

SHRIKES

Family LANIIDÆ

THIS family comprises a large number of species, and has alliances with the flycatchers on one side and with the *Timaliidæ* on the other.

The most characteristic feature is the bill, which is notched, and generally slightly hooked, and in the more typical forms compressed laterally, though some have it depressed like the flycatcher.

The wing has ten primaries and is long and pointed; the tail has twelve feathers, usually graduated, and as long or longer than the wing; the tarsi and feet are not specially strong.

Size, not very large, the biggest species less than a jay; colours, various, some of the African and Australian species brilliant.

Nests, open cups, built in trees and bushes, the eggs spotted. Young, usually cross-barred and streaked or spotted, many species taking two years to acquire the fully adult plumage. Sexes, often slightly different, or very different.

The family is spread over Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia, but the resident Australian and African forms differ largely from the Asiatic and European genera, and many birds are rather doubtfully included in the family.

Ten or twelve species occur in Malaya, of which five members of the genus *Lanius* are winter visitors or residents only. Four find a place in this volume.

KEY TO THE SPECIES HERE DESCRIBED

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| 1 | { | Size, larger head, strongly crested . . . | <i>Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus</i> , |
| | | | p. 253 |
| 2 | { | Size, smaller; head not crested . . . | 2 |
| | | Bill depressed, not strongly hooked . . . | <i>Hemipus hirundinaceus</i> , p. 255 |
| 3 | { | Bill compressed, strongly hooked . . . | 3 |
| | | Crown and back concolorous . . . | <i>Lanius cristatus cristatus</i> , p. 256 |
| | { | Crown; grey; back, chestnut . . . | <i>Lanius tigrinus</i> , p. 257 |

Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus

The Malay Jay-Shrike

Lophocitta ardesiaca, Cab., *Mus. Hein.*, i., 1850, p. 219 (Sumatra, substitute Malacca).

Platylophus ardesiacus, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1877, p. 317; Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1889, p. 477.

Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 314.

Malay Names.—Burong menjerit; burong berjambul; ōčlatok rimba (doubtful).

Description.—*Adult.*—Sexes alike. Head very heavily crested; two longest feathers 3 in. or over. Rictal bristles extremely strong. General colour, black; mantle and back, glossed with olive, with a slight ashy tinge below; the wing feathers slightly browner. On the sides of the neck, a large white patch with a faint creamy tinge, almost confluent on the nape; above and behind the eye a small white spot; beneath, with the chin and throat a little purer black, less tinged with grey than the rest of the under parts.

Immature.—The wing feathers much browner than in the adult, and the coverts broadly tipped with rusty buff; mantle, many of the feathers of the head, and the tips of the long crest feathers, chestnut; back and upper tail coverts, brown, the feathers with chestnut tips. Under surface, dark grey, with narrow white tips to the feathers, giving a barred effect. Still younger birds lack the longest crest feathers, the white neck patch is smaller, the upper surface more chestnut, and the buff tips to the wing coverts larger. Beneath, the belly, etc., is uniform grey without the white barring, with a large white patch in the middle. Bases of the under tail coverts, white. Subadult birds show narrow buffy hair-streaks on the shafts of the breast feathers.

Note.—This species appears to be very liable to fading. Freshly shot specimens are much blacker above and below, but cabinet skins soon acquire a greyish tinge on the belly, and become browner on the wings. The subject has been dealt with at length by Hume and Davison (*Stray Feathers*, vi., 1878, p. 381).

Soft Parts.—Iris, red or reddish brown; bill, black; feet, greenish black.

Dimensions.—Total length, 10 to 11 in.; wing, 5.1 to 5.5 in.; tail, 4.7 to 5.2 in.; tarsus, 1.3 in.; bill from gape, 1.3 to 1.4 in. Females are rather smaller.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Throughout its length but not on any of the islands.

Extralimital Range.—A short way into Southern Tenasserim and as far north as Koh Lak in South-West Siam. Closely allied forms occur in Borneo, Sumatra and Java.

Nidification.—Nothing whatever is as yet known.

Habits.—The jay-shrike is a common jungle bird throughout the Peninsula, but is found only in primeval forest, and not in secondary scrub or orchard-land. Though not met with in swamp forest or, as a rule, in low-lying country, it does not seem to ascend the mountains to more than 2500 ft., which is the upper limit of very many species. It frequents the lower trees and bushes, often among fallen timber, in parties of six or seven, which are incessantly in motion, the long crest usually elevated almost vertically above the head. It is an extremely noisy bird with a harsh, grating, rattling cry, from whence its Malay name, which means "shrieking," is derived.

Davison says that the bird feeds on beetles and insects generally, and my

Dyak collectors, who have at times collected all the known forms of the genus, say that it is very fond of large hairy caterpillars, though I cannot vouch for this personally.

Hemipus hirundinaceus

The Malay Pied Shrike

Muscicapa hirundinaceus, Temm., *Pl. Col.*, iii., 1824, pl. 119 (Java).

Hemipus obscurus, Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1889, p. 473.

Hemipus hirundinaceus, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 473.

Malay Name.—Unascertained.

Description.—*Adult male.*—Whole upper surface, except a broad, white bar on the rump, formed by the terminal halves of the feathers, glossy black, with a greenish tinge; wings and tail the same, the outer tail feathers with a broad, white edge on the inner webs, and a narrow one on the outer. Inner aspect of wing with the inner webs of the quills towards the base, brownish white; axillaries, lesser under wing coverts and edge of wing, white, the greater under wing coverts near the edge of the wing, blackish. Beneath, clearer white on a patch on the sides of the neck, belly, flanks and under tail coverts; clouded with grey on the breast; thighs, greyish.

Adult female.—As the male, but the black replaced by sooty brown; the greater upper tail coverts, glossy black, and the tail slightly glossed with greenish. Under wing coverts, greyish, and the edge of the wing not so conspicuously white; outer pair of tail feathers without the white edges.

Immature.—Like the adult female.

Soft Parts.—Iris, dark brown; bill, black; feet, black, the soles whitish. Immature males and females have the bill brownish black, with the bases of the lower mandible paler.

Dimensions.—Total length, about 5·7 in.; wing, 2·4 to 2·6 in.; tail, 2 to 2·1 in.; tarsus, 0·5 in.; bill from gape, 0·6 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—From about the latitude of Patani and Penang southwards to Johore. Doubtful on either Penang or Singapore; not on the other islands.

Extralimital Range.—Baker records it from Peninsular Burma, and from the Cachar Hills (once only). Common in Sumatra, Borneo and Java at low elevations.

Nidification.—There are no Malay Peninsula records of the nests and eggs. Baker describes a somewhat doubtful nest brought to him in Assam as a shallow cup of fine grasses bound together with cobwebs, and placed on a small branch of a tree in evergreen forest about six feet from the ground. Forbes obtained a single egg in West Java: "White, covered with tiny specks of purplish brown, larger and more thickly distributed near the larger end of the egg."

Habits.—Fairly common singly, in pairs, or small parties, in secondary jungle and open forest up to 1000 or 1500 ft., above which limit its place is taken by *Hemipus picatus*, a slightly larger bird with a white bar on the wing.

The present bird is also occasionally seen in gardens, on coconut-palms and trees in flower. It keeps as a rule to low trees and shrubs, and has very much the habits of a flycatcher, frequently catching insects on the wing. I am not acquainted with its note.

Lanius cristatus cristatus

The Brown Shrike

Lanius cristatus, Linn., *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 10), 1758, p. 93 (Bengal); Gadow, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, ix., 1883, p. 271; Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1889, p. 300; Ogilvie Grant, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 481.

Lanius cristatus cristatus, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 300.

Malay Name.—Merbah tana (*Patani*) (?).

Description.—*Adult.*—Sexes similar. Tail strongly graduated; head and back more or less concolorous.

Summer plumage.—Whole upper surface, including the inner upper wing coverts, brownish; the head with a strong reddish tinge; the upper tail coverts more rufous; greater wing coverts and tertials, blackish brown, strongly edged with pinkish buff; primaries and outer secondaries, uniform brown, with hardly visible pale edgings; inner aspect of wing, greyish, the quills with whitish edges to the inner webs; axillaries and under wing coverts, pale buffy, the outer series of the latter dusky; edges of the wing, white; tail feathers, brown with a reddish tinge, obscurely rayed with cross bars, only visible in certain lights, and edged and tipped with whitish. Extreme forehead and a superciliary stripe, white; lores, a narrow circle round the eye and the ear coverts, black. Beneath, throat, white; rest of the under surface, pale fulvous rufous; thighs, dusky. (This description is taken from birds shot in Junk Zeylon at the end of March and April in breeding plumage.)

Winter plumage.—Duller and less ruddy above, especially on the mantle, and much whiter beneath. (Birds shot in Peninsular Siam in October and November.)

Immature.—With indications of subterminal dark cross bars on the upper surface, most marked on the rump; lores and ear coverts, duller black; under surface, whiter; the flanks and sides of the breast with narrow black edges to the feathers.

Juvenile.—Top of the head, greyish, strongly barred with blackish, as is the rest of the upper surface; pale edges to the wing coverts, and inner secondaries deeper rufous buff, and broader.

Soft Parts.—Iris, dark; bill, pinkish horn, culmen and tip, dark; feet, greyish black.

Dimensions.—Total length, about 7.5 in.; wing, 3.3 to 3.5 in.; tail, 3.4 to 3.6 in.; tarsus, 0.85 to 1 in.; bill from gape, 0.9 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Throughout the Malay Peninsula as far

south as Malacca, and in the Langkawi Islands. I have not seen it from Johore or from Penang or Singapore.

Extralimital Range.—Breeds in Northern Asia and in Cachar; in winter throughout Northern India and the greater part of Indo-China.

Nidification.—Does not breed in the Malay Peninsula.

Habits.—The habits of the brown shrike are very much the same as those of the thick-billed species, and its distribution in the Malay Peninsula is the same, though the present bird is perhaps commoner in open country. It arrives from the north down the Straits of Malacca, and is often met with on the smaller islands both in autumn and spring. In the neighbourhood of Kuala Lumpur, in October and November, it is one of the commonest of birds, perching on the telegraph wires and other points of vantage. It is a noisy and quarrelsome bird with a scolding, chattering note, and I have never heard it sing.

The food is mainly locusts and other grasshoppers, though I once saw a shrike with a fledgeling munia, but this, I think, must be quite exceptional. Seimund has also once seen it spike a large grasshopper on a projecting, thorny branch, but this habit, too, seems rare with all the local shrikes.

Note.—Occurring with this species are two other races which may easily be confounded with it. One, *Lanius cristatus superciliosus*, is a redder bird, with a broader white forehead and superciliary stripe. It has been met with in several localities on the Peninsula and in Penang and Singapore, and is a breeding bird in Japan. The other, *Lanius cristatus luconiensis*, has the whole head dark lavender-grey, and is richer coloured beneath. It is less common than either of the other two forms, and the few specimens met with are usually adult. Worn and faded birds very closely resemble specimens of *L. c. cristatus* in a similar state of plumage.

Lanius tigrinus

The Thick-billed Shrike

Lanius tigrinus, Drapiez, *Dict. Class. Hist. Nat.*, xii., 1828, p. 523 (Java); Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind.*, i., 1889, p. 470; Ogilvie Grant, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 481; Stuart Baker, *op. cit.* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 305.

Malay Names.—Burong tirjup; burong papak; burong balai (*Kedah*).

Description.—*Adult male.*—The lores, cheeks and ear coverts and the region round the eye, black; head and nape, pale grey; back, rump, upper tail coverts and wing covert, chestnut-rufous, with narrow ill-defined bars of black; tail feathers, clear brown, rayed in certain lights with blackish bars, all but the central pair with narrow white tips, edged above with a faint black bar. Quills, brownish, the primaries narrowly, and the secondaries broadly, edged with rusty chestnut; inner aspect of wing, fuscous, with broad, buffy margins to the inner webs of the quills; axillaries, white; under wing coverts white, with narrow black markings. Under surface, pure white; the lower flanks tinged with buff and with narrow, black, transverse bars; thighs, mingled blackish and white.

Adult female.—It is probable that very fully adult females are precisely similar to the adult males, but, in a large number of cases, apparently adult females have the lores whitish, and the black stripe not carried over the eye.

Immature.—Above, dull rufous brown, greyer on the head, with blackish transverse bars and narrow, pale, shaft stripes on the nape; beneath, buffy white, with narrow, wavy black edgings to the feathers of the breast and flanks. Still younger birds have the head streaked, the feathers with greyish edges and yellowish white shaft stripes.

Soft Parts.—Iris, hazel; upper mandible, bluish grey, pinkish at the base, culmen, tip and edge, black; lower mandible, dirty-white; tip, blue-grey, black at the extreme tip; feet, bluish or purplish grey.

Dimensions.—Total length, about 6·5 in.; wing, 3·2 to 3·4 in.; tail, 2·7 to 2·9 in.; tarsus, 0·9 in.; bill from gape, 0·85 in.

Range in the Malay Peninsula.—Throughout its length; Penang, Singapore and the Langkawi group.

Extralimital Range.—Breeding in North-East Asia and Japan, and wintering in the Malay Archipelago and Indo-China, but only just reaching Southern Tenasserim.

Nidification.—Judging from the very young birds occasionally obtained, it is just on the bounds of possibility that this bird breeds in the Malay Peninsula. In Japan the nest is described as a deep cup, placed in low fruit trees, in gardens and orchards. The eggs are four to six to a clutch with a ground-colour of white or pale pink, strongly marked with red or reddish brown. The average dimensions of fifty eggs are given by Baker as 0·88 by 0·65 in.

Habits.—Commoner in the south of the Peninsula than in the north, and abundant on the coast and in open country, gardens, orchard-lands and the edges of ricefields from about the end of August to the beginning of April. As has been noted by both Hume and Grant, the immense majority of individuals from the Malay Peninsula are quite young, and of the very many that have passed through my hands only about a dozen have been really adult, with the pure grey head and neck.

The species has the same habits as others of the genus, taking up a post on an outstanding branch, or often on a telegraph wire or post, and thence searching for insects, usually grasshoppers, though I have seen it catch butterflies and winged termites. The call is harsh and disagreeable. I have never heard the "sweet and powerful song" attributed to it by Owston, which is perhaps uttered only in the breeding season.