

# Opportunistic Predation by a Broad-winged Hawk on a Southern Flying Squirrel

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Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo platypterus*) take a wide variety of prey, including numerous small mammal species (Rusch and Doerr 1972; Fitch 1974; Mosher and Matray 1974; Rosenfield et al. 1984; and Toland 1986). Flying squirrels (*Glaucomys* spp.) are probably not regular prey of diurnal raptors due to the squirrel's nocturnal habits (Davis 1974); however, some overlap in raptor and squirrel activity may occur at dawn and dusk. Mosher and Matray (1974) reported a northern flying squirrel (*G. sabrinus*) brought to a Broad-winged Hawk nest in the Central Adirondacks in New York. Rosenfield et al. (1984) also give an account of a flying squirrel (not identified to species) being brought to a Broad-winged Hawk nest in Lincoln County, Wisconsin. No accounts of Broad-winged Hawks preying on southern flying squirrels (*G. volans*) have ever been documented.

While climbing Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) cavity trees in the Angelina National Forest in eastern Texas (31°15'N, 94°15'W), we witnessed human induced opportunistic predation by a Broad-winged Hawk on a southern flying squirrel. The incident occurred at approximately 1000 hours on 12 April 1991 in a longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) stand where we were examining cavities for occupants. RRS was climbing a tree that had two cavities at approximately 9 and 12 m above the ground. The climb required us to use four 3-m interlocking Swedish climbing ladders. As a ladder section was being put into place, two flying squirrels flushed from the lower cavity and climbed to and entered the upper cavity. At this time, an adult Broad-winged Hawk flew in and perched in a tree approximately 40 m from the cavity tree, apparently attracted by the movements of the squirrels. When RRS placed the fourth ladder section on the tree one flying squirrel flushed from the upper cavity. The hawk immediately flew from its perch and caught the squirrel in the tree's crown only 4 m above the climber's head. It then flew off out of sight with its prey.

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