

# SHRIKES

## Family LANIIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 253.

OF this family, as understood in this work, no single species is characteristically montane, though in the more southern parts of the Peninsula *Hemipus picatus* is rarely found at low levels. Of the others, the five species of Butcher-birds, *Lanius*, are all migratory, though their residence in Malaya during the winter months is prolonged. Only one, *Lanius tigrinus*, has been definitely recorded from the hills. Two other species are low-country jungle species, common in the lower hills, but barely reaching the lower slopes of the higher mountains.

They are included in the key, and briefly mentioned in the text, but the full account of them is reserved for a later volume.

### KEY TO THE SPECIES HERE DESCRIBED

1	{	Size larger, length, 10 in. or over ;	} <i>Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus</i> ,
		head strongly crested	
2	{	Size smaller, length, 8 in. or under ;	}
		head not crested . . . . .	
2	{	Bill not compressed, not very	}
		strongly hooked . . . . .	
4	{	Bill compressed, very strongly	}
		hooked . . . . .	
3	{	Larger, grey or pale brown above,	} <i>Tephrodornis gularis fretensis</i> , p. 251
		no white bar on wing . . . . .	
4	{	Smaller, black or sooty brown above,	} <i>Hemipus picatus picatus</i> , p. 252
		a white bar on wing . . . . .	
4	{	Crown and back nearly concolorous	} <i>Lanius cristatus</i> , and subspecies,
	{	Crown grey ; back chestnut . . . . .	} <i>Lanius tigrinus</i> , p. 254

### *Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus*

#### The Malay Jay-Shrike

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General colour, blackish, somewhat slaty below, a large creamy white patch on each side of the neck. Head with a long black crest, the longest feathers 3 in. or over. Total length, 10 to 11 in.

Within my experience the superior limit of this species is about 2500 ft. It is very common at Ginting Simpah and Ginting Bidei on the Selangor-Pahang border, and on the lower Negri Sembilan hills, Gunong Angsi, Bukit Tangga, etc., it is a very conspicuous bird. Wray records it, however, from the Batang Padang Mountains, South Perak, so that it may possibly be met with on Cameron's Highlands.

*Tephrodornis gularis fretensis*

**The Southern Malayan Wood Shrike**

*Tephrodornis pelvica fretensis*, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Straits Branch, Roy. Asiat. Soc.*, No. 81, 1920, p. 109 (Gunong Angsi, Negri Sembilan).

*Tephrodornis gularis* (nec Raffles), Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1877, p. 278; Butler, *Journ. Straits Branch, Roy. Asiat. Soc.*, No. 32, 1899, p. 17; Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 576; Robinson, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, i., 1905, p. 28; Grant, *op. cit.*, iii., 1908, p. 21.

*Tephrodornis gularis fretensis*, Robinson and Kloss, *Journ. Nat. Hist. Soc. Siam.*, v., 1923, p. 330.

**Malay Name.**—Merbah rimba (very much of a "book" name).

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—Above, grey, purest and lightest on the head and neck, becoming more ashy and browner on the mantle and back; a narrow band on the rump, white, the longest upper tail coverts black. Primaries and secondaries, brownish black, all but the outer primaries narrowly, and the secondaries broadly, edged on the outer webs with ashy; inner aspect of wing, under wing coverts and axillaries, grey. Tail feathers, ashy brown, paler on the edges, darker brown down the region of the shaft. A broad band through the eye from the lores, including the ear coverts, deep black. Chin, throat and cheeks, white, shading into vinaceous grey on the breast and flanks; middle of the belly and under tail coverts, white.

*Adult female.*—With no pure grey or black, these tints becoming earthy or dark brown, most of the feathers of the upper surface and the wing coverts with pale edges; band through eye, dark brown. Beneath, breast, pale clay-brown, not vinaceous grey, the white margin to the cheeks not at all conspicuous.

*Immature.*—Like the female, but the pale edging to the feathers, especially to the secondaries, much more marked; shafts of the primaries, secondaries and tail feathers, reddish brown. Very young birds are much cross-banded above and on the wing coverts with rufous blackish brown and buffy white.

**Soft Parts.**—*Male*: iris and feet, black or hazel, but often greenish yellow; in the female, browner; bill, black in the male, brown or corneous in the female; feet, greyish or plumbeous; the claws darker.

**Dimensions.**—Total length, 6.5 in.; wing, 3.9 to 4.2 in.; tail, 2.5 to 2.7 in.; tarsus, 0.65 in.; bill from gape, 0.9 in.; culmen, 0.7 in.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula.**—From about the latitude of Penang and Patani to the extreme south of the Peninsula.

**Extralimital Range.**—Over Eastern and Western Sumatra, but not in the extreme south and south-west of that island, where it is replaced by the Javan form, the true *T. g. gularis* (*T. virgatus*, Temm.). North of Penang a larger browner bird (*T. g. annectens*) is found.

**Nidification.**—Not known. The nest of the northern race, *T. gularis pelvica*, according to Stuart Baker, is a shallow cradle of roots, fine twigs, etc., fastened together with cobwebs and decorated with lichen and moss, lined with fine roots; it is placed on a horizontal fork or on the upper surface of a branch five to ten feet above the ground. The eggs, two or three in number, are a very variable ground-colour, white or pale green, spotted and blotched, sometimes very closely, with vandyke-brown. It will probably be found that the Malay bird builds its nest in very high trees.

**Habits.**—Throughout its range this bird inhabits heavy forest, sometimes at or near sea-level, sometimes as high as 3000 ft. or more. It is very local in its distribution, and from many localities is altogether absent, while in others, such as Gunong Angsi and others of the Negri Sembilan hills, it is one of the commonest birds. It is found in pairs or small parties, but sometimes in quite large flocks of twenty or thirty birds, which live mainly in the upper branches of the higher trees, but sometimes among bamboos, feeding on insects, and, in part at least, on fruit. I have never seen them on the ground, nor have they, in the least, the general habits of the true shrikes, with which they are, in my opinion, very doubtfully associated. In general behaviour they are more like minivets, though not so active and graceful on the wing. They are very noisy birds, continually uttering a harsh, chattering call, like the squabbling note of a Straits robin.

*Note.*—I am rather doubtful if this bird and the continental and Bornean races are rightly connected subspecifically to the small, very grey and black-tailed bird which inhabits Java and South-West Sumatra. The transition is certainly somewhat abrupt, and many ornithologists would prefer to call the Malayan bird *Tephrodornis pelvica fretensis*.

### *Hemipus picatus picatus*

#### The Black-backed Pied Shrike

*Muscicapa picata*, Sykes, *P.Z.S.*, 1832, p. 85 (Deccan).

*Hemipus picatus*, Sharpe, *Cat. Birds, Brit. Mus.*, iii., 1877, p. 307; Hartert, *Nov. Zool.*, ix., 1902, p. 576; Oates, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds*, i., 1890, p. 471; Ogilvie-Grant, *Journ. Fed. Malay States Mus.*, iii., 1908, p. 22.

*Hemipus picatus picatus*, Stuart Baker, *Faun. Brit. Ind., Birds* (2nd ed.), ii., 1924, p. 306.

**Description.**—*Adult male.*—Above, glossy black, an incomplete collar on the hind neck and a band on the rump, white. Wing, glossy black, with a long white bar, formed by the median coverts and the edges of the secondaries; inner aspect of the quills, grey, their inner margins narrowly white; axillaries and under wing coverts, white, with dark grey bases and centres; tail, black,

the four outer pairs of feathers with broad white tips, increasing in breadth outwardly, the outer web of the outermost almost entirely white. Extreme point of chin, and a line bordering the sides of the throat, white; rest of the under surface, brownish vinaceous grey; middle of the abdomen, whitish.

*Adult female*.—The glossy black of the male replaced by dark sooty brown, the head and area bordering the white rump usually distinctly more blackish.

**Soft Parts**.—Iris, black or dark brown; bill, black; feet, black or greyish black.

**Dimensions**.—Total length, 5·3 to 5·8 in.; wing, 2·5 to 2·7 in.; tail, 2·4 to 2·7 in.; tarsus, 0·5 to 0·6 in.; bill from gape, 0·65 to 0·75 in.; culmen, 0·5 to 0·55 in. Females have a somewhat smaller bill than the male.

**Range in the Malay Peninsula**.—Throughout the Malay Peninsula as far south as the Selangor mountains and in Pahang.

**Extralimital Range**.—Southern India and Ceylon, Bengal and throughout Burma to Tonkin and Annam. Mountains of Sumatra and Northern Borneo.

**Nidification**.—There are no breeding records from the Malay Peninsula. In Southern and South-Western India the bird nests from March onwards, building small, shallow, saucer-shaped nests of grass and roots, bound together with cobwebs, and placed high up in trees, often in very accessible situations. Eggs are two or three in number; the ground-colour is a pale greenish white, thickly blotched with inky black and with underlying marks of grey. Average dimensions, 0·59 by 0·49 in. (*Baker*).

**Habits**.—In Peninsular Siam, and as far south as Temengoh in Upper Perak, this flycatcher-shrike is common in very varied situations at low levels, in gardens, orchards, open country and dry jungle, and along the banks of rivers, but in more southern regions it is found only in the mountains, and in Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore it does not occur at all. It feeds very largely on quite small insects and beetles, and frequents flowering trees in search of these, though it also catches butterflies, beetles, flying ants and termites on the wing, hawking for them in a very flycatcher-like manner, and returning time after time to the same vantage-point.<sup>1</sup> I have never seen it on the ground. I am not acquainted with its note, nor does there seem to be any published information on the subject. In the south of the Peninsula, and in low country, this species is replaced by *Hemipus hirundinaceus*, a rather smaller, darker bird, with no white bar on the wing.

*Note*.—The bird from Sumatra and from the Bornean and Malay Peninsula mountains is considered by some ornithologists to be referable to a distinct subspecies, *Hemipus picatus intermedius*, Salvad., characterized by smaller size, darker coloration below, and greater extent of white in the tail feathers. When sufficiently large series from the different localities are compared it is, however, impossible to maintain geographical distinctions.

<sup>1</sup> In Borneo, however, Mr Whitehead denies that the bird is *Muscicapine* in its habits (*Ibis*, 1889, p. 190).

*Lanius tigrinus***The Thick-billed Shrike**

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Adults, which are always very greatly in the minority, have the cheeks black, the head and nape grey, the back and rump rufous chestnut, and the under surface white, slightly barred with black on the flanks. Immature birds are dull rufous brown above, with blackish transverse bars; beneath, buffy white, with narrow, wavy black edges to the feathers of the breast. Total length, 6.5 to 7 in.

This shrike is common throughout the southern two-thirds of the Peninsula from September to April, generally in the low country, though it has been met with on Gunung Kledang in December, above the Semangko Pass in February, and on the Negri Sembilan hills. It is within the bounds of possibility that it will be found breeding in the country, though there is as yet no evidence that it does so.

*Lanius cristatus cristatus***The Brown Shrike**

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More uniform above than *Lanius tigrinus*, and never so strongly barred beneath; tail relatively longer and bill not so large or so compressed laterally. Size, rather larger; total length, 7.5 to 8 in.

Neither this race, which is extremely common in the winter months over the whole of the low country of the Malay Peninsula, nor its related forms, have as yet been recorded from the mountains. The present bird at least may be expected to occur, possibly for a few days only, in September and October, and again in March.