

INTRODUCTION TO THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL SHRIKE SYMPOSIUM, 15-18 SEPTEMBER 1999, GDAŃSK, POLAND

Dries Van Nieuwenhuyse, Przemysław Busse, Reuven Yosef, Lorenzo Fornasari, Norbert Lefranc, Fred Lohrer

D. Van Nieuwenhuyse, „Het Speihuis”, Speistraat 17, B-9550 Herzele, Belgium; P. Busse University of Gdańsk, Bird Migration Research Station, Przebendowo, PL 84-210 Choczewo, Poland; R. Yosef, International Birding & Research Centre in Eilat, P. O. Box 774, 88000 Eilat, Israel; L. Fornasari, Dept. of Environmental Sciences, II University of Milano, „BICOCCA”, Via L. Emanuelli 15, I-20126 Milano, Italy; N. Lefranc, Direction Régionale de l'Environnement, Lorraine, 19, avenue Foch, B. P. 60223, F-57005 Metz Cedex, France; F. Lohrer, Archbold Biological Station, P. O. Box 2057, Lake Placid, Florida 33862, U.S.A.

The 3rd International Shrike Symposium (3rdISS) was held in Gdansk (Poland) as a special symposium of the Second Meeting of the European Ornithologists Union under the chair of Dries Van Nieuwenhuyse (Belgium). The International Shrike Working Group (ISWG), active in shrike research and conservation, invited speakers from all over the world to participate. In order to situate this current symposium we illustrate why shrikeologists find shrikes so interesting that they spend most of their lives studying, communicating on, and protecting these peculiar animals. Being organised in the Working Group since the First International Shrike Symposium in 1993 boosted the activities around shrikes to an international level. Then we focus on different activities and communication channels of the Working Group. Finally, the programme of the 3rd International Shrike Symposium is presented.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT SHRIKES?

One could consider decreasing numbers as a good motivation for conservation. Fluctuations however are not exceptional in shrikes, so why put some effort in protecting shrikes? At the First International Shrike Symposium, the non-shrikeologist rapporteur A. Safriel gave several reasons why shrikes are important. Shrikes could be used as promoters for science, since they could serve as models for the perchers dilemma: how to succeed as predator and survive as prey? The mating system featured by clustered distribution pattern and extra parental care, loop migration, impaling of prey make the group very interesting. Shrikes can serve for educational purposes, too. Their territories are very easily influenced and the impact is easy to observe. The birds can be observed up to 80% of the time during the nestling pe-

riod. General ecological principals can be explained very well, making shrikes excellent study material. They are also excellent bio-indicators for grassland habitat and possibly for climatic changes. A good example is the Red-backed Shrike as a perfect indicator for the supra-Mediterranean zone in the Spanish Pyrenees as given by Campos and Lizarraga (Spain). Even some taxonomical challenges in shrikes remain as illustrated by Ivanovsky and Kuzmenko (Belarus). Finally, why not conserve shrikes just because they are so beautiful and peculiar?

A proof for special attraction of shrikes by ornithologists is also seen among their researchers: the longest continuous time series are still studied by Barbara Diehl for 36 years, Norbert Lefranc – for 35, Hans Jakober and Wolfgang Stauber – for 31, Martin Schön – for 30 years. One must have a passion for shrikes to continue that kind of work for so long and for all of them in their spare time.

INTERNATIONAL SHRIKE WORKING GROUP

The most striking finding of the 1st International Shrike Symposium was that most of the Shrike species are either declining or even became extinct locally. This alarming conclusion made the participating researchers to create the International Shrike Working Group for the co-ordination of regional and worldwide studies. This Group bundles and amplifies activities of local working groups in Canada, US (San Clemente Island), Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Belgium, France, *etc.* Besides studies, the promotion of shrike research was found to be very important on the long term. Since we are striving for the highest scientific standards, knowledge exchange became very intense with a principal tool being the Annotated Shrike Bibliography. We went even further and developed concrete implementation of results in several Conservation Plans.

One of the first conservation action plans is the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike Project by the US NAVY, dealing with *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi*, which is endemic to the Isle of San Clemente (California). In Canada, the Canadian Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Team developed a wide-scale recovery plan for Canada. In France, the Vignerons du Pays d'Ensérune created a special shrike friendly wine, of which for every bottle sold a percentage of the price goes to Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*) conservation. Furthermore, a census of breeding population of the Southern Grey Shrike (*L. meridionalis*) was done in Crau by a multinational team of shrikeologists in 1994. Finally, habitat restoration is done in a vast peat-moor area in Bargerveen (the Netherlands) and by restoring Steinriegels, which are historical piles of stones in Southern Germany.

ANNOTATED SHRIKE BIBLIOGRAPHY (REUVEN YOSEF, ISRAEL)

The Annotated Shrike Bibliography managed by Reuven Yosef is probably the most complete database of publications on shrikes and related topics and contains more than 3300 references of shrike literature. The number of references present in

this bibliography shows an exponential increase from the fifties on (Fig. 1). Despite the decline in number of titles in the last decade, the number of pages of shrike literature is quite higher for the nineties than for the eighties because some of the major books have been published then. The distribution of literature over the shrike species (Fig. 2) shows that 61% of all publications are published on only about 10% of the shrike species. Most is known about species that are located in the shrike-poor

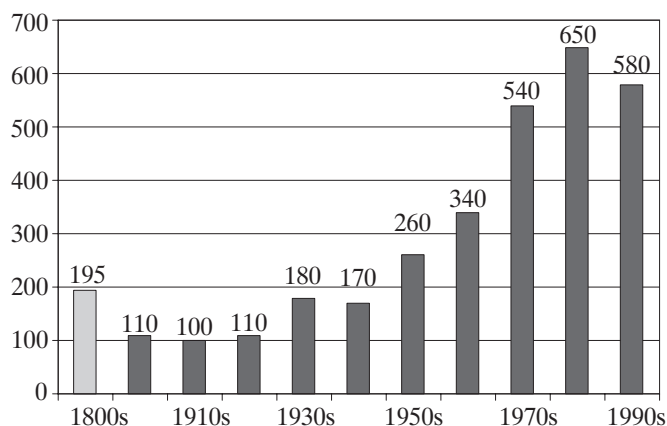


Fig. 1. Total number of *Laniidae* – related publications in the past

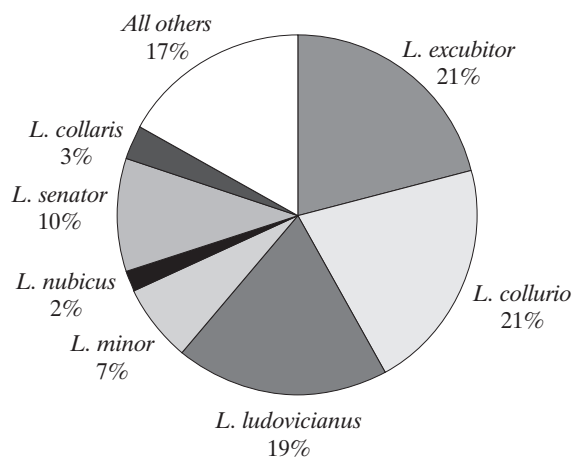


Fig. 2. Break down of species-specific publications of the *Laniidae* species of the world

areas (Red-backed Shrike – *Lanius collurio*, Great Grey Shrike – *L. excubitor*, Loggerhead Shrike – *L. ludovicianus*). Knowledge on African and Asian species is sparse (51% of all publications are situated in Europe, 26% – North America, 12% – Africa, 8% – Asia and 3% – Middle East). Hence, some quite exotic research

challenges remain in shrikes. That shrikes are useful to study many different biological aspects is shown by the list of different topics that the shrike publications deal with: behaviour (31%), faunistic and distribution (24%), reproduction (11%), general biology (8%), management and conservation (5%), ecology and populations (4%), morphology (3%), taxonomy (3%), migration and orientation (3%), disease and parasites (2%), physiology (1%), man and birds (1%), evolution and genetics (1%), techniques (1%), pesticides and pollution (1%) and others (2%).

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SHRIKE WORKING GROUP

At the first ISS, it became obvious how similar all shrikes species are. The need was felt for a more intense communication between different shrikeologists around the globe. Different communication channels were developed. In the beginning of the working group, a newsletter was distributed by mail. For the American section, Carola Haas compiles the newsletter, for the Euro-African section – Dries Van Nieuwenhuysse. The newsletters on paper continue, but we are migrating steadily towards e-mail and internet technology to save costs and increase speed. Topics that are dealt with in the newsletters are our meetings (ISWG meets about every year at different international congresses), new publications on shrikes in most of international journals and newly published shrike books. Information about the internet site and our e-mail group is also given. All newsletters and general information are also available at our web site.

An important communication channel is offered through our shrike meetings. About once a year, we try to meet at other official meetings. This simultaneous approach allows us to use the logistic support of larger organisations and guarantees us a good distribution of our results. The ISWG holds an International Shrike Symposium every 3 years, special symposia at international meetings like AOU, EOU and Raptors Meetings, shrike workshops and finally presentations at general meetings.

The last two years, we went online with our information, what boosted communication and reduced the cycle-time needed to distribute the information and receive feedback from months to minutes. Our internet site:

<http://studwww.rug.ac.be/~wdstecke/shrikes/index.htm>

allowed us to make all our available information readable on the web saving hundreds of stamps. Finally, interaction with shrikeologists is guaranteed via our eGroup:

(shrikeology@egroups.com) <http://www.egroups.com/list/shrikeology>.

Since we started with our site, we have managed to get up to 329 visitors looking for information on shrikes. Visitors are mostly situated in Europe. General shrike information, newsletters, announcements of meetings, references of publications are presented.

Much more updates are found in our e-mail discussion group. Since Emmanuel Chabot and Stefan Karlsson started in April 1999, 102 messages have been sent in

total after 5 months. About 800 messages have been read on the Web by 174 different web visitors. In September 1999, there were 78 subscribers, of which half have sent at least one message. The main subjects are first arrivals, local status, shrike-links, events (census, 3rdISS), and requests, research.

Proof that shrikeology is finally at cruise speed is seen by the set of books that have been published recently.

- *Monographie des Pie-grièches du genre Lanius*. (Olivier 1944)
- *Die Würger der Palaarktis*. (Panov 1983)
- *Shrikes of southern Africa*. (Harris and Arnott 1988)
- *Proceedings of the 1st International Shrike Symposium*. (Yosef and Lohrer 1993)
- *Proceedings of the 2nd International Shrike Symposium*. (Yosef and Lohrer 1998)
- *Shrikes of the World*. (Lefranc and Worfolk 1997)
- *Pies-grièches de l'Europe et de l'Afrique du Nord*. (Lefranc 1993)
- *Lanius excubitor*. (In: *Ökologie der Vögel*.) (Schön 1994)
- *Artenschützsymposium Neuntöter*. Bad. Württ., Germany (1989)
- *Aves – shrike theme number* (1999)
- *Loggerhead Shrike*. (In: *Birds of North Am.*) (Yosef 1996)

THIRD INTERNATIONAL SHRIKE SYMPOSIUM

The 3rd International Shrike Symposium counted 45 participants from 19 countries, 24 talks were held (Poland – 4, Israel – 3, UK – 3, Belgium – 2, Hungary – 2, Italy – 2, The Netherlands – 2, Bulgaria – 1, Portugal – 1, Slovakia – 1, Spain – 1, Switzerland – 1) and 15 shrike posters presented (USA – 3, Belarus – 2, Finland – 2, Hungary – 2, Ukraine – 2, Canada – 1, Estonia – 1, Kazakhstan – 1, Romania – 1). This edition of the International Shrike Symposium focused mainly on factors that influence distributions of shrikes (24%), food and foraging (24%) and breeding biology (24%). Two additional topics made up 14% of the oral presentations, *i.e.* habitat and breeding success. The distribution of species in the talks showed two most popular shrike species the same as in the bibliography – *Lanius collurio* (52%) and *L. excubitor* (22%). However remarkable is the fact that the Fiscal Shrike (*Lanius collaris*) is becoming more popular (11%).

The following sessions were held:

- Food and hunting behaviour in shrikes, chaired by Lorenzo Fornasari (Italy);
- Habitat selection and distribution of shrikes, chaired by Norbert Lefranc (France);
- Nesting ecology of shrikes, chaired by Dries Van Nieuwenhuyse (Belgium);
- Nest site selection and reproductive success of shrikes, chaired by Reuven Yosef (Israel).

Norbert Lefranc (France) took responsibility of rapporteur of the 3rdISS.

Finally, we wish to thank the authors for sharing with us their current insights, the accompanying participants – for their interest during the sessions and the following people that helped in one or another way to make sure that this 3rd Interna-

tional Shrike Symposium could take place – Emmanuel Chabot (eGroup), Stefan Karlsson (eGroup), Carola Haas (Newsletter – Am. section), Piotr Tryjanowski, Martin Hromada, Grzegorz Lorek, Tibor Fuisz, Barbara Diehl and Anton Kristin – for their valuable help in the organisation. The following organisations supported the International Shrike Working Group: Gdańsk University, Natural History Museum Luxembourg, International Birding & Research Center in Eilat (Israel), Aves a.s.b.l. (Belgium), Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Archbold Biological Station (Lake Placid, Florida), Eilat Municipality, Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Nature Reserves Authority, Artesia Banking Corporation (Belgium).