



fact sheet

Toll-free: 1-866-833-8888 ■ Web site: www.shrike.ca

Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery

A very special bird

The Eastern Loggerhead Shrike is a unique bird — it's a songbird that hunts like a hawk.

Unfortunately it's also a critically endangered bird. In 2003, only 24 breeding pairs were spotted in Ontario, six pairs in Manitoba, and none in Quebec. We need to act now to save the shrike from extinction.

Recovery takes teamwork

A broad range of people and organizations are working to save the shrike, including many conservation groups, government agencies, private landowners, agricultural associations and aggregate producers (see page two for a complete list). Private landowners are a particularly important part of the recovery strategy, since most shrike habitat is located on private land.

In 1992 a Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Team was formed, and it completed a Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Plan in 1994. The Recovery Team has now evolved into two separate groups: one to help the endangered Eastern Loggerhead Shrike, and the other to focus on the threatened Western Loggerhead Shrike in the southern prairies.

Recovery efforts for the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike are being undertaken by regional offices of Environment Canada in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

In 2003, Environment Canada (Ontario Region) and Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada entered into a conservation agreement under the new federal Species At Risk Act giving the Trust responsibility for coordinating and implementing Eastern Loggerhead Shrike recovery in the Province.

Population monitoring

We need lots of information about the shrike if we're going to be successful at protecting this bird from extinction. So each year, field biologists and volunteers survey Eastern Loggerhead Shrike habitat to see how many birds there are and whether they are building nests and laying eggs.

The process is invaluable, providing information on things like how many adult and juvenile birds return to Canada each spring, whether the population is growing or shrinking, what kind of habitat shrikes like best, and what the shrikes are eating, as well as addressing landowners' questions.

Enhancing shrike habitat

Since deteriorating and fragmenting habitat may be the biggest problem facing shrikes, we're contacting landowners and encouraging them to protect and enhance shrike habitat on their property. This could mean installing fencing to permit cattle grazing, clearing brush, or planting nesting trees, to give a few examples.

These activities are spearheaded by Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Action Groups (RAGs), which are community-based groups that share information, organize volunteers, and work with landowners.

Captive breeding

When shrike numbers fell to only 18 pairs in Ontario, Environment Canada established a captive population. A total of 43 nestlings were taken from the wild population in Ontario in the summers of 1997 and 1998. The current captive breeding program has two goals: first, to preserve the genetic diversity of the Eastern Loggerhead

Shrike, and second, to boost the number of Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes in the wild by releasing captive birds in areas where the local population has declined severely, where the “critical habitat” necessary for their recovery has been identified, and where landowners are supportive.

Banding

Another important source of information about the shrike’s behaviour, survival, and migration habits comes from banding — a process where tiny bracelet-type rings are attached around a bird’s legs. Each bird receives a unique pattern of up to four different coloured bands, two on each leg, which allows observers to identify each bird and when and where it was banded. Every effort is made to ensure that each Eastern Loggerhead Shrike in Canada is captured, banded and released so that it can be tracked and identified later.

Bands are “read” first from the left leg and then from the right, and always from top to bottom: for example, “orange over silver on the left, red over green on the right.” It takes patience and a bird-spotting telescope to identify a particular bird.

Sightings of banded birds has provided the Recovery Program with valuable information on pair behaviour, whether shrikes return to particular nest sites, and whether individual birds move from one shrike population to another.

Genetic studies

Each time we band a shrike, we take a tail feather from the bird, which regrows within six weeks. DNA in the feather is used to obtain a genetic profile for each bird, which, in turn, gives us important information about shrike population dynamics.

Partners in the effort

We’re fortunate to have many groups and individuals dedicated to the recovery of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike in Ontario. Our partners include:

- over 300 landowners
- Avian Science and Conservation Centre of McGill University

- Bird Studies Canada
- Canadian Cattlemen’s Association
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- Toronto Zoo
- Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada

You can help

Join us! We need your support to save this endangered bird.

If you spot a shrike, please call Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada at 1-800-956-6608 or the Species at Risk number at 1-866-833-8888 or Birds Studies Canada at 1-888-448-BIRD.

If you’d like to get involved in habitat restoration, call us and we’ll put you in touch with a local Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Action Group. If you’d like to find another way to help, we’d be happy to speak with you.

How can I get more information?

For more information on the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike and/or the recovery program, please visit our web site <www.shrike.ca>, send a message to <info@shrike.ca>, or leave us a toll-free message at 1-866-833-8888.

