

**BULL SNAKE PREDATION ON BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE NEST** — On June 6, 1986, I observed an attempted predation by a bull snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus sayi*) on a Black-capped Chickadee nest. I was in the process of color-banding a brood of twelve-day old Black-capped Chickadee nestlings at the Cedar Creek Natural History Area in northern Anoka County. The nest was in a cavity in a 1 m high birch stump at the edge of a field, and the entrance hole was only 80 cm above the ground. I had extracted the five nestlings through a hole I had cut in the back of the stump. Steve Crossot and I were sitting about 20 m from the nest, and I had banded one of the nestlings. I gave this first nestling to Steve to return to the nest so that the female upon her return would not find it empty. I banded the remaining four nestlings and went to the nest to return them about 15 minutes after the first was returned. A small bull snake about 70 cm long was in the cavity. I prodded the snake into leaving, and we caught it as it left the cavity. The snake contained no obvious bulge, and evidently had not eaten the nestling. I later released it about 800 m from the nest. I removed the nestling from the cavity and examined it. The nestling's head was wet, and it apparently had some puncture wounds on the shoulders. It kept its eyes closed but could move its legs, so I thought it might survive, and I returned it and its siblings to the nest cavity. The brood fledged on June 11, and I saw the fledglings June 12, including the one bitten by the snake. All were alive and well June 21, and the fledglings dispersed from their parents' territory June 30. Most nests destroyed by bull snakes at Cedar Creek are probably those of species such as Lark, Vesper, and Field Sparrows that build open nests on or very near the ground. Bull snakes at Cedar Creek have also been reported to prey on open nests in trees (Maxson, *The Loon* 53:61-62, 1981), and I have seen them in aquatic habitats and in tree cavities. On June 13, 1986, I found a bull snake about 1.5 m long in a cavity in an aspen stump 15 m out in a marsh at Cedar Creek. The cavity was about 30 cm above the water level, and the snake must have swum to reach the stump. The stump contained a deer mouse (*Peromyscus*) nest, but I do not know if the snake found any mice in it. In May 1985 I found a bull snake that had evidently just preyed upon a brood of nestling Eastern Bluebirds at Cedar Creek. Dahlsten and Cooper (The role of insectivorous birds in terrestrial ecosystems, Dickson et al, editors, Academic Press, New York, 1979) noted predation by the closely related gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus catenifer*) on Mountain Chickadee nests in nest boxes. Observations of predation on nests are very rare relative to the number of such predations. Snakes are well known to be important nest predators in the tropics. James L. Howitz, 1700 Silver Lake Road, New Brighton, MN 55112.