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## Gray Squirrel Kills and Eats Blue Jay Fledgling

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corvids Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) are described in Bent (1946) as repeatedly flying into the face of a Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter velox*) and being chased, a behavior that I have also noted (unpubl. obs.). Provoking a larger or more powerful animal would seem to occur among a variety of corvids when another animal responds. The function of this behavior is unclear and worthy of additional study.

I thank James H. Hendrie, Sr., and John D. Hendrie for letting my wife and I visit their ranch, my wife Jane for aid in making observations, and James N. Layne and Fred Lohrer of the Archbold Biological Station, Lake Placid, Florida, for help of various kinds.

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**Gray squirrel kills and eats Blue Jay fledgling.**—On 27 May 1978 at Athens, Georgia, we observed a gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) capture and eat a fledgling blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*). Four fledglings were observed attempting to fly. Three were relatively inactive: the fourth flapped its wings while climbing an oak tree trunk. Four to six adult-sized gray squirrels were nearby. One stalked the active fledgling. Twice when the squirrel approached the fledgling, two adult jays flew near the squirrel thereby diverting its attention.

After 20 to 30 min., the squirrel suddenly lunged and captured the jay with its mouth. Two adult jays attacked the squirrel with swoops and pecks and gave repeated distress calls. These calls were intense, high-pitched, rapid screams (one every 1 to 2 sec) similar in sound to "jeeah". The squirrel ran onto a nearby tree with the fledgling in its mouth.

Following the calls, 10 to 12 adult jays arrived and began to mob the squirrel. We approached the tree and observed the squirrel eating the fledgling. It rotated the dead bird with its front paws while alternately chewing the bird's head, wings, feet, and bill. Most of the mobbing jays soon left, but the two adults originally present remained and occasionally gave distress calls.

Twenty minutes later, the adults tended the remaining young much as before the squirrel attack and continued to do so for 30 min more. The adults repeatedly flew from branch to branch, or ground to branch within 10 m of the fledglings. During this period, fewer

squirrels were observed in the area and the remaining fledglings were more dispersed, perhaps a result of our proximity or of the earlier mobbing behavior of the jays.

Although general accounts of gray squirrel feeding habits list animal foods, including small birds and eggs, as a small dietary component (e.g. Brown and Yeager 1945, Jennings 1951, Martin et al. 1961, Nixon et al. 1968, Walker 1975), we could find no documentation of prey capture. Jennings (1951) reported an observation of a gray squirrel "in the process of eating a freshly killed Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarium*) which it handled as if the bird had been a large nut, turning it over repeatedly and plucking feathers off." The observer did not see how the squirrel obtained the bird. The description of the handling of the bird, however, is similar to our observation.

Animal foods in the diet of gray squirrels in late May have been reported before. Nixon (1970) observed three juvenile gray squirrels feeding on bark-dwelling insects in late May. He also found more insects in squirrel stomachs in late spring and summer and more insects in juvenile stomachs than in adults. He attributed these results to a shortage of forest seed crops, the high protein content of insects, and the abundance of recently weaned squirrels at this time of year. Although we have no population estimates of gray squirrels in Athens, it is possible that food shortage, dense populations, and the availability of easy prey account for the predatory behavior of the gray squirrel we observed.

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**A clutch of five-lined skink eggs from south Florida.**—Little has been published on the reproductive biology of *Eumeces inexpectatus*, the southeastern five-lined skink. In this note, I report on the largest clutch size and latest hatching date recorded for this species.

On the morning of 26 October 1983, a female skink was discovered with a clutch of 14 eggs under a limestone rock in sandy soil at the United States Department of Agriculture Subtropical Research Station, Miami (Dade Co.), Florida. When first uncovered the female was curled in a semicircle around her eggs, in brooding posture as has been reported for *Eumeces fasciatus* (Fitch 1954). The rock was carefully placed back over the nest and in the afternoon of the same day, I collected the skink in attendance and the eggs, two of