

ARBOREAL NEST PREDATION BY A BULLSNAKE — At 14:30, 5 June 1979, on the Cedar Creek Natural History Area in northern Anoka County, I hear persistent alarm calls by American Robins and several other species (Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Oriole, Indigo Bunting, and Chipping Sparrow) from a group of oaks beside an old field. Upon investigation, I found a Bull Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus sayi*) approximately 1.4m long curled around a robin nest on a horizontal limb of a Bur Oak (43cm dbh). The nest was 2.3m above ground and 2.7m from the trunk. The snake was swallowing one nestling. One egg remained in the nest but was consumed within 10 min. Both adult robins called continuously, perching less than 1m from the snake, sometimes diving at it without contact, but the snake appeared oblivious to the mobbing. As the snake crawled toward the trunk, the alarm calling diminished. When the snake reached the trunk, the robins ceased calling and departed. Several days after the above incident I observed a large Bull Snake (possibly the same individual) 1m up in a Red Pine adjacent to an unoccupied bird house. A. Peterson (pers. comm.) saw a Bull Snake 3m above ground in an oak containing a robin nest with eggs, but the snake was knocked out of the tree by Peterson before it reached the nest. J. Howitz (pers. comm.) noticed a 1.3m long Bull Snake about 2m up in a Black Cherry (20cm dbh) but there were no bird nests in the tree or the immediate vicinity. Bull Snakes are known to depredate the nests of ground and bank nesting birds (Best, Condor 79:509, 1979) but have rarely been observed in trees and hence are not usually considered a threat to tree nesting birds. However, Wright and Wright (Handbook of Snakes, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, Vol. II, p. 607, 1957) state that "prairie bullsnakes . . . ascend trees and banks and crawl into nesting boxes," and a Bull Snake depredated a Long-eared Owl nest 7.4 m up in a Ponderosa Pine in Montana (Amstrup and McEneaney, Wilson Bull. 92:402, 1980). The closely related Gopher Snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus catenifer*) regularly climbs trees (Cunningham, Herpetologica 11:217-220, 1955). Apparently Bull Snakes can be adept tree climbers, too, particularly if the tree has rough bark. Although Rat (*Elaphe* spp.), Garter (*Thamnophis* spp.), and Racer (*Coluber* spp.) snakes have accounted for the majority of reported nest loss due to snakes, the Bull Snake should also be considered a threat to tree nesting birds. I thank S. J. Maxson for his comments. George-Ann D. Maxson, Cedar Creek Natural History Area, 2660 Fawn Lake Dr. NE, Bethel, MN 55055.