

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Northern Shrike-Blue Jay Interplay: A regular visitor at Amity Lake from 8-27 January 1984, a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) usually appeared with a noisily protesting flock of seven to 18 Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*). At other times the sudden disappearance or "freezing" of small birds at the feeder betrayed its presence. Slightly smaller than the Blue Jays and with no crest, the bird was light gray above with a dusky-white faintly barred breast and a black eye mask ending at the hooked bill. When I was in the field near Amity Lake on 25 January, 18 screaming Blue Jays followed the shrike as it flew up to perch near the top of a 35-foot White Ash about 75 feet from me. All but one of the jays flew on past, but one lit near the shrike which began calling a musical soft *Zree-zree-zree*, each note individually descending. Although the jays quieted down, the shrike continued its song(?), changing it at times to a short musical *chilrrr*, ascending at the end, or a lovely watery chuckling. As I watched using 7 x 50 binoculars, it suddenly flew to my left about 50 feet to perch ten feet up in a big hawthorn where the single Blue Jay immediately followed to a branch two feet above it. Here the shrike fanned its tail, displaying the white outer feathers, and bowed repeatedly, still "singing" and sometimes adding a thin, short, descending "Meow" to its repertoire. The jay, too, began to bow and fan its tail showing its outer white tail feathers, but insofar as I could determine, making no call. The interplay continued about three minutes before both flew away out of sight. Although the significance of this mutual showing off escapes me, it was a pretty sight.

Vivian Mills Pitzrick, Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813