

## Peppershrike Song

With reference to Victor Quesnel's contention, perhaps I should revise and re-state my position.

My previous statements (french 1973, 1986) that the Peppershrike repeats the same phrase are based on very long, but general, experience. If you listen to a Peppershrike singing, it appears to repeat the same phrase many times, usually without variation, or perhaps sometimes with a slight variation. This "variation" may depend more on the signer's exact position when singing, or even on the listener's ability to hear all or perhaps nearly all of the notes. At any rate, one would describe the Peppershrike's song as a phrase repeated many times. If you said that it called various different phrases habitually in a series, this would definitely give the wrong impression.

Quesnel's thesis is that an individual can and does change its tune, and he is probably right, at least to the extent that a bird may have more than one tune in its repertoire. Paul Schwartz recorded in Venezuela such a change in the song of a Peppershrike included in his record "Bird Song of the Tropics" during the 1960's. And J. C. Barlow, who studied the closely related Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo (1975), states that a Peppershrike has from two to six song-types in its repertoire.

How often such changes occur in a song-series is a point that we still need to determine. Certainly my field experience leads me to believe that it happens rather rarely. I have recently followed individual singing birds, counting the repeated phrases, on several occasions. Each time the bird "dried up" without changing its tune at all, after singing the repeated phrase up to 150 times without a break. I believe this to be the normal feature of Peppershrike song. But more research needs to be done to clarify the picture.

Richard ffrench

## References

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