

BOOK REVIEW

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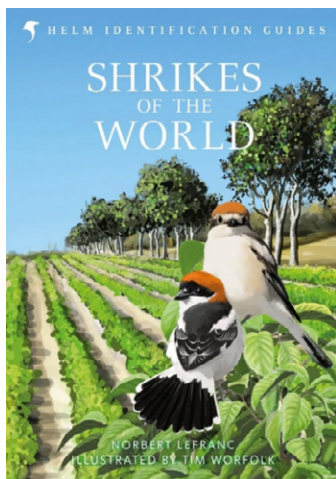
Title: SHRIKES OF THE WORLD – 336 pp

Author: Norbert Lefranc

Illustrated by: Tim Worfolk

Publisher: Helm, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London. 2022.

Format: Hardback



This book, published by Helm (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc), under the 'Helm Identification Guides' series is written by Norbert Lefranc and illustrated by Tim Worfolk. This is the second edition; the earlier 'Shrikes: A guide to the shrikes of the world' by Norbert Lefranc was published in 1997. The taxonomy has been updated and many new sections have been added in

this edition.

The format of the book is: Introduction, Acknowledgements, Style and layout of the book, Taxonomy and relationships – A brief historical approach, True shrike systematics, Overview of the genus *Lanius*, Overview of the genus *Eurocephalus*, Colour plates, Species accounts, Bibliography and Index. The history of shrike taxonomy is given in 'Taxonomy and relationships' and in the chapter on 'True shrike systematics' written by Jérôme Fuchs, the relationships within Laniidae are explained in detail; the species which require more molecular work are mentioned, with the author explaining that the Long-tailed Shrike requires further research since it has a large distribution, encompassing several major biogeographic breaks. The chapter on the overview of the genus *Lanius* is very extensive, covering the life history of shrikes, and includes several relevant photographs and illustrations showing behaviour and other details.

The book covers 34 species as per the current accepted taxonomic treatment for this group; 32 species of Laniidae and two species of *Eurocephalus*. The 21 plates illustrate all the species and a further five plates are given, in which illustrations of the spread wings and tail of 'Grey Shrike' taxa are given. The illustrations are very elaborate, with male, female, first winter/ juvenile plumages depicted. This is followed by main species accounts which cover identification, geographical variation, moult, measurements, breeding and non-breeding distributions, vagrancy, behaviour, food, breeding, population trends and conservation status. The species accounts carry

maps showing the breeding / wintering regions and vagrant records. The species text is authoritative but succinct, and explains in detail all the topics covered under each heading. Good quality photographs, with captions, showing male / female / first winter / juvenile birds are given for each species.

Though the book lists many species which do not occur in India, there is still enough for the Indian bird watcher to be interested. For bird watchers in Gujarat, the species accounts of Red-backed Shrike, Turkestan Shrike (or Red-tailed Shrike) and Isabelline Shrike will be of great interest. All these three species are seen in Gujarat and the identification of these shrikes in the field is often quite difficult. Adding to this confusion is the occurrence of the Brown Shrike in Gujarat! Getting the identification correct for these four shrike species is a problem faced by many bird watchers here. The field identification of first-winter shrikes of these species remains a challenge and this book, with illustrations and photographs, will be helpful in understanding the finer aspects of identifying these species in the field. Also of particular interest are hybrids between different shrike species given in this book. For example, in the species account of Red-backed Shrike, a hybrid of Red-backed Shrike x Red-tailed Shrike is shown in one photograph and the hybridization zones between *L. collurio* x *L. isabellinus* and *L. collurio* x *L. phoenicuroides* are shown. The species account of the Great Grey Shrike is a delight, with photographs and maps for different subspecies, and the plumage features explained. The taxonomic notes add to the text and the taxonomic treatment for these taxa is explained in detail so that readers can get an idea about taxonomy for many species.

This book is a must have for bird watchers with an interest in shrikes. In general, less attention is given to shrikes by birders but shrikes, as a group, are fascinating birds. I have always been interested in shrikes and look forward to using this book for identification and as a reference. This book will be a useful resource for all those interested in shrikes and will be an important addition to a bird watchers library. This book is available online at: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/in/shrikes-of-the-world-9781472933775/> for Rs. 3599/- in hardback and Rs. 3239/- for eBook in India. □