

At approximately 7:45 AM during the aforementioned CBC myself and fellow participants Wayne and Connie observed a Northern Shrike for about a minute as it perched facing us atop vegetation along the east side of the refuge's boardwalk pond roughly 200 yds. north of the parking area for same. Seen stationary in full sunlight from about 20 yds. away, it was easy to tell through just binoculars (mine Leica Ultravid 8x32, others' unknown) that the bird's mask was significantly narrower and its head and back lighter gray than on a Loggerhead Shrike. It also looked less compact than the latter species. I was attempting to detect the distinctive NSHR field mark of a light lower mandible base--unsuccessfully at the distance involved without a scope--when the bird flew across the road in front of us and through vegetation on the other side, where we lost track of it.

Our Northern appeared to have a complete mask and plumage that lacked brownish overtones so was thought to be an adult, probably the same bird reported 12/13/12 a short way south. Wayne commented that the reverse was true of those features on a presumed immature he photographed near the start of the South Loop earlier in the month; and other CBC participants observed such a bird from Hwy. 1 not far from our sighting location, so there likely were two NSHRs at the Bosque that day.

No photo, video or audio documentation of the unusual species we encountered was obtained; and the details describing our observation are from mental notes I made at the time.

I've seen, watched and occasionally photographed Loggerhead Shrikes over many years but hadn't succeeded before in finding a Northern. However, just prior to Count day I consulted several of my field guides (National Geographic, Peterson, Sibley and Stokes) to refamiliarize myself with what to look for in differentiating those two species due to recent reports of the latter on the refuge. Other than as mentioned above I don't know Wayne's or Connie's experience with shrikes.

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