

MEDIA RELEASE:

Release of Critically Endangered Bird on the Bruce Peninsula Will Boost Wild Populations

For release August 12, 2005

Dyer's Bay, ON – Today nine captive bred Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes will be released into the wild, boosting the population of this critically endangered bird that was once a common sight in Ontario. Currently, fewer than 35 wild pairs can be found in Canada.

The captive breeding program was established in 1997 for this unusual predatory songbird after the Canadian shrike population reached an all-time low of just 18 breeding pairs. The success of the program this year means there are over 50 birds ready to be released over the next few weeks on the Carden Plain and the Bruce Peninsula.

“Seeing these birds take off into the wild is a highlight of our recovery efforts,” says Elaine Williams, Executive Director of **Wildlife Preservation Canada**, a registered charity is the lead in implementing the recovery program of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike in Ontario. “It gives everyone involved such a sense of optimism that one day we’ll be able to take the shrike off the list of Canada’s endangered species.”

On hand to watch the release will be local landowners who housed the large field propagation cages where the young shrikes have been raised by their parents and are adapting to their surroundings over the summer.

“We’re enormously grateful to have such generous partners,” said Robert Wenting, Environment Canada’s lead for shrike recovery. “Captive breeding wouldn’t be possible without this kind of support from landowners.”

The effectiveness of the program was proved earlier this year when a captive-bred shrike released in 2004 on the Bruce Peninsula returned this spring to successfully breed with the wild male and hatch and fledge six chicks. This landmark – likely the first example in the world involving a migratory songbird – proves that shrikes born in captivity from captive parents do survive in the wild, do know how and where to migrate, and can successfully enter the wild breeding population.

Since 2001, when the first captive bred birds were released, a total of 56 shrikes have been released to the wild in Ontario. One of only a handful of such projects worldwide, the shrike breeding program is developing innovative techniques that will have applications throughout the conservation world, including helping the recovery of this critically endangered species throughout its historic North American range.

The program is a partnership between local landowners, the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association, Environment Canada, Toronto Zoo and Wildlife Preservation Canada.

Wildlife Preservation Canada is a charitable organization dedicated to saving endangered wildlife species from extinction. It is internationally recognized for species-focused conservation initiatives and expertise in the captive breeding and release. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association is a not-profit organization representing over 93,000 cattle producers that coordinates the Habitat Stewardship Program for the shrikes. Environment Canada is the lead government agency responsible for recovery efforts for migratory birds in Canada.

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Note to editors: Digital video and still images of the release will be available. For background information on the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike, please visit www.shrike.ca

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