

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*LANIUS MINOR*) WITH SALAMANDER PREY

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At approximately 0905 hr on 16 May 2004, just south of Dannelly Field, Montgomery, Alabama, a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius minor*) was observed perched on a post with a three-inch-long (7.6 cm) vertebrate in its bill. The shape of the legs and feet were sufficient to identify the vertebrate as a salamander, but the species could not be determined. After remaining in view at the perch for approximately two minutes, the bird flew off to the southwest carrying the salamander in its bill. Although salamanders have been found in the larders of shrikes in Kentucky and Minnesota (F. Lyne and T. Bormann, pers. comm., respectively), I could find no published records of salamanders being used for food by the Loggerhead Shrike, and therefore, this observation is worthy of note.

Shrikes often prey on small vertebrates and although most salamanders are similar in size to lizard species on which shrikes are known to prey, they are found in different habitats. Some species of lizards inhabit relatively dry, open areas where shrikes typically forage (Yosef 1996, Imhof 1976), whereas salamanders typically occur in water or moist habitats, usually under logs, rocks or debris.

Shrikes have been found to take fish, but only fish left on land (Bent 1950). They also have been known to feed on frogs, but typically on species that can be found in open habitats [e.g., Plains Leopard Frog (*Rana blairi*) and Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*), Tyler 1991] and that venture out of the water. In Oklahoma, half of the snakes preyed upon by Loggerhead Shrikes were water snakes (Tyler 1991), but again, there are water snake species that inhabit open areas and that sun and forage out of the water. It should be noted, however, that the Loggerhead Shrike has been observed catching an insect from the water (Siegel 1980).

Loggerhead Shrikes are known as opportunistic feeders that adjust their diet to the availability of prey (Yosef 1996). A small stream was located near the site where I observed the Loggerhead Shrike with the captured salamander. Apparently, the salamander presented the shrike with an opportunity that the shrike seized.

LITERATURE CITED

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