

Entanglement in Nest Material Causes Mortality of Young Loggerhead Shrikes

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Entanglement in synthetic material (e.g., fishing line, plastic six pack rings, etc.) is a known cause of mortality in birds. While a variety of synthetic materials may be used in nest construction by birds, to my knowledge there are no published reports of synthetic material causing mortality at the nest.

Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*) often include synthetic materials in the base of their nests. These materials include glass, paper, rags, string (Bent 1950), cigarette filters (Lohrer 1974), metal and plastic (Slack pers. obs.). During a banding study of a breeding population of Loggerhead Shrikes, the author documented mortality of young Loggerhead Shrikes (not banded) caused by entanglement in string used in nest construction. Observations were made in Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi.

The first case occurred at a nest (4.4 m above ground level) placed in a Carolina laurel cherry (*Prunus caroliniana*). Five nestlings fledged from this nest on 23 April 1990. On 27 April, the adults were observed feeding the fledglings in several trees near the nest tree. On 28 April, a dead fledgling shrike (ca. 24 days old) was found hanging from the nest by a piece of string. The adults were feeding four fledglings in nearby trees. Examination of the dead fledgling showed the left tarsus entangled by one end of the string. From the tarsus, the string extended upward into the base of the nest.

The second case occurred at a nest (9.6 m above ground level) placed in a slash pine (*Pinus elliotii*). On 2 July 1990, the adults were observed feeding four young in the nest. On 4 July, two dead nestling shrikes (ca. 17 days old) were found hanging by a piece of string which extended upward into the base of the nest. The adults continued to feed the

other two nestlings which fledged on 6 July. The dead nestlings were last seen hanging from the nest on 1 August. In mid-August, the skeletal remains with attached string were found on the ground below the nest. The remains were entangled in the string at one end of a loop formed by a knot 42.5 cm distally. From the point of entanglement to the longest free end of the string measured 92.9 cm. Examination of the remains showed the end of the loop in a "figure eight" form around the left wing and left leg of one skeleton. The left leg of the second skeleton was also inserted through the "figure eight" loop.

Mortality caused by entanglement in nest material occurred at two of 40 (5%) active shrike nests on the study site during 1990. No mortality of this kind was observed at 48 active nests during 1991. For both years, the rate of occurrence per active nest was 2.3% (2 of 88).

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