birds of North America Online. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York; <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/www.lib.ncsu.edu:2048/bna/species/086>). It eats primarily arthropod (e.g., caterpillars, beetles, ants, wasps, spiders, and scale insects) and vegetable foods, and typically forages by gleaning foliage and probing bark crevices (Grubb and Pravosudov, *op. cit.*). Although titmice generally forage in high vegetation, they may also spend considerable time feeding on or near the ground, especially on cold, windy days (Grubb and Pravosudov, *op. cit.*). To our knowledge, this represents the first report of a titmouse, or any similarly-sized passerine, as a predator of *V. valeriae*. The specimen is deposited in the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences (NCSM 75790). It also represents a new county record and an early date of activity for the species in North Carolina (Palmer and Braswell, *op. cit.*).

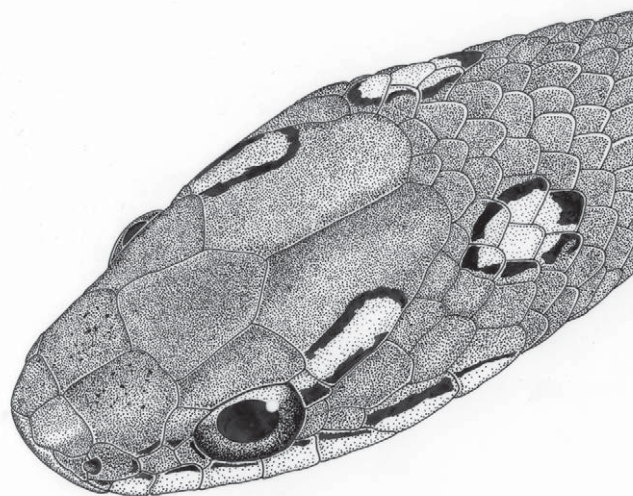
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XENOPHOLIS SCALARIS (Wucherer's Ground Snake). **DIET.** *Xenopholis scalaris* is believed to be a predatory specialist of frogs and its diet is known to be composed of *Adenomira andreae*, *Eleutherodactylus* species, *Hamptophryne boliviana*, and *Ischnocnema quixensis* (Duellman 1978. Univ. Kansas Nat. Hist. Mus. Misc. Publ. No. 65; Duellman 2005. Cusco Amazónico. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 433 pp.; Martins and Oliveira 1998. Herpetol. Nat. Hist. 6:78–150). Here we report an additional anuran food item for the species.

On 26 December 2007 an adult *X. scalaris* was observed and photographed consuming a subadult *Leptodactylus didymus* at Reserva Amazónica, Peru (UTADC 1954–55). The snake was found with the left leg of the anuran in its mouth. Over the next few minutes the snake engulfed the frog with its mouth, however the final ingestion of the prey item was not observed. The *L. didymus* was distinguished from *L. bolivianus*, also found at Reserva Amazónica, by having a creamy white longitudinal stripe across the thighs (Duellman 2005, *op. cit.*). Reserva Amazónica occurs in the Provincia Tambopata, ca. 12 km E of Puerto Maldonado on the north shore of the Rio Madre de Dios in southeastern Peru (ca. 12.5416667°N, 69.0527778°W; datum WGS 84; elev. 195 m). During our surveys from 18 December 2007 to 9 January 2008 we found *L. didymus* to be the most common anuran encountered. In addition, three *X. scalaris* were observed during surveys and the abundance of *L. didymus* may represent a large part of the prey base for *X. scalaris* in the area.

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Rhadinaea decorata (UMMZ 126432; 225 mm SVL). Guatemala: El Petén, Tikal. Illustration by Julian C. Lee.