

SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE
HABITS OF THE BUTCHER SHRIKE

C. W. Shannon, 1916.

The shrikes are commonly known as "Butchers Birds." They live upon animal food, small birds, small mammals, and insects being their chief subsistence. Their life is one of continual warfare.

The bill of the shrike is that of a rapacious bird, but their feet are weak and they cannot hold their prey. For this reason they usually resort to thorn trees, where their victims are impaled upon thorns, sometimes making quite an array of small birds, beetles, and other food, reminding one of a butcher's rack filled with meats.

The White-rumped Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*) is very common in this section of the country. It is very interesting to note the habits of this bird in capturing its food and storing it away. Its movements are very sure to attract attention.

One day as I was walking across a prairie pasture a shrike darted past me, and I thought in its carelessness struck a barbed wire fence in front of me. The bird struck the fence while flying in a straight line, then circled around and darted away. I was only a few steps from the fence, and when I came up to it, I found a large live grasshopper impaled on a barb of the wire. The bird had fixed its prey there as it struck the fence.

On October 24, 1916, about 12 miles south of Durant, I saw a shrike carrying a cow blackbird. It flew low and passing over the road stopped in an apple tree nearby. The weight of the blackbird seemed to be almost the limit of burden for the shrike.

I have on another occasion found a field mouse impaled on the thorn of a honey locust, and in the same tree an English close growing limb. There was no proof that the shrike was the sparrow was tightly wedged between the body of the tree and a doer of the deed, but I judged him guilty nevertheless.