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# Xantusia Vigilis (Desert Night Lizard) and Sceloporus Magister (Desert Spiny Lizard). Predation and Diet.

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eggs that lack shells, as is consistent with the known viviparity of *S. bicanthalis*. In the oviparous species *S. scalaris*, eggs in a comparable stage of development have a well developed shell, as exemplified by UMMZ 118556, from 2 mi SE Laguna Valderrama, 7800 ft., Zacatecas, 19 June 1957.

On these bases we add *S. bicanthalis* to the list of species of the *scalaris* group of *Sceloporus* in which patternlessness occurs. It remains unknown in the wide-ranging eastern component of *S. s. scalaris*, extending from Tamaulipas to Puebla and westward along the transvolcanic zone to (but not including) Guanajuato.

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**SCINCELLA LATERALIS** (Ground Skink). **PREDATION.** Although birds are often acknowledged as feeding on lizards (Pearson 1917. Birds of America, Doubleday & Co., New York), direct observations of predation are relatively rare under natural conditions. On 22 June 1996, we witnessed a barred owl (*Strix varia*) attack an adult ground skink as the lizard crawled through mixed leaf litter composed of deciduous hardwood leaves and pine needles. The weather was cloudy and the air was warm (27°C) and humid. Prior to attacking the lizard, the owl had perched on a narrow white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) limb 3.5 m above the litter surface for about 15 min. During this time, it alternately scanned the forest understory and ground surface, presumably searching for prey. At 1635 h, it cocked its head toward the ground and flew silently to the litter surface where it captured the ground skink in its talons. After eating the lizard on the ground, the owl flew to a nearby perch and resumed scanning the forest understory.

Barred owls have been reported to prey upon a variety of small herpetofauna (Ross 1989. Amphibians and Reptiles in the Diets of North American Raptors. Wisconsin Endangered Species Report 59), however lizards were not included among the prey listed. To our knowledge, the only previous record of avian predation on ground skinks was by Beane and Trail (1991. Herpetol. Rev. 22:99) who reported a pair of nesting bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) feeding ground skinks to their young. Based on qualitative observations, ground skinks are extremely abundant in the leaf litter of the mixed mesophytic forest where the observations took place (a residential forested area west of the Devil's Millhopper State Geological Site, Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida, USA; Brooks 1967. Ecol. Monog. 37:71-87 for estimates of abundance in similar habitat). As such, it is possible that small lizards could form an important component in the diet of these non-passerine avian predators.

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**XANTUSIA VIGILIS** (Desert Night Lizard) and **SCELOPORUS MAGISTER** (Desert Spiny Lizard). **PREDATION and DIET.** Here, we report evidence of predation on *Xantusia vigilis* by *Sceloporus magister*. We collected a yearling female *S. magister* (71 mm SVL, mass = 13.6 g) on 24 July 1996, 5 km SE of Llano, Los Angeles County, California, USA (34°29'N, 117°46'W, elevation 1120 m). In the laboratory, on 29 July, the *S. magister* deposited a fecal pellet that contained part of a *Xantusia vigilis*

body, including sections of dorsal and ventral integument and both hind limbs. Based on the knee-to-knee length of the prey specimen (14 mm) and a sample of living *X. vigilis* (N = 24) from the same locality, we estimate that the *Xantusia* prey would have measured 42 mm SVL and weighed 1.2 g when alive, and therefore was an adult.

*Sceloporus magister* and *X. vigilis* are abundant at this site, and commonly inhabit Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) throughout the western Mojave Desert. However, *S. magister* typically climbs Joshua trees and is a diurnal heliotherm and ambush predator, whereas the reclusive *X. vigilis* inhabits fallen branches and other debris, and is rarely observed in the open. This *S. magister* was perched in a Joshua tree when first observed. *Sceloporus magister* sometimes take shelter beneath fallen Joshua tree branches. Despite their common name, night lizards are apparently sometimes active during the day, beneath debris (Stebbins 1954, Amphibians and Reptiles of Western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536 pp.). A daytime encounter beneath fallen Joshua tree branches seems to be the most likely explanation for this instance of predation.

Zweifel and Lowe (1966. Am. Mus. Novit. 2247:1-57) do not mention *S. magister* as a potential predator of *X. vigilis* at their study site, which was within 4 km of our collection site. Likewise, Parker and Pianka (1973. Herpetologica 29:143-152) do not mention *Xantusia* in their analysis of the diet of *S. magister* from the Mojave Desert.

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## SERPENTES

**CROTALUS CERASTES CERASTES** (Mojave Desert Sidewinder). **LONGEVITY.** *Crotalus cerastes cerastes* is known to live in captivity up to 11.7 years (Snider and Bowler 1992. Longevity of Reptiles and Amphibians in North American Collections. Herpetol. Circ. No. 21. Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. 40 pp.). Here we report on a captive *C. c. cerastes* that is presently 28 years old.

In June 1968 Thomas Moisi collected a gravid *C. c. cerastes* from just east of Whitewater Canyon, Riverside County, California, USA. In September 1968 this snake gave birth to five offspring. Today, one of the offspring is still alive in the collection at California State Polytechnic University. This female *C. c. cerastes* is presently 629 mm SVL, 53 mm tail length, and 378 g. It has several tumors, but feeds regularly and apparently is still reproductive, producing unfertilized eggs in 1994 and 1995.

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**DENDRELAPHIS CALLIGASTRA** (Northern Tree Snake). **DIET.** As is the case for the majority of Australia's snakes, the diet of *Dendrelaphis calligastra* is known only from dissection of a relatively small number of museum specimens (Shine 1991. Copeia 1991:120-131). These dissections revealed that the species preys on frogs (families Hylidae and Myobatrachidae) and lizards (families Scincidae and Gekkonidae).

While conducting fieldwork in rainforest near Paluma in northern Queensland, I caught an actively foraging *D. calligastra* (SVL