

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION
OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

Species: Northern Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) Number: I

Location: Six miles no. of Decorah, Winneshiek County, Iowa Time: 0730 to 0745

Date: March 31, 1979 Description: The size of the bird was about that of a robin. Bill color was mostly dark. A dark black mask extending from upper part of bill to auriculars, this dark area surrounded lower half of eye. The mask didn't meet over the bill. A white line meeting over bill running back to include upper half of eye, lores, much of superciliary and ending on nape. The upper part of head, nape, scapulars and back were a light grey. Wings were mostly black with white areas at base of outer primaries, on edge of inner greater wing coverts, and on trailing edge of secondaries. Tail was mostly dark with much white in outer feathers. Rump was white, this white extended to lower back. Throat, breast, belly, sides and under tail were white. The vermiculations were mostly lacking. The shrike appeared big headed and had a strongly hooked bill, the upper end of which was rather visible protruding downward.

Behavior: The shrike was first observed on a low powerline near a smaller Red-winged Blackbird. It was tame and let my car approach closely. The bird was actively searching for prey, and scanning area. Posture was rather flat, with head, body and tail being held horizontally. The bird frequently yawned and repeatedly moved, with a short flight, along the powerline as I pressed close. Finally it took a long flight away from me so terminating my observation.

Similar species: The Loggerhead Shrike has a stubbier less strongly hooked bill, and has less white in facial pattern and black mask meeting over bill.

Distance: The subject several times was approached and studied within 40 feet.

Optical equipment: The bird was studied with a Bushnell Spacemaster 20x45 powered scope, usually at full power.

No books or other observers were consulted.

Detailed notes were taken at time of sighting and are the basis of this document.

Date: April 15, 1979

Address: St. Lucas, IA, 52166

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