



Eastern Black-necked Gartersnake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus*) - Diet and Predation

A Natural History Note

By

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The eastern Black-necked Gartersnake (*Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus*) is an inhabitant of the springs and spring fed creeks of the Edwards Plateau in central Texas. The diet of this eastern variant has not been studied in depth, but predation on *Plethodon albagula* has been recorded (Fouquette 1954).

On April 8th, 2008, myself and two other individuals were walking the greenbelt about 3 miles west of downtown Austin, Texas in search of Texas Alligator Lizards (*Gerrhonotus infernalis*). At around 10:00 A.M. with temperatures approaching 80°F, we found the second of two *T. c. ocellatus* active on the surface. The snake was in a dry ravine with multiple crevices, leaf piles, and scattered small boulders. The snake was around 15" and had obviously just captured a large meal. The snake was captured and transported to a nearby shaded boulder for photographs. When placed on the ground it regurgitated a 5" Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*). The salamander was regurgitated bent in half, with the tail and head both appearing first out of the snake's mouth (see photo below). The salamander looked to be captured by the snake at mid-body, between the front and back legs, bent in half, and then swallowed. The front limbs of the salamander were pointed forward, with the feet nearly at the eye of the salamander, and the back legs were pointed towards the tail. Neither specimen was collected but multiple photographs (displayed below) were taken during the encounter.



Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus regurgitating a Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) Photo by John T. Williams



Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus regurgitating a Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) Photo by John T. Williams



Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus regurgitating a Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) with black outlining head, blue outlining front limb, and white outlining tail Photo by John T. Williams



Thamnophis cyrtopsis ocellatus with a freshly disgorged Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) Photo by John T. Williams



Western Slimy Salamander (*Plethodon albagula*) regurgitated by an Eastern Black-necked Gartersnake (*Thamnophis c. ocellatus*)

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