

Predation of Yellow-winged Tanager *Thraupis abbas* by an arboreal snake in Belize

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Observaciones sobre depredación de aves por reptiles son reportadas con poca frecuencia. En esta nota reportamos el primer evento registrado de depredación de *Thraupis abbas* por una serpiente arborícola en Belize.

Yellow-winged Tanager *Thraupis abbas* is relatively common in disturbed habitats, at 0–1,600 m, from east Mexico to Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua^{1,3}. Adults are easily separated from other thraupids by their lemon-olive underparts, contrasting with black remiges marked with a broad yellow band at the base³. Little is known concerning predation of *T. abbas*, and observations of such events are rarely documented. Here we report on the predation of *T. abbas* by an arboreal snake in northern Belize.

On 25 March 1997, at 12h20, we observed an adult *T. abbas* being consumed by an adult green vine snake *Oxybelis fulgidus* (estimated total length = c.180 cm). The snake was anchored in the crotch of a wild custard apple tree *Annona reticulata*, 367 cm above ground and c.150 m west of New River Lagoon, Orange Walk District, Belize (17°45'N 88°39'W). When the observation was initially made,

the snake had already consumed the anterior third of the bird, as far as its upper wings (Fig. 1). After photographing the snake and bird, we moved away from the tree to minimise stress and disturbance to the feeding snake. Approximately 45 minutes later, we returned to find the snake had completely swallowed the tanager (indicated by a large bulge in the central third of the snake's body) and had moved higher into the tree. A voucher photograph of the snake swallowing the bird has been deposited in the Campbell Museum (CUSC 1944), Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, USA. This is the first report of *T. abbas* predation by a snake.

O. fulgidus is an arboreal, diurnal snake, which is known to feed on a variety of avian prey^{2,4,5}. Prey is partially subdued by mild venom injected from enlarged fangs in the rear of the mouth¹. Although such predation observations are rare, both *T. abbas* and *O. fulgidus* frequent forest edge habitat^{3,4}, and it is possible that encounters between the two are relatively common in areas where the species are sympatric.

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Figure 1. Yellow-winged Tanager *Thraupis abbas* being consumed by *Oxybelis fulgidus* (Thomas R. Rainwater)

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