

2005 Field Season

Prepared by Cory J. Lindgren for the:
The Eastern Manitoba Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Action Group (EMRAG)

The eastern loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*) is a grassland songbird that was listed as Endangered in Canada in 1991 and later listed as Endangered in Manitoba in 1998. Although suitable habitat for the eastern loggerhead shrikes appears to exist in several areas of Manitoba, in recent years nesting pairs have only been observed in the rural municipalities of West St Paul, Rosser and Headingly, located to the north and west of the City of Winnipeg.

Population Monitoring

In 2005, a total of 5 nesting pairs and three individual (N=13) loggerhead shrikes were found in Manitoba. A female of one pair was killed prior to egg laying as a result of a vehicle collision resulting in only 4 pairs actually nesting in 2005.

A total of 4 nests were found in 2005 – one for each of the four remaining nesting pairs. No nests failed and thus there were no re-nests in 2005. A total of 26 eggs were produced with clutch sizes ranging from 5 to 7 eggs (mean = 6.5 eggs/nest). Twenty eggs successfully hatched (mean = 5.0 hatchlings/nest) resulting in a 77% hatching success rate. Fledging success was 97% as 19 of 20 young (mean = 4.75 fledglings/nest) fledged in 2005. There were no second clutches produced after successful first clutches in 2005. The mean number of young produced per nesting female in 2005 was 4.75 (or 3.8 per pair including the road-killed female).

Banding

In 2005, 18 of the 19 young that fledged were banded. Banding of nestlings occurred generally around 9 days of age or at a time when it was estimated that they were of sufficient size yet not too large and prone to premature fledging. The first family group of hatch year shrikes was banded on 15 June while the last hatch year shrike was banded on 20 July.

In 2005, 10 shrikes that had been previously banded in the core area returned (8 nested, one was killed prior to nesting, and one disappeared). These consisted of 6 that were originally banded as adults (one from each of 2001, 2002 and 2003, and three from 2004) and 4 that had originally been banded as juveniles (one from each of 2002 and 2003, and two from 2004). Attempts to capture and band the two unbanded breeding adults were unsuccessful.

Alarming Trends

Monitoring efforts revealed a 19% decrease from the 16 shrikes found in 2004, and a 41% decline from a high of 22 shrikes found in 2000. The total number of shrikes observed in 2005 was 21% below the eight-year average of 16.37 shrikes per year. There was an alarming 38% decline in the number of nesting pairs, a 50% decline in the number of successful nesting pairs, a 58% decline in the number of eggs produced, and a 55% decline in young produced between 2004 and 2005. It would seem this population is facing eminent extirpation unless the current trend reverses or recovery action is immediately employed.

Awareness

An educational program was initiated in a West St Paul grade 5 class during 2005. The class studied aspects of species at risk ecology, assisted in shrike surveys, planted shrike habitat within their school yard, and spent a day in the field observing nesting shrikes.