

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* consumes a Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis* at migration stopover site in southern Israel

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Shrikes (Laniidae) are well known for their habits of preying on and impaling small birds, lizards, insects and small mammals (Cramp & Perrins 1993, Harris & Franklin 2000). A number of bird species are recorded as prey of the Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* "... notably and perhaps exclusively exhausted migrants" (Cramp & Perrins 1993). Eilat, Israel, is located at the head of the gulf of Aqaba where the Negev desert reaches the sea. A bird park, containing local plant species, is located on the northeast edge of the city and serves as a refuelling station for many passerine migrants en route from Africa to Eurasia, including Masked Shrikes (Yosef 1998). Graceful Warblers *Prinia gracilis* are present in the area year-round (Cramp & Perrins 1993, Shirihai 1996).

At 05.25 h on 20 April 2001 I saw a Masked Shrike feeding on a Graceful Warbler in a 6–8 m high tree in the bird park just 5 m from the ringing station building. The Graceful Warbler was impaled on a 7 cm long hard leafless twig (not a thorn) on a more or less horizontal branch 120 cm from the trunk at a height of c175 cm above the ground. The Masked Shrike consumed all the flesh, removing larger feathers. At 05.36 h the Masked Shrike finished eating, moved 35 cm further along the same branch and wiped its bill. Forty seconds later, it moved 70 cm further along the same branch where it spent the next 90 s preening. Apart from a leg and some feathers there were no other remains of the Graceful Warbler after the Masked Shrike had moved away.

REFERENCES

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