

OPHEODRYS VERNALIS (Smooth Greensnake). PREDATION.

Ophedrys vernalis is a small, terrestrial snake that occurs across most of the northeastern United States and southwestern Canada, with patchy, disjunct populations throughout the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains (Ernst and Ernst 2003. Snakes of the United States and Canada. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. ix + 668 pp.; Walley 2003. Cat. Am. Amphib. Rept. 776:1–13). In South Dakota, populations of *O. vernalis* primarily occur in the Black Hills and the northeastern glacial lakes but individuals have recently been reported in both northern and southeastern South Dakota (Ballinger et al. 2000. Trans. Nebraska Acad. Sci. 26:29–46; Davis and Zimmer 2017. Herpetol. Rev. 48:129–130; DRD, unpubl. data). The primary form of defense for *O. vernalis* is crypsis, blending in with surrounding vegetation (Harding and Mifsud 2017. Amphibians and Reptiles of the Great Lakes Region. Revised edition. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan. xvi + 392 pp.), and few predators of this species have been reported. Many authors note predation by ophiophagous snakes, predatory mammals, and birds, but few provide detailed accounts of predation events (Phillips et al. 1999. Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles of Illinois. Illinois Natural History Survey, Champaign, Illinois. xiv + 282 pp.; Ernst and Ernst 2003, *op. cit.*; Krulikowski 2004. Snakes of New England. Lebon Press, Hartford, Connecticut. xi + 308 pp.). Krulikowski (2004, *op. cit.*) reports that “crows,” Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) have all been observed as predators of *O. vernalis*. Here, we report an additional avian predator of *O. vernalis*, the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*).

On 30 April 2020, at ca. 1030 h, an adult male *M. gallopavo* (Galliformes: Phasianidae) was shot at 4 Mile-Clubhouse-Barretts Game Production Area in Marshall County, South Dakota, USA (45.70947°N, 97.49247°W; WGS 84). Upon cleaning the bird, the gizzard was removed and opened, revealing an adult *O. vernalis* (ca. 32 cm total length). Given the lack of decomposition of the *O. vernalis*, it was likely consumed the previous evening.

Meleagris gallopavo is considered an opportunistic omnivore, with a diet primarily comprised of seeds and invertebrates (Bent 1932. Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds. U.S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 162. 490 pp.; Hurst 1992. In Dickson [ed.], The Wild Turkey, Biology and Management, pp. 66–83. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), with vertebrates consumed rarely (Judd 1905. The Grouse and Wildlife Turkeys of the United States, and their Economic Value. U. S. Department of Agriculture Biological Survey 24. 55 pp.). Snakes have previously been reported in the diet of *M. gallopavo* (Guthrie 1932. Wilson Bull. 44:88–133), including *Thamnophis elegans* (Horner et al. 2016. Herpetol. Rev. 47:317) and *T. sirtalis* (DeKay 1842. Zoology of New-York or the New-York Fauna. Part III. Reptiles and Amphibia. W. & A. White & J. Visscher, Albany, New York. vi + 98 pp.; Hay 1892. Dept. Geol. Nat. Resources Ann. Rep. 17:409–602, 3 plates). Additionally, several individuals have reported *M. gallopavo* attacking or killing, but not consuming, larger snakes often in defense of eggs and poults (“rattlesnakes”:

Crimmins 1931. Bull. Antivenin Inst. Am. 5:46–47; *Pantherophis ramspotti*: Carlisle et al. 2008. Herpetol. Rev. 39:98–99; *Pituophis catenifer*: Beasom and Pattee 1975. Wilson Bull. 87:281–282). In the Black Hills of western South Dakota where *O. vernalis* also occur, a dietary study of *M. gallopavo* only reported vegetation and invertebrates (Rumble and Anderson 1996. Am. Midl. Nat. 136:157–171). Although we are uncertain of the circumstances leading to the snake’s capture and consumption, this observation adds *M. gallopavo* to a list of known predators of *O. vernalis*.

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