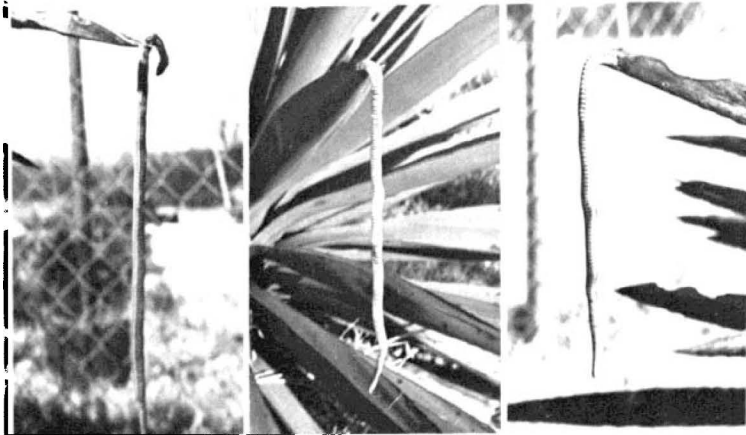


THE LINED SNAKE AS FOOD FOR BIRDS

BY JEFFREY HOWARD BLACK

Within the city limits of Shawnee, Pottawatomie County, central Oklahoma the most common snake is a small, secretive species known as the Lined Snake (*Tropidoclonion lineatum*). Our neighborhood in the northern part of Shawnee harbors a large population of this snake, individuals of which can be found in dry grass, under rocks, boards, and debris, sunning on sidewalks, or, in spring — its breeding season — prowling about during daylight hours. In the vicinity of Shawnee, the species rarely exceeds 12 inches in length. It is easily identifiable by a double row of black half-moons down the belly.

My observations over the past three years make clear that at least four bird species feed on this snake in central Oklahoma, especially in spring. Its chief avian predator appears to be the Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius*



LINED SNAKES AS SHRIKE PREY

Three of five Lined Snakes, none of them over a foot long, found impaled on leaves of the same yucca plant in Shawnee, Oklahoma during the second week of February, 1975. Photographs by Jeffrey Howard Black.

ludovicianus). So often has this bird hung Lined Snakes from the sharply pointed leaves of two yucca plants in a neighbor's yard that I have made a point of visiting the plants repeatedly, partly to ascertain what else the shrikes might be capturing. In the second week of February 1975 I found five Lined Snakes impaled on the leaves of one yucca plant. I had no way of knowing how many shrikes had caught the snakes, nor could I be sure how many had been caught in any one day. It is perhaps significant that I found no other prey impaled on the leaves. During the past three years I have found Lined Snakes hanging from the yucca tines as early as 10 February and as late as the middle of November. In the most severe part of winter the snakes probably become inactive.

The American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) feeds regularly on the Lined Snake. During the winter of 1974-75 I often saw a male kestrel perched on a telephone wire or fencepost on my way to work. The bird seemed to have a definite territory, for I saw it repeatedly in about the same area. On 13 February I watched it eating a Lined Snake. It was perching on a fence wire at the time.

On 14 February I watched a Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) carrying a living Lined Snake in its bill. The jay killed the snake by slamming it against a branch.

In early February 1975 (exact date not recorded) I was surprised to see a meadowlark (*Sturnella* sp.) on the ground with a Lined Snake seven or eight inches long hanging from its bill. When the snake writhed, thus seeming to become shorter, the meadowlark shook it vigorously. This treatment continued until the snake grew limp. I did not see the meadowlark swallow the snake. As an impatient motorist drove past, honking his horn, the meadowlark took alarm and flew off with the snake dangling from its bill.

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY, OKLAHOMA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY, SHAWNEE, OKLAHOMA 74801.
15 JUNE 1975.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER NEST IN COMANCHE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

BY EUGENE A. BARTNICKI

On the morning of 2 June 1975, while making a routine survey by truck of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Comanche County, southwestern Oklahoma, I happened to see a flycatcher of the genus *Myiarchus* flying past with an insect in its bill. Suspecting that it might have a nest nearby, I decided to investigate. The open northwestern part of the refuge where I was at the time, an area known locally as Fullingim Flat, is near-climax mixed-grass prairie throughout which such native grasses as little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsuta*), and buffalograss (*Buchlœe dactyloides*) flourish. A