

Frequently Asked Questions from Owners of Shrike Habitat

What's so special about this bird?

The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike is a bird that's unique in North America — it's the only songbird that hunts like a hawk.

Unfortunately the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike is also a critically endangered bird whose numbers have declined drastically over the past 50 years. In 2003, only 24 breeding pairs were spotted in Ontario and six pairs in Manitoba. None have been found in Quebec since 1995. That's why we're working so hard to save this unique bird from extinction.

Who is involved in saving the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike?

A broad group of people and organizations is working to save the shrike, including Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Canadian Wildlife Service, the Manitoba Cattle Producer's Association, Manitoba Conservation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds, Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec, the Toronto Zoo, and Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada.

Are any landowners involved in this?

Yes, and they are the most important part of the recovery program. Most of the shrike's known habitat is on private land: some is in backyards, but most of it is pastureland for cattle.

Through the federal Habitat Stewardship Program, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and Wildlife

Preservation Trust Canada have worked with hundreds of landowners to protect and improve habitat and to raise public awareness of this collective recovery effort.

What should I do if I have Eastern Loggerhead Shrike on my property?

For most of the year, you can carry on with regular farm work throughout much of a shrike's territory. The most important thing is to give a wide berth to any nest trees from April to September. Shrikes are normally not afraid of humans on farm equipment, but, like all songbirds, they are easily stressed during their breeding season. As well, if you approach a nest too frequently, the stress calls of the birds can tip off predators such as cats, hawks and crows to its location.

What can I do to make my land attractive to shrikes?

If your land is already shrike habitat, keeping it attractive to these birds simply means doing more of the same:

- Leave some thorny trees within pastures and fields and along their edges to provide nesting sites and hunting perches, or plant some if none exist. Try not to plant along roads, where shrikes could be killed by passing vehicles.
- Maintain some thorny shrubs and barbed wire, which are important for shrikes to impale dead prey.
- Leave a few perching trees (preferably dead trees or dead branches on a large live tree), which are

essential for shrikes to protect their territories and scout for food.

- Maintain the land as grassland or pasture, and don't let invasive shrubs, such as red cedar or juniper, take over. Consider mowing overgrown fields if cattle aren't pastured.
- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides whenever possible since they will reduce the prey species the birds need.
- Contact us for advice if you're thinking about making any changes to habitat. And contact us anyway; we want to hear from you!

Can I get financial help to do things that improve habitat?

Yes, you may be eligible for financial support from the federal Habitat Stewardship Program for installing fencing, removing certain trees or shrubs and planting others, or enhancing shrike habitat in other ways.

What about other forms of support?

Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Action Groups (RAGs) have been established in communities where our recovery efforts to date have been focused. These groups share information, organize volunteers, and work with landowners who want to maintain or restore shrike habitat. Every arrangement is an individual one-on-one partnership, worked out co-operatively, and often at the kitchen table. Participation is completely voluntary, and landowners can be as involved as they choose. Once a year, the RAG hosts a gathering, usually in the form of a barbeque, to celebrate recovery efforts that year.

Does having shrikes on my property limit my use of the land or my freedom to sell it?

It shouldn't. If you put your land up for sale, you should inform potential buyers about the shrike habitat (active nest trees) in the interests of providing "full disclosure."

Should you want to sever your land and build a house, you will need to consult with your local

municipality. You will be advised that there is a Provincial Policy Statement associated with Ontario's Planning Act that notes that a municipality must "have regard to" the habitat of endangered and threatened species. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has been applying a 400 metre, no-development "donut" around any nest tree.

In June of 2004, the remainder of the federal Species At Risk Act (SARA) will come into effect. SARA requires the federal government to identify the "critical habitat" required either to maintain the existing population of an endangered species or to effect its recovery. SARA requires that Environment Canada must show how this critical habitat is effectively protected, and one means to do so is to enter into "conservation agreements" with landowners (as identified in section 11 of that Act).

Another requirement of SARA is that a socio-economic analysis of the impact of any recovery effort on a community must be done, and this will certainly influence recovery actions.

Since the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike is an endangered migratory bird and the protection of migratory birds is recognized as a federal responsibility in both SARA and the Migratory Birds Convention Act, we anticipate that there will be an agreement between Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for "critical habitat" issues to be dealt with in the future by Environment Canada. This should result in all landowners with Eastern Loggerhead Shrike "critical habitat" being contacted by Environment Canada after such an arrangement has been worked out.

For SARA, the emphasis will always be on partnership for the protection of species at risk and their habitat.

Do I have to allow shrike biologists on my property? Bird enthusiasts?

No. It's your land. You may choose whether to allow shrike field staff to look for birds, and you can put signs up advising bird enthusiasts and other people against trespassing.

We encourage cooperation and community involvement in the recovery of species at risk, but the choice is entirely yours.

Should I report shrike sightings?

Absolutely. We know very little about the shrike's migratory habits, and sightings give us important insight into its patterns and habits.

Report Eastern Loggerhead Shrike sightings to Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada's toll free number (1-800-956-6608), or to Bird Studies Canada at its toll-free number (1-888-448-BIRD) or the Species at Risk and Habitat Stewardship Program's toll-free number (1-866-833-8888).

Can I talk to other landowners about their experiences, both good and bad?

Certainly. We can put you in touch with both participating and non-participating landowners, landowners' associations, and stakeholder organizations. And we're happy to discuss any concerns you

might have. Cooperation works because trust exists.

Can I join the recovery effort?

We'd love it! Recovery Action Groups (RAGs) in key areas of Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba welcome involvement from landowners and volunteers. Currently, members receive a pewter pin of a shrike in flight and a newsletter. Everyone who has property that is part of the territory of a breeding pair of Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes is invited by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association to become a member of "The 500 Club" (reflecting our goal to have 500 breeding pairs in Canada).

How can I get more information?

For more information on the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike and/or the recovery program, please visit our website <www.shrike.ca>, send a message to <info@shrike.ca>, or leave us a toll-free message at 1-866-833-8888 or contact someone at Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada at 1-800-956-6608.