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## Books

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# Books

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**SHRIKES AND BUSH-SHRIKES - INCLUDING WOOD-SHRIKES, HELMET-SHRIKES, FLY-CATCHER-SHRIKES, PHILENTOMAS, BATISES, AND WATTLE-EYES.** By Tony Harris. Illustrated by Kim Franklin. 2000. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 392 pp. \$49.50.

This book is the second, to my knowledge, treatment of shrikes of the world since 1997. The first was Norbert Lefranc and Tim Worfolk's "Shrike -A Guide to Shrikes of the World," published by Pica Press, Sussex, in 1997. That work was the first volume to treat all 31 species of true shrikes (Laniidae) in one volume. Harris deals with 114 species, including 30 species of true shrikes. Harris lumps Uhehe Shrike (*Lanius marwizi*) as a race within Common Fiscal Shrike (*L. collaris*).

The book is divided into four sections. The introduction is divided further into two. First, the history and characteristics of shrikes are discussed in eight pages. Harris reveals a strong interest in behavior and communication (songs and calls). He provides a methodology to define species based in large part on those characteristics. Included is a succinct summary of the species concept and associated problems. Secondly, 31 pages are devoted to Harris' primary interest, the communication behavior of the 21 genera included in the book.

The second section consists of 83 pages of plates illustrating the 114 species. The plates highlight differences in sex, age, polymorphism and geographic variation to a certain extent. The illustrations are good. Opposite the illustrations Harris has included range maps and some brief discussion of species characteristics and a cross-reference to the species summary in the main text. Although the author provides a caveat that range maps are general, I was still disappointed to find significant errors in the breeding ranges shown for both Loggerhead Shrike and Great Grey (Northern) Shrike, the two species with which I am familiar. Loggerhead Shrike is indicated to breed

much farther north than it does and Northern Shrike is shown incorrectly as breeding in northern Alberta.

The third section is the substance of the book and consists of 216 pages of species accounts. As appropriate, each account deals with "Field Identification," "Characteristics," "Flight," "Comparisons," "Description," "Geographical Variation," "Hybrids and Abnormal Plumage," "Moult," "Range," "Habitat and Status," "Movements," "Social Organization and General Behaviour," "Sounds," "Breeding Biology" and "Measurements and Weights." Accounts range from as short as a page to five or more.

Being most familiar with the Loggerhead Shrike, I critiqued its account as a sample of Harris' thoroughness. This species is covered in four pages. The Comparisons section for this species is over emphasized. Differences between the Northern and Loggerhead shrikes are more marked than indicated and they seldom overlap in distribution, as Loggerheads migrate south well before the first Northerns appear and do not return north until the chance of encountering a Northern is very small. Numerous races are described enthusiastically under Geographical variation even though it has been shown that the quantitative criteria for these are invalid. A species with this large a range should show variation stemming from adaptation to local habitat characteristics and it apparently does. However, the significance that should be attributed to this variation is highly debatable. Unlike Harris, my preference would be to deemphasize geographic variation unless it is more than clinal.

The section on Range, Habitat and Status is particularly well done and provides a summary of the conservation status of the species across its range. This is very useful to managers and regulators and I am not aware of similar treatment elsewhere. On the other hand, migration phenology is general and somewhat misleading under Movements. Loggerhead Shrikes arrive in the Canadian prairies during the first week of May, later than the March-April period indicated.

The bulk of the rest of the account seems thorough, with one caveat. In my view, geographic variation manifests itself in more interesting ways than plumage variation. Clutch size, prey base, nesting substrate and numerous other characteristics vary across latitudinal and longitudinal gradients. Although Harris acknowledges this, he does not deal with it in the detail that existing quantitative information would allow. For example, he indicates clutch size as "usually 4-5 (1-7)." At the species' northern range limit in the Canadian prairies, modal clutch size is six and has been recorded up to nine. Undoubtedly this is an expression of the species' attempt to maximize the one breeding attempt that is normally possible there.

The most noticeable absence within the species accounts, from a *NABB* reader's perspective, is the lack of specific reference to banding data. I suspect that information derived from banding is synthe-

sized within the species accounts, but no individual recoveries or insights gained from banding appear to be discussed.

The fourth section of the book consists of 35 pages of references and two appendices listing taxonomic and systematic problems and potential taxonomic characters.

In summary, this volume is a very clear, organized and thorough treatment of the 114 species considered, with emphasis on Harris' areas of special interest: speciation, behavior and sounds. Notwithstanding my criticism of details above, this book will occupy a prominent spot on my shelf and be referred to frequently.

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**Northern Shrike by George West**