

were in perfect condition, indicating that the clutch was consumed very recently. Dissection of one egg revealed a nearly fully developed Scaled Quail (*Callipepla squamata*). We thank Alan Tennant for identifying the bird.

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MASTICOPHIS FLAGELLUM PICEUS (Red Racer). **CARRION FEEDING.** DeVault and Krochmal (2002. *Herpetologica* 58:429–436) summarized 35 literature reports of natural snake scavenging (spanning at least 24 snake species and assorted carrion) to show that snakes utilize carrion more often than commonly believed. Not unexpectedly, these reports reveal that snakes generally use olfaction to locate carrion, and they suggest that some snake species forage specifically for carrion.

On 24 July 1974 between 0700 and 1030 h I observed three unusual instances of opportunistic carrion feeding by two or three *Masticophis flagellum piceus* at a field collectors' campsite in Whitewater Canyon, Riverside County, California (33°57.422'N, 116°38.650'W, 536 m elev.). During the previous evening (23 July 1974) researchers at the camp prepared about a dozen museum study skins of local rodent specimens including field mice (*Peromyscus*) and pocket mice (*Perognathus* and *Chaetodipus*), all < 35g live mass. We skinned the animals, removed the heads, opened the abdominal cavities to evaluate reproductive condition, and discarded the carcasses randomly in sparse desert vegetation along a nearby road embankment. During the night the skinless carcasses desiccated rapidly in the high temperatures and extremely low humidity. They were also contaminated with desert gravel and the hardwood sawdust used during preparation.

The next morning (24 July 1974) at 0700 h, a *M. f. piceus* (ca. 1200 mm TL) was outstretched in open view in full sunlight along the above embankment, rapidly engulfing one of the desiccated mouse carcasses. An attempt to catch the snake failed and it escaped rapidly, still grasping the mouse carcass. Air temperature at 0700 h was 28°C, and ground temperature in direct sun was ca. 40°C. Three hours later we noticed a second *M. f. piceus* (1175 mm TL) engulfing a very dry mouse carcass at the same spot on the embankment where the first snake had been. The ground temperature (determined later) at the site was 44°C, and the shaded-bulb air temperature was 42°C. About 20 minutes later we saw a third *M. f. piceus* (1180 mm TL) outstretched and engulfing a mouse carcass < 2 m from the spot where the first snakes were seen. I collected the second and third specimens with dust shot and deposited them in the UC Davis Museum of Zoology (cat nos. 5331–5332). The stomachs of both specimens were empty, but I cannot be certain that either collected snake was not the specimen seen at 0700 h.

Cowles (1946, *Herpetologica* 3:121–122) and Small et al. (1994. *Herpetol. Rev.* 25:28) reported natural carrion feeding by *M. f. piceus*, respectively, on a poorwill (*Phaelaenoptilus nuttali*) in an advanced state of putrefaction and on a road-killed Glossy Snake (*Arizona elegans*). Our observations and others support DeVault and Krochmal's (2002) contention that carrion is normal forage for some snake species, and they underscore the role of olfaction

in foraging even in snakes thought to rely primarily on prey movement and other visual cues.

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MICRURUS DISTANS (West Mexican Coral Snake). **TREE CLIMBING.** Snakes of the genus *Micrurus* are secretive and largely fossorial, and are often found under cover objects such as leaves, stones, and logs (Roze 1996. *Coral Snakes of the Americas: Biology, Identification, and Venoms*. Krieger Publ., Malabar, Florida). To our knowledge, there are no records of arboreality for this species. On 24 September 2001, at 1230 h, while conducting a survey on the herpetofauna of the Cuixmala-Chamela Biosphere Reserve on the coast of Jalisco, México, we observed a *M. distans* (790 mm TL) climbing a mature tree at ca. 4.5 m above the ground. The tree was part of a small patch of remnant dry forest immersed in a matrix of livestock grazing plots in different stages of regeneration. Air temperature was 29.1°C and humidity was 84.6%. Upon discovery the snake climbed down the tree and disappeared under the ground litter (specimen was photographed while climbing down). This observation suggests that this typically ground-dwelling species of coral snake may occasionally climb trees, perhaps to hunt prey not readily available on the ground. Two previous publications report the presence of *M. distans* in the area we describe herein but make no reference to arboreal habits (García and Ceballos 1994. *Guía de Campo de los Reptiles y Anfibios de la Costa de Jalisco, Mexico*, Fundación Ecológica de Cuxmala and IB UNAM, Mexico:184 pp.; and Ramírez-Bautista 1994. *Manual y Claves Ilustradas de los Anfibios y Reptiles de la Región de Chamela, Jalisco, México*. Cuadernos IB UNAM [23]:1–127).

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NINIA PSEPHOTA (Cope's Coffee Snake). **REPRODUCTION.** *Ninia psephota* is a colubrid that occurs in evergreen forests in Costa Rica and Panama (Savage 2002. *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Costa Rica: A Herpetofauna Between Two Continents, Between Two Seas*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 934 pp.). There is, to my knowledge, no information on clutch size in *N. psephota*. Herein I present information on two egg clutches