Western Marsh Harrier Preys on Herring Gull

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Key Words: *Western Marsh Harrier*; Circus aeruginosus; *Herring Gull*; Larus argentatus; *predation.*

The Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) is one of the better known raptors in the western Palearctic (Cramp and Simmons 1980), and has been the subject of several diet studies (Schipper 1973, Underhill-Day 1985, Clarke et al. 1993, Brzekiński and Żmihorski 2009, Cardador et al. 2012, Tornberg and Haapala 2013). Harriers feed on a wide range of small mammals and birds. Most avian prey is relatively small (10–675 g) but harriers occasionally take prey as a large as 1000 g (e.g., Great Bittern [*Botaurus stellaris*]; Tornberg and Haapala 2013). However, prey items at the larger end of the mass spectrum tend to be juvenile, sick, or disabled individuals (Schipper 1973). Nesting harriers in Finland frequently took Black-headed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*; 265 g) and less frequently Mew Gulls (*Larus canus,* 415 g; Tornberg and Haapala 2013). To my knowledge, there are no published records of Western Marsh Harrier preying on larger and more aggressive species of gulls.

On 8 September 2013, I watched a congregation of several thousand waterfowl, cormorants, shorebirds, Black-headed Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*) and Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) from an observation

blind at Klydesøreservatet (55°34.8′N, 12°31.8′E) near Copenhagen, Denmark. Two Western Marsh Harriers made several passes over the mudflats and *Phragmites* beds before my attention was drawn to a commotion of Northern Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) and Black-headed Gulls harassing a harrier that had captured a Herring Gull at the end of a narrow spit (12:24 H). I observed the action through a 20–60× scope from a distance of 205 m (measured with Google Earth Pro). The harrier had the gull's neck pinned to the mud with one foot, while the gull was on its back, feebly beating its wings, and slowly kicking its legs in a running fashion. The struggling gull failed to right itself and the harrier carried it to higher ground with the aid of a strong wind (approximately 28 km/hr). At the higher site, the harrier's feet and the gull's head were obscured by a dead thistle, so I could not see how the harrier finally dispatched the gull, which continued to kick until 12:33 H. The harrier began consuming bits of muscle soon afterwards and started plucking the gull's breast at 12:48 H. It fed until 12:52 H, stepped off the gull's carcass at 12:59 H, and preened nearby on the ground until I left the area at 13:09 H. Having missed the harrier's initial strike, I do not know whether the gull was acting normally beforehand or whether it showed signs of disease or incapacitation. However, the length of time (>9 min) required for the harrier to kill the gull suggested the gull was reasonably fit.

The harrier's golden crown and throat, and the absence of pale markings on the breast and leading edge of the wing indicated that it was a juvenile. The gull was in second- or third-year plumage, with dark mottling on the upper wing coverts. Herring Gulls from nominate populations in Norway vary in weight from 795 to 1440 g (Cramp and Simmons 1983), overlapping the size range of female harriers (540–1269 g) but not males (320–667 g; Cramp and Simmons 1980).

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PREDATION BY GEOFFROY'S CAT ON FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL IN *CALDÉN* SEMIARID FOREST, ARGENTINA

KEY WORDS: *Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl*; Glaucidium brasilianum; *Geoffroy's cat*; Leopardus geoffroyi; *Argentina*; *predation*.

The Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) has a broad geographic distribution, occurring from the southwestern United States to Central America and South America (Holt et al. 1999, Proudfoot and Johnson 2000). It is found in a variety of habitats from tropical and subtropical dry forest to semiarid open forest; it nests in natural cavities and is active diurnally (Proudfoot and Johnson 2000). Predation of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl nestlings by raccoons