

cies avoids wetland centers and is associated with wetland prairies, wetland edges and developed lands (Shew 2004. Spatial Ecology and Habitat Use of the Western fox Snake (*Elaphe vulpina vulpina*) on Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Masters thesis. Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri. 51 pp.). Although observations have been made of this species preying upon duck nests on wetland edges (Wheeler 1984. Wildl. Soc. Bull. 12:77–78), they have not been reported to utilize wetland centers containing relatively deep water habitat (> 90cm).

During the period of May through mid-June 2005 and 2006, ca. 50 *E. vulpina* were observed utilizing deep water wetland habitats in a 239-ha marsh located on the southwest portion of SCNWR, Holt County, Missouri, USA. Individuals were typically observed in cattail (*Typha* sp.) patches coiled on Red-wing Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) and Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) nests, ca. 60–90 cm above the surface of the water. Using a geographic information system we calculated that the snakes had to swim a minimum of 130 m to reach the cattail patches where they were located. Utilization of this habitat type has been observed on SCNWR annually since 2001 by refuge staff members.

Although *E. vulpina* were never observed feeding on eggs or nestlings, depredation was suspected as this appears to be one of the major food resources in this habitat type during this time period which coincides with nesting period of several bird species. The three dominant species of arboreal nesting birds located in this habitat include the aforementioned blackbirds and Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*). Additionally, five other species of platform nesting birds may also be found in this habitat including Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), American Bittern (*Bontaurus lentiginosus*), Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), American Coot (*Fulica americana*), and Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*). The eggs and nestlings of all of these species represent potential prey items. Cattail patches as well as other deep water wetland vegetation may play a more significant role in the spatial ecology of the species than previously suspected. This relationship is likely on a temporal basis that coincides with wetland breeding bird activity. Further research on the habitat use of *E. vulpina* within managed wetlands may prove useful in fully understanding the ecology of this species.

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FARANCIA ABACURA REINWARDTII (Western Mud Snake). **REPRODUCTION.** Information regarding reproduction of *Farancia abacura reinwardtii* is limited due, in part, to its secretive habits. Specifically, copulation has only been reported once, by Anderson (1965. The Reptiles of Missouri. Univ. Missouri Press, Columbia. 330 pp.). Herein, we report on copulation of *F. a. reinwardtii* from Reelfoot Lake, Lake County, Tennessee, USA.

On 05 June 2005 at 1100 h, we observed (from a boat) a large (142 cm SVL, 162 cm TL) *F. a. reinwardtii* on the northwest bank of Horse Island Ditch at Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee (36°24'57"N, 89°22'30"W, NAD27). Upon approach, we noticed that the snake

was copulating with a smaller individual. We captured the pair after 2–3 minutes of observation, and discovered that the larger individual was a dead, bloated female. The pair was transported, *in coitus*, to the University of Tennessee–Martin Reelfoot Lake Research and Teaching Center at Samburg, Tennessee. Copulation continued until 1430 h, when the smaller male separated from the dead female. The male (ca. 95 cm TL) was returned to the point of capture the following day. The female was deposited into the Herpetology Collection at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU 178S).

We could determine neither the cause nor timing of death of the female, or if copulation was initiated before or after the female died. Although from the bloated appearance of the female, we speculate post-mortem initiation of copulation. In field experiments, several snake species have followed chemical trails left by (and courted with) recently deceased females (Shine et al. 2000. Behaviour 137:727–739). Besides providing an additional observation of post-mortem copulation, our observation on 05 June appears to be the earliest report of copulation for *F. a. reinwardtii*. Copulation in Western Mud Snakes has been observed as early as 13 June in southeastern Missouri (reported by Max Nickerson in Anderson 1965, *op. cit.*). Additionally, this observation supports the conclusions of Robinette and Trauth (1992. Proc. Arkansas Acad. Sci. 46:61–64) that the reproductive cycles of both male and female *F. a. reinwardtii* peak in May and June. Research was supported by a grant to VAC from the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (Contract Num. ED-05-01679-00). Specimen was collected under authorization of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (permit no. 1798).

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LAMPROPELTIS PYROMELANA (Sonoran Mountain Kingsnake). **PIGMENT LOSS.** On 22 September 2003 we captured a normally pigmented adult female *Lampropeltis pyromelana* (622 mm SVL, 74.0 g) in the northern Sierra San Luis (Chihuahua, México; 31°18.1'N, 108°45.9'W, 1878 m elev.). We surgically implanted a radio transmitter, and released her on 27 September 2003. Between 28 September and 2 November 2003 we relocated this individual five times, however we observed her only once, on 2 November, at which time she weighed 71.3 g, and remained normally pigmented. We next relocated this snake on 17 May 2004. Although she had lost considerable weight (mass 59.6 g), and had an open, dry wound along her side exposing a small section of the transmitter antenna, the snake seemed to be in good health otherwise, and exhibited no signs of infection or systemic disease. However, she had lost some pigment. Most orange bands exhibited areas where the orange had been replaced by an uneven alabaster to faded salmon coloration. Pigment loss was most severe dorsally, with pigment loss extending down towards the venter in some bands. Most white bands were unchanged, however small areas along the dorsum of some bands had changed from cream to alabaster. Black bands were unaffected by any pigment loss. Coloration on both the head and tail remained unchanged.