THE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE.

†LANIUS LUDOVICIANUS, *Linn.*

PLATE CCXXXVII.—MALE AND FEMALE.

This species may with great propriety be called an inhabitant of the "Low Countries," as it is seldom or never met with even in the vicinity of the mountains intersecting the districts in which it usually resides. It is also confined to that portion of our country usually known under the name of the Southern States, seldom reaching farther eastward than North Carolina, or farther inland than the State of Mississippi, in which latter, as well as in Louisiana, it appears only during the winter months. Its chief residence may, therefore, be looked upon as the Floridas, Georgia, and the Carolinas. In these States, it is seen along the fences and bushes about the rice plantations, at all seasons, and is of some service to the planter, as it destroys the field-mice in great numbers, as well as many of the larger kinds of grubs and insects, upon which it pounces in the manner of a Hawk.

The Loggerhead has no song, but utters a shrill clear creaking prolonged note, resembling the grating of a rusty hinge slowly moved to and fro. This sound is heard only during the spring season, and whilst the female is sitting. About the beginning of March these birds begin to pair. They exhibit at this time few of those marks of the tender affection which birds usually shew. The male courts the female without much regard, and she, in return, appears to receive his haughty attentions with merely just as much condescension as enables her to become the mother of a family, whose feelings are destined to be of the same cold nature.

The nest is fixed in a low bush, generally near the centre of a dwarf hawthorn, and is so little concealed as to be easily discovered. It is coarsely constructed of dry crooked twigs, and is lined with fibrous roots and slender grasses. The eggs, which are of a greenish-white, are from three to five. Incubation is performed by the male as well as by the female, but each searches for its own food during the intervals of sitting.

The young are at first fed on crickets, grasshoppers, and other insects; but as they become larger and stronger, they receive portions of mice, which form the principal food of the grown birds at all seasons. The Loggerheads rear only one brood in the season.

Whilst this species is on wing, its motions are very rapid and direct, its

flight being produced by quick flutterings of the wings, without any apparent undulation. The bird alights in a sudden firm manner, like a Hawk, stands erect, silent and watchful, until it spies its prey on the ground, when it suddenly pounces upon it, striking it first *with its bill*, but seizing it with its claws so immediately after, that the most careful observation alone can enable one to decide as to the priority of either action. I have never seen it attack birds, nor stick its prey on thorns in the manner of the Great American Shrike.

This bird appears in Louisiana only at intervals, and seldom remains more than a few weeks in December or January. It never comes near houses, although it frequents the fields around them. It has no note at this period, and appears singly, alighting on the stacks and fences, where it stands perched for a considerable time, carefully looking around over the ground. As soon as the spot is thoroughly examined, it flies off to another, and there renews its search.

I have received specimens of our Loggerhead Shrike, of both sexes and of various ages, from Mr. TOWNSEND, who procured them on the Rocky Mountains and in the Columbia river district. These specimens are in no respect different from those which I have obtained in South Carolina, where it is plentiful. That this species should occur on both sides of the continent is not very remarkable, as several other birds are in the same predicament. The Fish Crow, for example, affords a more striking instance, as it is rarely found beyond the maritime districts; whereas the Loggerhead Shrike extends its movements far inland in the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. This species has been given as new, under the name of *Lanius Excubitoroides*, in the Fauna Boreali-Americana; but the description and figure indicate nothing peculiar; and the nest and eggs described by Mr. DRUMMOND, especially the latter, are similar to those of the Carolina-bird.

My account of the habits of this species being meagre, I have great pleasure in laying before you the observations of my friend the Rev. Dr. BACHMAN, who has had much better opportunities of studying them. "Your description of this bird requires, I think, many additions. You say it has no song. This is true in part, but it has other notes than the grating sounds you attribute to it. During the breeding season, and indeed nearly all summer, the male ascends some cedar or other tree, and makes an effort at a song, which I cannot compare to anything nearer than the first attempts of a young Brown Thrush. He seems to labour hard, making as it were almost painful exertions. At times the notes are not unpleasing, but very irregular.

"You speak of the male shewing but little attachment to the female. I have thought differently, and so would you were you to watch him carrying every now and then a grasshopper or cricket to her, pouncing upon the

Crow and even the Buzzard, that approach his nest, and invariably driving these intruders away. Indeed I consider these birds as evidencing great attachment toward each other.

"I have usually found the nest on the outer limbs of a tree, frequently the live-oak, sometimes the black-gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and often on a cedar, from fifteen to thirty feet from the ground. Once only I saw it lower, on the toothache bush, *Xanthoxylum*, about ten feet high.

"I have occasionally seen this bird with young mice in its mouth, and have found it feeding on birds that had apparently been wounded by the sportsman. It sometimes catches young birds and devours them; but I am induced to think, from the observation of many years, that the food of the Loggerhead Shrike consists principally of insects. Grasshoppers and crickets are preferred; coleopterous and other insects are also frequently seized; and I have seen it catch moths and butterflies on wing. This bird has the same propensity as the Northern Shrike, to stick grasshoppers and other insects on thorns. I have seen one occupy himself for hours in sticking up in this way a number of small fishes that the fishermen had thrown on the shore; but I never found either this or the Northern Shrike return to seek this prey for food at any other time; but on the contrary, the fishes dried up and decayed. I have seen them alight on the same thorn-bush afterwards, but never make use of this kind of food. May it not be the same propensity which Jays have, who conceal nuts and grain, and apparently do not return to devour them?

"The Loggerheaded Shrike is partially migratory in Carolina. A few may be found through the winter; but the number is ten times greater in summer; and such is also the case with the Mocking-bird. It appears fond of the little changeable Green Lizard (*Anolis Carolinensis*, Cuv.), and I have seen exertions of skill and activity on the one part in seizing, and on the other in avoiding their enemy, but the reptile, in spite of all its agility, is frequently secured. On one occasion I had marked a lizard of this species on a fence. It was then beautifully green; but on being chased by a Shrike, which observing me flew off, I found that it had become quite brown.

"This species breeds twice in a season, lays four and sometimes five white eggs. Occasionally it feeds on the small black berries of a species of *Smilax*; this is in winter, when it is probably pinched for food. I have noticed it building its nest in the same tree for a succession of years, never repairing an old nest but always building a new one."

According to Mr. SWAINSON this species is found on the table-land of Mexico, where it is very common.

I have given you, kind reader, the representation of a pair of these Shrikes, contending for a mouse. The difference of plumage in the sexes is

scarcely perceptible; but I have thought it necessary to figure both, in order to shew the quarrelsome disposition of these birds even when united by the hymeneal band.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, *Lanius Carolinensis*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 57.

LANIUS LUDOVICIANUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 72.

LANIUS EXCUBITOROIDES, *American Grey Shrike*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 115.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 261.

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, *Lanius ludovicianus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 300; vol. v. p. 435.

Third quill longest, fourth scarcely shorter, second and sixth equal; tail rather long, graduated; bill black, upper parts deep leaden-grey, lower greyish-white, the sides bluish-grey; a streak of whitish over the eye, and margining the forehead; loreal space, and a patch behind the eye, black; posterior scapulars almost entirely white; quills and coverts black, secondaries narrowly tipped with white; bases of primaries white, forming a conspicuous patch on the extended wing; tail-feathers black, all except the middle pair white at the end, that colour occupying nearly two-thirds of the outer, and gradually diminishing on the rest. Female with the plumage somewhat darker. Young brownish-white beneath, the breast and sides transversely barred with dark grey.

Male, $8\frac{1}{2}$, 13.

From Louisiana to Carolina, laterally to the Columbia river, and northward to the Fur Countries. Abundant. Resident in the south. Migratory in the north.

A male preserved in spirits measures $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length; extent of wings 12; wing from flexure 4; tail $4\frac{1}{2}$.

The roof of the mouth is as in the other species; its width 7 twelfths; the tongue is 6 twelfths, the posterior aperture of the nares 5 twelfths. The lobes of the liver are very unequal, the right being the largest. The œsophagus is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, 4 twelfths in width, but on entering the thorax contracting to $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths; the proventriculus 3 twelfths. The stomach is irregularly elliptical, a little compressed; the muscles thin, especially the lower; the epithelium thin, tough, brownish-red, with longitudinal rugæ. The intestine is 9 inches long, from 3 twelfths to 1 twelfth wide; the cœca extremely small, $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths long, $\frac{1}{4}$ twelfth wide; the cloaca small and oblong.

The trachea is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, moderately flattened, $1\frac{3}{4}$ twelfths broad at the commencement, 1 twelfth at the lower part; the rings firm, about 56, with 2 dimidiate rings. The lateral muscles are very slender, as are the sterno-tracheal, and there are four pairs of inferior laryngeal muscles on each

side, forming a large pad, as in the Thrushes. In this respect the Shrikes resemble the *Turdinæ* and *Sylvianæ*, much more than the Flycatchers, of which the inferior laryngeal muscles are small and blended. The bronchi are moderate, of about 12 half rings.

THE GREEN BRIAR, OR ROUND-LEAVED SMILAX.

SMILAX ROTUNDIFOLIA, *Willd.*, Sp. Pl., vol. iv. p. 779. *Pursh*, Flor. Amer., vol. i. p. 250.
—DIOECIA HEXANDRIA, *Linn.*—ASPARAGI, *Juss.*

This species of *smilax*, which is common along fences, in old fields, and by the borders of woods, is characterized by its shrubby stem, round branches, roundish-ovate, acuminate, slightly cordate, five or seven-nerved leaves, and spherical berries. It flowers in May and June. The berries are of a dark purple colour.

THE FIELD MOUSE.

This species is found in all parts of the United States, living in the meadows and woods. It forms narrow subterranean passages, to which it resorts on the least appearance of danger, but from which it is easily driven, by thrusting a twig into them.

Great American Shrike.

1. Male. 2. Female. 3. Young.

Crataegus Spirofolia.

Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Loggerhead Shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus*, Linn. [Pl. 237]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 135–139. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319350>.

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