HERBIVOROUS *THAMNOPHIS*?

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With regards to the article on fruit-eating snakes in Litteratura Serpentium by A.B. van Woerkom, I decided to see if my snakes, a pair of *Thamnophis radix haydeni*, would eat fruit under terrarium conditions. As I nearly always feed my snakes with tweezers, these were used with the fruit. In September 1982 and 1983 I fed both my snakes on several occasions with a piece of blue grape (not successful in 1984). During the winter of 1984 the male twice ate a piece of mandarine. I also tried other kinds of fruit, but these were not accepted. At first I skinned the fruit, removed the seeds, and offered only small strips. The fact that the snakes tongued the fruit frequently before eating, and they once ate several pieces in succession, it is my opininon that it was not a coincidence. Further, in my opinion, they will only accept fruit that smells and tastes sweet.
However, one must not overestimate the evidence of this experiment. It only shows that it could happen in nature. It is risky to refer to other cases where animals, that are believed to be solely carnivorous, have eaten herbivorous material. For example, a few people know that tigers sometimes eat grass or berries. But snakes are mostly, even in their regular food, more specialized than carnivorous animals. However, it would be interesting if everyone could test their own snakes.

REFERENCES

Woerkom, A.B. van, 1981. Fruit eating snakes.

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