
An unusual prey for the Marine Toad, *Bufo marinus*.

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IN their review of the natural history of the marine toad, *Bufo marinus*, which in Trinidad is called "crapaud", Zug and Zug (1979) say that it "will apparently eat almost every animate object it can catch" and "although terrestrial arthropods form the bulk of its diet, snails, earthworms, and small vertebrates are also engulfed". Grant (1946) also noted that it would eat noxious biting or stinging prey. It is easy to believe that among the vertebrates other species of amphibian, and perhaps its own young, would be included, as has been reported, even that the occasional lizard could be consumed. For instance, Pippet (1975) records three skinks among the stomach contents of marine toads in Papua New Guinea. It is surprising that venomous snakes could, even occasionally, form part of its diet, yet Richard French (pers. comm) has seen a marine toad eating a small coral snake, *Micrurus psyches circinalis*, and it is hard to imagine that birds could fall prey to it, yet this is exactly what this note records.

On my return home on the night of 10th July 1983 a strange animal that seemed to have wings sprouting from its head leapt away from the vicinity of the kitchen door and disappeared in the darkness. Getting a flashlight I located the animal again and found it to be a marine toad, not quite fully grown, that was attempting to eat a bird. The bird's head and neck were well down in the toad's throat but its wings, protruding one from each side of the mouth, prevented the toad from swallowing it. Wanting to know what species of bird it was, I rescued it and found it to be a nearly fully fledged glossy cowbird, *Molothrus bonariensis*,

that must have fallen out of the wrens' nest below the garage roof. The head and neck were covered in mucus and seemed damaged, and the breast had lost a lot of feathers. The bird could not hold up its head and I doubted that it would live but I put it out of reach of the toad and went to bed.

The next morning the bird was holding its head up and the wrens were feeding it. The following day it disappeared into the nearby vegetation but its calls and those of the wrens indicated that it was still being fed and must have recovered completely.

I have seen so many animals, lizards, snakes and even birds, swallow prey that appeared to be too big for them that I have no doubt that had I not intervened the toad would eventually have managed to manoeuvre the bird down its throat especially since toads can use their hands to help them get their food in. Thus, we can now add young birds to the list of vertebrates that toads will eat if they can get them.

REFERENCES

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