

Shrike Captures Cardinal. "What was that!?" Mike exclaimed, snatching up his 10x50 binoculars as one bird pursued another across the yard. Vivian, quickly grabbing her 7x35's, joined him at the picture window. A gray robin-sized bird with black wings perched quietly in a willow tree about 50 feet away. Although the light was good even with the overcast sky, the bird was facing away, revealing few details. Suddenly a bright red male Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) bolted out over the frozen lake from a lower branch. Immediately the agile gray bird darted in pursuit, striking its slower prey again and again from above, finally grounding it, and then pinning it with its feet while pecking its head. Amazingly, the gray bird then clutched the cardinal with its feet and carried it head first back to within about thirty feet from the window. Plunging into the seven-inch snow cover beneath a honeysuckle bush, again the gray bird repeatedly struck the struggling cardinal with its heavy hooked beak until at last there was no movement from the smaller bird. By this time both birds had disappeared into the snow. However, at intervals the predator lifted its head to look around, revealing the heavy head and neck of a shrike. While it could not be determined whether the black eye mask stopped at the beak or continued over it, this was probably the same bird Vivian identified as a Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) here on 26 November 1991, when she was able to see more clearly the mask as well as a bit of white in the wings and at the outer margins of the long tail.

This episode occurred at 8:00 A.M. on 18 December 1991. At midday, examination of the hole in the snow where the shrike had killed the cardinal revealed not so much as a feather or drop of blood, and no tracks led to or from the spot.

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