

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*LANIUS LUDOVICIANUS*)



Description

The loggerhead shrike is a robin-sized bird with a length of 9 inches (23 cm) and a raptor-like, hooked bill. It has a bluish-gray plumage above with a whitish coloration below. Compared to other birds, its head is large in proportion to its body size, hence the name 'loggerhead'. Most distinctive is the black eye mask, and in flight, the white wing patches on the contrasting dark wings. It can be distinguished from the northern mockingbird, which it resembles in flight, by darker wing and smaller white wing patches. Additionally, the mockingbird lacks the

conspicuous black mask and hooked bill, and has slower wing beats.

Habitat

This species inhabits open areas such as savannahs and deserts where shrubs, small trees, or other perch sites are available. Also called the 'butcher bird,' the loggerhead shrike is an impressive predator that characteristically impales its prey on thorns, barbed wire, or other sharp projections. Lacking talons, the impaling behavior represents a unique adaptation to aid in the consumption of larger prey. Diet includes a variety of insects and spiders, small reptiles, rodents, and small birds.

Range/distribution

The loggerhead shrike is a year-round resident throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/photo by Gary M. Stolz, National Image Library, URL: <http://images.fws.gov>, accessed September 9, 2002

References

- Yosef, R. 1996. Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 231 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.