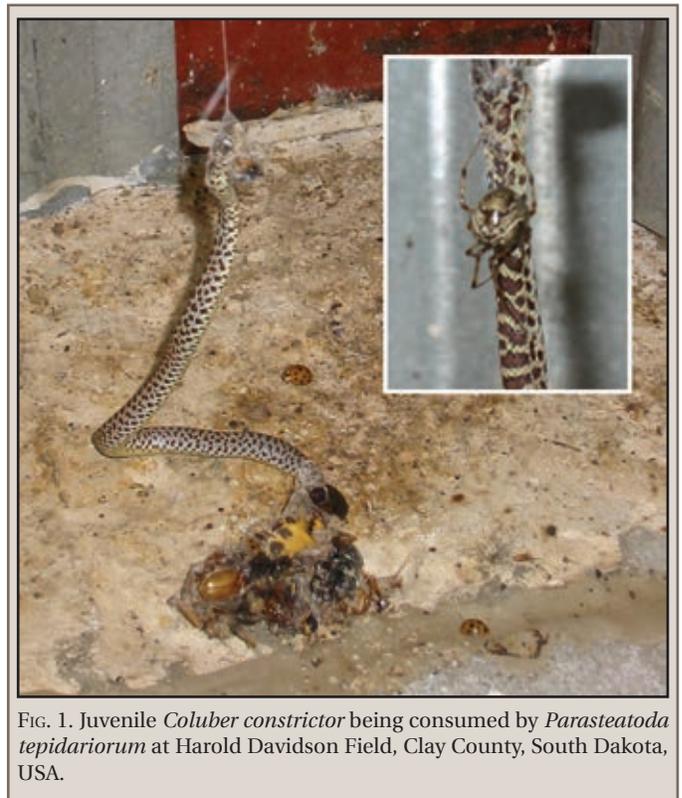


**COLUBER CONSTRICTOR (North American Racer). PREDATION.** Although ophiophagy and snake entrapment in webs has been documented in spiders of the families Araneidae (Burt 1949. *Herpetologica* 5:127; Gudger 1931. *Sci. Mon.* 32:422–433; Pinkus 1932. *Sci. Mon.* 34:80–83), Nephilidae (Zippel and Kirkland 1998. *Herpetol. Rev.* 29:46), Pisauridae (Lazcano et al. 2005. *Herpetol. Rev.* 36:186; Gerald 2006. *Herpetol. Rev.* 37:480), and Theraphosidae (Gudger 1931, *op. cit.*; Nunes et al. 2010. *Herpetol. Rev.* 41:367–368; Jorge et al. 2016. *Herpetol. Rev.* 47:308), most records have involved the family Theridiidae. Theridiid spiders in the genera *Latrodectus* (Neill 1948. *Herpetologica* 4:158; Kaston 1965. *Am. Midl. Nat.* 73:336–356; Bayliss 2001. *Herpetol. Rev.* 32:48–49; Smith 2004. *Afr. Wildl.* 58:23; Ervin and Carroll 2007. *Herpetol. Rev.* 38:468; Jones et al. 2011. *Herpetol. Rev.* 42:440–441; Beaman and Tucker 2014. *Herpetol. Rev.* 45:514), *Steatoda* (Pruett and Jadin 2010. *Herpetol. Rev.* 41:99), and *Theridion* (Kaston 1965, *op. cit.*; Groves and Groves 1978. *Bull. Maryland Herpetol. Soc.* 14:44–46) all occasionally trap and consume snakes, although the frequency of such events is unknown. The strong webs and potent venom of these spiders allows them to consume relatively large prey (Hódar and Sánchez-Piñero 2002. *J. Zool. Lond.* 257:101–109). Most of the snakes consumed by spiders are either juveniles of larger species or small, fossorial species (McCormick and Polis 1982. *Biol. Rev.* 57:29–58). Additionally, some authors have suggested that predation events may be the result of certain snakes attempting to consume either the spider itself or other invertebrates trapped in the spider's web (Groves and Groves 1978, *op. cit.*; Hall and Johnson 2007. *Prairie Nat.* 39:157–158).

*Coluber constrictor* is a widespread, actively foraging, generalist snake species that is found in a wide range of habitats (Ernst and Ernst 2003. *Snakes of the United States and Canada*).



PHOTOS BY MARK W. DAHLHOFF

FIG. 1. Juvenile *Coluber constrictor* being consumed by *Parasteatoda tepidariorum* at Harold Davidson Field, Clay County, South Dakota, USA.

Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 668 pp.). Known predators of *C. constrictor* include several species of mammals, birds, and snakes (Fitch 1963. Univ. Kansas Publ. Mus. Nat. Hist. 15:351–468; Ernst and Ernst 2003, *op. cit.*), yet predation by invertebrates, particularly spiders, is not well documented. In captivity, *Aphonopelma hentzi* (Theraphosidae) is known to consume hatchling *C. constrictor* (Owens 1949. Herpetologica 5:148), however, we are unaware of any published reports of *C. constrictor* predation by spiders in the wild. Here, we describe an additional predator of *C. constrictor*, and provide the first report of spider predation in the wild, which may suggest bidirectional predator-prey interactions.

On 16 June 2008, a juvenile *C. constrictor* was observed in the web of an adult *Parasteatoda tepidariorum* (Theridiidae) in an aircraft hanger at the Harold Davidson Field, outside of Vermillion, Clay County, South Dakota, USA (42.76538°N, 96.92950°W; WGS 84). The *C. constrictor* was observed to be alive and attempting unsuccessfully to escape the spider web. The tail of the snake was caught in the spider's web ca. 10 cm above the ground and the body and head of the snake were on the ground, with the spider located near the tail. On 18 June, the juvenile *C. constrictor* was found dead in the spider web, with the head of the snake suspended ca. 12 cm above the ground in the web (Fig. 1) with the spider actively feeding on the snake near the neck (Fig. 1, inset). Both the head and the posterior end of the body and tail were wrapped in silk, and the skin along the posterior end of the body and tail appeared to be collapsed, suggesting the spider had liquefied and consumed the tissues in this region in the preceding days. Although we are uncertain of the circumstances leading to the snake's capture, the individual may have become trapped in the web during an attempt to prey on the spider. *Coluber constrictor* is known to consume spiders, especially as juveniles (Ernst and Ernst 2003, *op. cit.*), and this observation may suggest bidirectional predator-prey interactions between *C. constrictor* and spiders.

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