

FIELD NOTES

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE EATS ENGLISH SPARROW

At Zephyr Hills, Florida, on June 11, 1923, I discovered a Loggerhead Shrike carrying in its claws, not its beak, what appeared to be a song bird. This Shrike flew to a tree in which were an adult bird, and three young ones clamoring for food. All gathered around the booty and feasted for some time. After a few minutes the dead bird fell to the ground, allowing opportunity for examination. It proved to be an English Sparrow, either female or immature, the head entirely gone and the body more or less torn. It was evidently freshly killed. As soon as we left the spot one of the adult birds came to the ground and carried the remains of the sparrow away.

This is the first evidence I have received of the Loggerhead Shrike eating other birds. It is fairly common around Macon, Ga., but I have never had the slightest evidence myself, nor have a number of other observers, with whom I have talked of its killing song birds. In this part of Florida the Loggerhead is abundant, but my brother-in-law, who has studied birds here for four years, has never before known of its eating other birds. This would therefore seem to be a rare occurrence.

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PECULIAR NESTING HABITS OF SOME BIRDS

Having made a few observations that may be of general interest, upon the nesting peculiarities of some species of birds, I will here relate them:

As I was at work on one of my Bird Census lists I noticed a pair of Phœbes about a private bridge over a small creek in the field. Of course that was perfectly natural and just what one would expect. But it soon became apparent that there were more than two adult birds around there; in fact, I soon noticed four of them at once. Close investigation showed only one nest situated under the bridge. I was puzzled. However, there was an old deserted well close by the bridge and this well had a fence about ten feet square around it. I noticed one of the birds alighted frequently on one of the posts of this fence. One of the planks was off the top platform of the well, leaving an open space about twelve inches wide across the center of the well. I went up to the well to investigate, and one of the birds flew out of the well. A careful examination showed that the well was "curbed" up with boards, not round, but four feet square on the inside. It was sixteen feet from the platform down to the water, and a frame of 2x4 inch lumber was inside the boards and five feet below the platform. There was no other frame or projection of any kind inside the curbing, nothing but smooth boards down to the water. In the northwest corner upon the edge of the 2x4 frame above referred to was the bird's nest with five snow white eggs in it. A twelve-inch opening five feet above and cold water ten feet below! Now this was certainly an interesting situation for a bird's nest! I resolved then and there that this affair would bear watching. I went back in three days and the young birds (4 of them) were hatched out. They

grew as young birds do, unmindful of their precarious situation. About two weeks passed. I saw them several times during this time. The last time I saw them they were about fully feathered out, three were on the nest and one was on the 2x4 beside the nest. A few days later, when I went there, the birds, neither young nor old, were to be seen anywhere. I examined the surface of the water very carefully but could see no sign of a drowned bird. They must have made their initial flight up and out through that twelve-inch opening. It seems marvelous that a bird with no opportunities for practice should be able to do this, but the facts seem to indicate that they did, for if they had failed and dropped into the water below, their bodies would have been floating on its surface. There certainly is a vast difference between the various species in this respect. Imagine a young House Wren, Robin, or Rose-breasted Grosbeak leaving the nest under these circumstances.

Other and similar cases, with the danger of drowning eliminated, however, are the Chimney Swifts. I have at least one instance on record where a pair of these birds had their nest in a chimney 8x8 inches inside measurement and situated twenty-two feet below the top of chimney. How the young birds can make a flight of twenty-two feet straight up to get into daylight is also a wonder to me. But perhaps they crawl up the wall with the assistance of their feet and wings as do the young Wrens.

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