

COMMENTS ON A LIZARD EATING *ARGIOPE*
(ARANEIDAE:ARANEAE)

Recorded occurrences of orb-weaving spiders preying on vertebrates are rare. Bristowe (The Comity of Spiders, Volume II, The Ray Society, London, Number 128, 1941, p. 330) cites observations of lizards falling prey to Argiopidae (=Araneidae) but no specifics are given in his account. The present note confirms and extends knowledge of lizards preyed upon by orb-weavers.

On August 28, 1976, I observed a female *Argiope aurantia* that had killed and was wrapping a juvenile broad-headed skink, *Eumeces laticeps* (family Scincidae). The web was constructed between a tree limb and the bottom side of an old wooden bridge over Mud Creek, 10 km N, 7 km E of Oscar, Jefferson County, Oklahoma. The lizard presumably came into contact with the web while climbing either the limb or bridge where the web was attached. Collins (Complete Field Guide to American Wildlife: East, Central and North. Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1959, pp.373) reports that *Eumeces laticeps* is partially arboreal. Since the web was intact, it can be assumed the lizard was not actively seeking a meal of the spider, but rather that the spider attacked the lizard. The *Eumeces* (35.6 mm snout-vent length) received three bites which penetrated the body. One bite was in the center of the dorsum 5.1 mm anterior to the origin of the hind limbs, the second was on the tail 30.0 mm from the tip, and the third was on the right forelimb at the junction of the ulna and humerus. The bite on the back was positioned in a manner suggesting the spider attacked from the side (i.e., the two fang holes were along the mid-dorsal stripe with one hole anterior to the other). The actual sequence of bites was not observed, but probably the bite on the back was first. The genus *Eumeces* is notorious for losing its tail to elude predators, and therefore the tail probably would have been missing if it were bit first. The toxin apparently worked quickly, because the spider and web showed no signs of a struggle.

The manner in which *Argiope* wrap paralyzed lizards has received no mention in the literature. The present *A. aurantia* carried the lizard to the center of the web and folded the lizard in a workable-sized packet prior to wrapping. The lizard's head was bent to the right at the pectoral girdle, the tail was looped up on the left side of the body to the forelimb, and then back down along the basal part of the tail.

Both the *Argiope* and the *Eumeces* are deposited in the Midwestern State University Invertebrate collection. James Cokendolpher, Department of Biology, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas 76308.