

## Shrike Field Report 2006

**Wild Population:** This year, wild population monitoring of the two remaining core areas, the Napanee Plain and Carden Alvar, began in mid-April and continued through August.

In Carden, seven breeding pairs were found in the wild, down from 14 in 2005. 2001 was the last year such low numbers were recorded. However, reproductive success was greater this year compared to last, with all pairs successfully breeding and fledging a total of 24 young. In Napanee, 10 pairs fledged 39 young. This is the lowest number of pairs for the area since recovery work began, but is only slightly down from the last 3 years. Nests were observed remotely at both sites this year, due to the higher number of crows and jays observed in the area over the last couple of seasons. In total, 63 young shrikes fledged in the wild in Ontario in 2006 as compared to a total of 66 in 2005.

The decline in the number of known breeding pairs found this year was anticipated due to the poor productivity of wild breeding pairs observed last year.

This year another captive-born female was found breeding with a wild male in Carden. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> return in 2 consecutive years. Unfortunately, attempts to read this year's return shrike's band number were unsuccessful, so it remains unknown when and where she was released. She successfully fledged a minimum of 3 young. Releases of captive-born shrikes only began in 2001 with a total of 110 captive raised shrikes released between 2001 and 2005 and *never before* has a reintroduction program for a migratory bird shown so much success so early into the program.

**Field Breeding and Releases:** This has been an incredibly successful season for the field-breeding program. This year four new cages were built at the field-breeding and release site in Carden allowing us to house 14 pairs. In Carden, 9 pairs successfully fledged 62 young. This is more than three times the number produced last season. At the Dyer's Bay field-breeding site, all 10 pairs successfully bred producing 66 fledglings, almost twice as many as last year. Two additional pairs at the Toronto Zoo did not produce any young this year. There were also 5 breeding pairs at Ingersoll this season. One pair successfully fledged 2 young, but these died a couple of days later. Six adults also died at Ingersoll this season (May-Sept). All specimens were sent to the University of Guelph Pathology Lab for necropsy, virology, bacteriology, immunohistochemistry and histopathology examination. Lab results for the adults were inconclusive, with no significant gross, microscopic or ancillary laboratory results. However, high levels of *Pseudomonas* were found in the lungs of the 2 fledglings. This was a problem which plagued the facility in 2005. Efforts are ongoing to try and counter this problem, and we are compiling all of our data to look for any possible patterns in the deaths.

In total 128 young shrikes successfully fledged at our field-breeding sites this year. Seventeen genetically important individuals were held back to supplement our captive breeding program, while the rest were released to the wild. Since the inception of the program in 2001, up until this season, 110 captive-bred shrikes have been released. This number was more than matched this year - a significant contribution to the wild population.

We have already received evidence that our released shrikes are making their way south for the winter. A shrike was spotted by birders near Long Point on September 10<sup>th</sup>. When they enlarged their photos, they were able to read the bird's banding combination, revealing that it was one of our captive-born young released this season. The bird was observed actively feeding on insects along the road and out over the fields.

Next year we hope to be able to follow our released shrikes all the way to their wintering grounds. This year we tested "dummy" radio transmitters on 4 of our new captive-born young in the hopes that next year we can radio track released birds to help us discover migration routes and wintering grounds for this species.

*By Jessica Steiner*