

SHRIKES

Family LANIIDÆ

Vol. I., p. 253; Vol. II., p. 250.

THE shrikes form a large family of small birds closely related to the flycatchers and the babblers. The bill is usually slightly hooked and always notched like that of a bird of prey. In a minority of the known forms it is slightly flattened from above, but in the majority of cases the bill is compressed laterally, that is, from side to side.

The wing is long and pointed and has ten primaries. The tail of twelve feathers is long and in most cases graduated.

In the local species the plumage is dull, but in many of the others, notably in Africa and Australia, bright colours are often met with. Most shrikes are small birds, but a few attain a size nearly equal to that of a jay.

The spotted eggs are laid in open cup-like nests, which are placed in bushes and trees.

The sexes usually differ slightly in plumage: in some cases the difference is very marked. Except in some anomalous forms, the young birds are characterized by having the under parts cross-barred, streaked or spotted.

The family is very widely distributed, except in South America, but it is chiefly an Old World group. Its limits are difficult to define, and the shrikes form a heterogeneous assembly in which many of the tropical resident forms differ widely from the representatives of the family breeding in Europe and non-tropical Asia.

Readers interested in the bird-life of Europe will immediately associate the shrikes, or butcher-birds as they are often called, with their curious, but well-known habit of impaling their prey, usually consisting of large insects and small mammals, birds and reptiles, on long thorns, but the true shrikes that winter in the Malay Peninsula seem not to have this habit of keeping regular "larders," although they have been seen to impale large grasshoppers, which insects form a large part of the food.

Eleven forms are found in the Malay Peninsula, but none properly finds a place in the present volume, for if they have not been dealt with in our first two volumes, they are migratory or open-country forms.

KEY TO THE MALAYAN SHRIKES

- I { Head with a long crest. General } *Platylophus galericulatus ardesi-*
plumage, blackish with a white } *acus*, p. 337
neck patch
Head uncrested; under parts much
paler than upper parts 2

2	{	A white patch on the rump	3	
		Rump, brown to rufous	5	
3	{	Large: wing about 4 in.; a black patch on the side of the head	4	} <i>Tephrodornis gularis</i> subsp., p. 338
		Small: wing about 2.5 in.; sides of head and crown uniformly dark		
4	{	Outer tail feathers largely white; a white bar across the wing		} <i>Hemipus picatus picatus</i> , p. 338
		Tail and wings without conspicuous white		
5	{	A conspicuous white patch in the wing; tail, long and black		} <i>Lanius schach bentet</i> , p. 340
		No white patch in the wing; tail, shorter and brown	6	
6	{	A blue-grey crown, contrasting with a rufous-brown back		} <i>Lanius tigrinus</i> (adult), p. 338
		Crown and back, brown to rufous and almost concolorous	7	
7	{	Upper parts heavily barred		} <i>Lanius tigrinus</i> (immature), p. 338
		Upper parts unbarred (adults) or with obsolete bars (younger birds)		

*Platylophus galericulatus ardesiacus***The Malay Jay-Shrike**

Vol. I., p. 253; Vol. II., p. 250.

The sexes are alike and both carry a long crest, about 3 in. in length, on the head. The general plumage is black, washed with olive on the upper parts and with grey below. On each side of the neck there is a large white patch.

Total length, about 10.5 in.; wing, 5.3 in.

The jay-shrike is a common resident in lowland forest throughout the whole length of the Malay Peninsula. It is a noisy bird, usually seen in small parties. Normally it avoids secondary growth, cultivated areas and settlements. The food is mainly large insects. There is no record of the nest and eggs from the Peninsula.

*Hemipus hirundinaceus***The Malay Pied-Shrike**

Vol. I., p. 255.

The male is glossy black above, with a broad white bar on the rump. The under parts are white, washed with grey on the breast. In females dark brown replaces the glossy black of males.

Total length, about 5.7 in.; wing, 2.5 in.

This small shrike is common and resident in forest and secondary growth

throughout the lowlands of the Malay States. It sometimes enters gardens, where it is conspicuous on account of its flycatcher-like habits. Mr A. T. Edgar has found the eggs in Perak at the beginning of May. The nest was ten feet from the ground in a small tree on a forested hillside. It was slung in a fork of small twigs near the end of a lateral branch. It was a shallow saucer made of soft, fibrous material, and much adorned on the rim and outside with cobweb and some bits of green moss. Mr Edgar describes the two eggs as follows: "Broad, blunt ovals, not glossy, and measuring 0.69 by 0.52 in. Ground-colour, greyish white with a faint greenish tinge. Markings, spots of dull brown or buffy yellow, more or less confined to a zone at the larger end."

Hemipus picatus picatus

The Black-backed Pied-Shrike

Vol. II., p. 252.

This species is very like the preceding one, but it is distinguished by having a white bar across the wing: furthermore, the outer tail feathers are tipped with white. In the north of the Peninsula it is common and resident in the lowlands, in forest, cultivated areas and secondary growth. Farther south it is purely a mountain bird, and from the extreme south of the Peninsula it is unknown. There is no Malayan record of the nest and eggs.

Tephrodornis gularis fretensis

The Southern Malayan Wood-Shrike

Vol. II., p. 251.

The male is grey above, faintly washed with brown on the back. The under parts are white, tinged with grey on the breast. A broad, black patch is conspicuous on each side of the head. The rump is white, and the longer upper tail coverts are black. Females are less decisively coloured and have the upper parts greyish brown and the under parts washed with brown.

Total length, about 6.5 in.; wing, 4 in.

A resident bird in the lowland forests, but very locally distributed, and unrecorded from many localities where it would seem likely to occur. In the lowlands it is nowhere so numerous as in specified submontane districts, such as certain of the Negri Sembilan hills, where it is common. There is no published record of the nest and eggs. North of about the latitude of Penang and Patani the southern form is replaced by a slightly larger and browner bird, *T. gularis annectens*, originally described from Trang, in Peninsular Siam.

Lanius tigrinus

The Thick-billed Shrike

Vol. I., p. 257; Vol. II., p. 254.

Adults have the top of the head and the mantle bluish grey, and the remaining upper parts rich chestnut. A broad black patch covers each side

of the head. The under parts are white, slightly barred with dusky on the flanks. Birds in this plumage are not often seen in the Malay Peninsula, where immature birds are much more numerous. These latter have the upper parts rufous-brown, heavily barred with black and spotted with buff. On the under parts they are creamy white, with narrow, wavy, dusky bars.

Total length, about 6·5 in. ; wing, 3·3 in.

This shrike breeds in North-East Asia and Japan, and visits Malaysia in the winter months, during which it is very common in open country, cultivated land and gardens in the south of the Peninsula, but much less numerous in the north.

Lanius cristatus subsp.

The Brown Shrike

Vol. I., p. 256; Vol. II., p. 254.

This shrike occurs in Malaya as a migrant only. It is divided into a number of subspecies (geographical races), each with its own breeding-grounds, which, in the case of the local forms, are situated far to the north in Eastern Siberia, Mongolia, China, Japan, etc. In the autumn the birds move south, and then, and in the succeeding winter months, no less than four races are met with in the Malay Peninsula. In adult plumage these races are not difficult to differentiate, and typically they are very distinct, but young birds are often more difficult to identify, as their plumage is more generalized and intermediate in character. The species will be dealt with in detail in our next volume. The forms occurring in the Peninsula are :

Lanius cristatus cristatus.—Sexes alike. *Breeding plumage*: upper parts, brown, with a reddish tinge on the crown. A narrow band across the forehead and narrow superciliary stripes, white. Loes and ear coverts, black. Throat, white; remaining under parts, buff. Birds in this plumage are not often seen in the Malay Peninsula. In *winter plumage* the upper parts are duller, and the under parts are whiter and only tinged with buff. *Immature birds* form a majority of the visitors to the Peninsula. They are narrowly barred with dusky on the under parts and there are also obsolete bars on the upper parts, especially on the rump.

Total length, about 7·5 in. ; wing, 3·4 in.

The main breeding-grounds of this form are in South and East Siberia.

L. cristatus superciliosus breeds in Japan. It is much brighter above than the typical race, and the crown especially is much more tinged with red. The white forehead and superciliary stripes are broader than in *L. c. cristatus*.

L. cristatus lucionensis is the breeding bird of most of China and Korea. Adults differ from those of *L. c. cristatus* in that the top of the head is pale grey, not reddish brown. In young birds the upper parts are dull brown and lack all reddish tinge.

L. cristatus confusus breeds in Amurland and Eastern Manchuria. It is extremely like *L. c. cristatus*, but is slightly paler and less richly coloured on the upper parts; the white band across the forehead is a little broader.

*Lanius schach bentet***The Grey-backed Shrike**

A large, long-tailed species, with the forehead, cheeks, wings and tail, black; the mantle, pale grey; the rump, rufous-buff; and the under parts, white, washed with pale rufous on the flanks. A hidden patch of white in the wing.

Total length, about 9·6 in.; wing, 3·5 in.; tail, about 5 in.

This shrike is far from common in the Malay Peninsula, although at times it appears in fair numbers in the open country near Kuala Lumpur in the winter months. There is no local record of the nest and eggs, but Captain T. P. Coe, M.C., who sends me interesting bird notes from time to time, is certain that he has seen the species near Kuala Lumpur in April and thence up to the end of August.