

CONSERVATION GROUP RECOGNIZES COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN EFFORT TO SAVE RARE CANADIAN SONGBIRD

Kirkfield, ON (August 31, 2004) – In a case study for the potential of communities and environmental groups partnering to protect endangered species in Canada, the **Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada (WPTC)** and the **Canadian Cattlemen’s Association (CCA)** launched an environmental recognition program to acknowledge Ontario and Manitoba landowners whose stewardship supports a nesting pair of one of Canada’s most endangered and compelling birds – the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike.

The recognition program – officially dubbed The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike “500 Club” – was launched August 21, 2003 with a dinner and awards ceremony in Napanee, Ontario. A gold pin showing a pair of shrikes sitting on a hawthorn branch was presented to each landowner hosting a wild breeding pair. In addition to a number of private landowners, the Bay of Quinte Mohawk Nation and the Town of Napanee also received pins.

The “500 Club” represents a milestone in the **CCA’s** and **WPTC’s** partnership-focused recovery plan to save the shrike – a unique, once common predatory songbird whose numbers had declined to just 18 breeding pairs in Canada in 1997. Since 2000, the **CCA** has been a recipient of federal Habitat Stewardship Program dollars, which it has used to rehabilitate critical habitat required for the recovery of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike and to promote community participation in this recovery. Those federal dollars have been matched by financial and “in-kind” support from landowners and a host of volunteer individuals and organizations.

Recognized internationally for species-focused conservation initiatives and expertise in the captive breeding and release – other species of focus include the Burrowing Owl, the Swift Fox, and the Vancouver Island Marmot – the **WPTC** partnered with the **CCA** in 2002 to administer and coordinate their federally-funded Habitat Stewardship Program to protect the open-range, mixed grassland habitat so critical to the survival of the shrikes. With influence over thousands of acres of such habitat, the **CCA** – a not-profit organization representing over 90,000 cattle producers – has been a key partner in the recovery effort.

“Community partnerships are absolutely essential to the ongoing success of environmental and conservation programs like the Shrike Recovery Plan,” says Elaine Williams, Executive Director of the **Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada**. “Endangered species in particular – which so often require specialized, relatively undisturbed habitat, often on privately-owned land – stand to benefit from the kind of commitment demonstrated by the Canadian Cattlemen’s Association and hundreds of private landowners. The **CCA’s** ongoing support is especially notable given the devastating effect the beef ban on the Canadian cattle industry and rural communities in general. With so much to worry about, they continue to reach out and make a difference.”

The goal of the Recovery Plan for the species is to have 500 pairs in the wild – hence the “500 Club.” In 2004, a total of 35 wild breeding pairs of Eastern Loggerhead Shrike were located in Canada – 26 in two locations in Ontario and 9 in one location in Manitoba. A captive population of Eastern Loggerhead Shrike maintained by Environment Canada in partnership with private

interests and the Toronto Zoo produced 54 young this year, a portion of which were released to the wild, as a part of ongoing research into reintroduction methodologies.

“Both wild and captive populations of Eastern Loggerhead Shrike are particularly vulnerable to West Nile Virus and a lot remains unknown about the migratory habitats and wintering grounds of this endangered subspecies,” says Williams. “While we continue essential research to confirm that recovery is possible, community support and participation remain the key elements of our conservation efforts.”

Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to saving those species whose numbers in the wild are so low – or whose population are so fragmented – that a great deal more than habitat protection is required to prevent imminent extinction. **WPTC** operates through the strategic, tailored use of a diverse and growing inventory of recovery tools ranging from professional training, scientific field research, and captive breeding to reintroductions, translocations, habitat stewardship and public education. In partnership with volunteers, donors, communities, governments, industry and other non-governmental groups including sister organizations in the U.S. and U.K., the **WPTC** (www.wptc.org) is committed to its singular role of saving critically endangered species in this country and abroad.

Canadian Cattlemen’s Association

Established in 1932, the CCA is the only *national* association representing the interests of Canada's 90,000 beef producers. Twenty-eight producers from eight provinces make up the CCA board of directors. The CCA provides the leadership and unity necessary to speak as one voice for the beef industry. This includes assisting in its development, adaptation to new ideas and technologies, and in its prosperity. The CCA is structured to represent every phase of the production system; the purebred, cow/calf, backgrounding and feedlot sectors.

- 30 -

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