LANIUS MINOR, *Gmel.*

Rose-Breasted Shrike.

Lanius minor, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 308.
——— *italicus*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 71.
——— *vigil*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. i. p. 403.
——— *longipennis*, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xv. p. 300.
Enneoctonus minor (Gould), Rodd, Journ. Roy. Inst. Cornw., no. viii. 1867.
——— *roseus*, Baill. Orn. de la Savoie, tom. ii. p. 26.
——— *minor*, Blyth, Cat. of Birds in Mus. Asiat. Soc. Calcutta, p. 152.

Some ornithologists believe that Britain has from time to time been visited by two, if not three, kinds of Grey Shrikes. Beside the *Lanius excubitor*, the *L. minor* has certainly occurred here; and I have therefore much pleasure in giving a figure of the latter in the present work. Mr. Rodd, of Penzance, has an undoubted specimen of this species, killed at Scilly; and it may have occurred in other parts of our island, and probably the American *Lanius borealis* also. I must remark that Mr. Rodd's bird is out of colour, or destitute of the delicate rosy hue on the breast represented in the accompanying Plate, and has the band on the forehead, so conspicuous in the male, less distinctly defined. It is probably a young female which had not acquired the characteristic colouring of the adult.

It will be seen that I have adopted two of the proposed generic divisions of the *Laniidæ*, and applied *Lanius* and *Enneoctonus* respectively to the Great Grey and the Red-backed Shrikes; and there are few persons, I imagine, but will agree that these birds are very different both in form and coloration, the little Red-backed Shrike, *E. collurio*, with its salmon-coloured breast and brown-plumaged female, being essentially different from the white-breasted *L. excubitor*. Unfortunately for the systematist, the present bird is directly intermediate between the two, both in structure and colouring, and really is almost as nearly allied to the one as to the other, the grey tint of its upper surface being precisely similar to that of *Lanius*, and its rose-tinted breast to the salmon-hued *Enneoctonus*, in which genus it has been placed by Mr. Blyth. On comparing the wings of *L. minor* with the same organs in *L. excubitor*, we find them to be much longer, although the body of the bird is smaller; in this respect, as well as in the narrower form of the tail-feathers, it assimilates to *E. collurio*; but differs from it in having a well-developed white speculum at the base of the primaries.

The history of the Rose-breasted Shrike, as far as regards its capture in Britain, is contained in the following passages from Mr. Rodd's paper on the subject in the 'Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall.'

"There is a probability of our being able to add another European species of 'Shrike,' or 'Butcherbird,' to our list of British Birds, and the avifauna of Cornwall—although the occurrence of the individual, and, as far as I can learn, the only example yet found in Britain took place in the year 1851, at Scilly, and is recorded in the 'Zoologist' for that year. I received the bird in the flesh, and had it preserved by Mr. Vingoe. It proved on dissection to be a female. On comparing it with a male specimen of the *Lanius excubitor*, there were several points of difference—in size, length of tail, in the form and character of the black streak through and behind the eye, together with a remarkable variation in the structure and form of the bill. I labelled it, however, as the 'Female Great Grey Shrike'; but subsequent observations induced me to doubt the identity of the two birds. Soon afterwards I met Mr. Gould at Tregothnan, and called his attention to the subject; and as he was about to prepare his Plates of the Shrikes for his work on the Birds of Great Britain, he requested me to submit the bird to his inspection, which I accordingly did on his return to London; and in a few days I received the following remark from him: 'your Shrike is the *Lanius minor*, the first instance of its occurrence in the British Isles, as far as I know.' It may be as well to note here that my specimen has not the black frontal band; but Temminck says that the young birds are without it; and probably my bird may be young, with its plumage much worn."

The natural home of this delicately coloured species is in the sunny regions of the Archipelago, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, and many parts of the south of France.

It is seldom found in Germany, and still more rarely in Holland. I have seen examples from the Crimea; and Mr. Tristram observed it in southern Palestine, which may be its most eastern range; for as yet it has not been found in India. Dr. Bree says that, according to Degland, the Rose-breasted Shrike builds its nest of odoriferous herbs; and M. Gerbe states that in Provence the outside is always constructed of the stalks, in more or less abundance, of the wild *Amaranthus*. The eggs are five or six in number, which are generally of a greenish hue, but sometimes grey or bluish, spotted with violet, grey, and olive.

Walter Imp.