

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Shrike Survives Collision: Feeder birds exploded in all directions as a mass of gray feathers crashed into the picture window at 2:10 P.M. here at Amity Lake, Allegany County. Sprawled on the ground with hook-tipped beak open, black wings and tail askew but bright eyes open and heart pounding furiously, the mockingbird-sized slate gray bird was alive!

The head and neck were much heavier than a mockingbird's, a black mask extended from the hooked bill back through the eye, the wings showed a narrow white patch, the tail was boldly edged in white and the buffy breast was faintly barred horizontally, but the feet were weak — not talons as would be consistent with the raptor bill. Instead of a Northern Mockingbird, which has a more slender bill with no hook, larger white wing patches but no eye mask or brown breast stripes, this was a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*.) It was not a Loggerhead Shrike as the eye mask did not extend along the top of the bill.

Hoping it would recover, I carefully laid the shrike in a ventilated box with cover secure. In about a half hour it was rattling the box energetically, and I took it out, holding it first cupped under my hand with its head through between the index and third fingers. Not being a bander, I hadn't realized there was too much bird (so strong, so solid, so big!) to hold this way and so I carefully grasped the legs, index finger between them, close to the body. The bird appeared to be in good condition with plenty of fat. At first it seemed very docile, but not for long. As we tried for a picture, my left hand supporting the breast became a target for the bill, each touch punching a tiny hole drawing a droplet of blood. After multiple samplings, it finally found a better place, the fleshy edge next to the fourth finger nail, where it clamped down hard, twisting at the same time. *Then* I hunted up a leather glove!

In a few minutes when I stepped to the porch to open my hands, the bird stood on the glove momentarily looking around — such a beautiful bird! — and then flew to a low bush nearby to sit for about ten minutes before flying into conifers to the west. As it was then about 3:00 P.M., it should have been able to find food before dark.

This arrival date, 23 November 1987, of the shrike was four days earlier than the one of five years ago.

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