

COOPER'S HAWK KILLS BELTED KINGFISHER

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Abstract: A Cooper's Hawk killed a Belted Kingfisher at a farm pond on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia.

Key words: Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*, Belted Kingfisher, *Ceryle alcyon*, predation, prey, diet, food.

On 22 November 1996 at 10:00 I watched, from 100 metres with an 8x binocular, as a Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) dropped from its perch on a willow overhanging a farm pond. Before it had plunged more than half of the three metres to the water a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) struck it from the side. The two birds fell together into the water. A flurry of splashes hid them from view for a few seconds. Then the raptor, holding the kingfisher, "rowed" about five metres to reach the shore. It rested with its prey at the pond's edge for about 10 seconds, then struggled up the metre-high bank to a mown path. The hawk stood for a full minute with its talons in or on the unmoving kingfisher, looking around and shaking itself. Partly screened from view by shrubs, the hawk began pulling feathers or flesh from the kingfisher, perhaps eating some of it. When I walked there an hour later I found only a few kingfisher feathers at the site.

Belted Kingfishers and Cooper's Hawks have similar continent-wide ranges and must share many specific habitats, yet a search of a dozen internet articles on Cooper's Hawk diets revealed no references to adult or

fledged Belted Kingfishers as prey of this raptor. Nor do Curtis *et al.* (2006) mention Belted Kingfishers in the diet of Cooper's Hawks. Further, Andrew Stewart of the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre and long-time researcher on Cooper's Hawks around southern Vancouver Island, said that he had never heard of this species preying on Belted Kingfishers (personal communication).

LITERATURE CITED

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Cooper's Hawk, photo by Andrew C. Stewart