

## 2010 Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Field Report Season Results

### Wild Population

After the encouraging increasing trend seen over the last several years, it was disappointing that the number of wild pairs observed in 2010 had dropped by approximately a third since last season. Twenty-two pairs were confirmed in the province: 16 in Carden, 5 in Napanee and 1 in Pembroke. There were no pairs confirmed in Fenelon Falls (Carden), Smiths Falls or Grey-Bruce this season. Interestingly, there was a large proportion of single birds observed in the province this year; 4-6 in Napanee, 9-12 in Carden, 1 in Pembroke and several (most unconfirmed) in Grey-Bruce, leading to some interesting observations of cooperative breeding. The harsh winter experienced by many south-eastern U.S. states where ELOSH are suspected to winter is a potential factor in the decline seen – a reminder of the susceptibility of this small population to random events. Sixteen of these pairs fledged a total of at least 64 young; productivity similar to previous years.

Survey effort this season was again greatly enhanced by dedicated volunteers from both the Napanee Adopt-A-Site program and Ontario-wide Grassland Bird Survey (GBS). Participation in the GBS was increased substantially this year to 85 volunteers. There were 7 observations of shrikes reported to the GBS coordinator, but despite follow-up visits by both the GBS coordinator and WPC field staff only one observation was able to be confirmed. For more information on either of these programs please contact us.

This year saw the return to breeding grounds of 7 Ontario captive-bred birds previously released from the field breeding program, including TWO 4-year old birds. One of these 4-year old birds returned to the same Carden site on which it successfully bred last season, but unfortunately remained unpaired this year. The juvenile return rate of Ontario release birds was up to 4.3% (4 of 94 released in 2009) this year; very encouraging considering the low wild numbers observed. Of particular note this season was the confirmation of a 2009-release bird from Carden that returned and bred successfully in Quebec. This is the first pair confirmed in the province since 1995!

Field staff collected additional data related to territory boundaries and diet. Staff did inventories of cache trees and collected pellets to help assess diet composition and provide some guidance for future diet research. All data will be analyzed over the winter, providing important information on territory size and use throughout the breeding cycle, habitat requirements of shrikes, and diet.

The banding program continued this season, and all wild adults banded this year received white over a silver ID band on the right leg as part of their unique 4-colour combination. Nestling banding occurred in Carden this year, with young banded with a silver ID band at 9-11 days old a few days prior to fledging. This will help us to track recruitment of wild young into the population next year. As always we encourage birders to try and determine band combinations on any shrikes spotted, and of course report any sightings to us! (1-800-956-6608 or [jessica@wildlifepreservation.ca](mailto:jessica@wildlifepreservation.ca)).

### Field Breeding and Release

It proved to be another productive year for our captive breeding program. In late April, birds were paired for breeding at all of our facilities: the Carden and Dyer's Bay field breeding sites,

Ingersoll, Toronto Zoo and African Lion Safari. The Toronto Zoo added 3 field breeding enclosures to their program and new partner African Lion Safari participated in its first shrike breeding season. Twenty-two pairs successfully bred this year, 9 producing second clutches. Seventy-six young were released in 2010 to supplement the wild population. While this is slightly lower than previous years, an additional 22 young were retained for the captive population to enhance the genetic integrity of our captive stock as well as allow for experimentation with different release techniques next season (e.g. releases of family groups) in an effort to further improve return rates.

All release birds received unique 4-colour band combinations, unless they were wearing a geolocator (see below). In an effort to increase detectability by birders/the public along migration routes and on wintering grounds the breasts of release birds were coloured this season: green for Carden, blue for Dyer's Bay. Our fingers are crossed that some of these conspicuously coloured shrikes will be reported to us from their winter homes!



**Shrike with green coloured breast**

### ***Geolocators***

Given the decline seen in the wild population, remarkably two 2009-release birds wearing geolocators returned to breeding grounds (4.1% of tagged birds). Both had been released from Carden and returned to Carden where they were successfully trapped and the geolocators retrieved. Unfortunately in both cases we found to our dismay that the device had malfunctioned and data collection was cut short at around 54 days, meaning we were unable to capture any migratory movements. On a positive note, in both cases the data that was recorded was quite clean, giving accurate positional information for the period the birds were in a release cage (and location was known). For the period following release until the geolocators stopped working (~4-5 weeks), the average location of the birds remained the same, indicating that the birds did not leave the Carden area during that time. Given the time-frame, this is in-line with general results from previous telemetry work and post-release monitoring with release birds in Carden.

We continued with our geolocator research this year, releasing 43 young wearing the device and banded Silver on the left, Red on the right. Stay tuned!

### **Habitat Stewardship and Outreach**

Over the summer months our field biologists in Napanee and Carden met with landowners to investigate potential projects and several priority projects have been identified in each area. In Carden, project planning has been in co-operation with Couchiching Conservancy through the

Integrated Carden Conservation Strategy. Habitat stewardship project development and implementation will occur over the fall/winter.

#### *Media*

Several articles pertaining to the Recovery Program appeared this season:

- *Extreme makeover for endangered shrikes* (Lionel Gould, Owen Sound Sun Times July 2010)
- [\*At Loggerheads\*](#) (Saul Chernos, NOW magazine, July 8-15, 2010, VOL 29 NO 45)
- [\*Bird's apparent decline concerns species recovery biologist\*](#) (Robin Harvey, Whig Standard Aug 31, 2010)
- *Wingbeat: Watch for unusually coloured shrikes* (Lionel Gould, Lakeside Living Sept 2010)
- *Farmers Enhancing Habitat for Loggerhead Shrike* (Nancy Tilt, OSCIA, Ontario Farmer Sept 7, 2010)
- [\*Government of Canada Investing in Community Action to Preserve Local Habitat and Species at Risk in Ontario\*](#) (EC media release, Sept 14, 2010)
- [\*Chong announces federal dollars to aid animal biodiversity\*](#) (Vik Kirsch, Guelph Mercury, Sept 14, 2010)

#### *Public Presentations and Site Tours*

Shrike Recovery display booths were manned for International Migratory Bird Day at the Toronto Zoo (May 8), Sources of Knowledge Forum at Bruce Peninsula National Park (May 14-15), Carden Nature Festival (June 4-5), and Dufferin Carden Quarry Open House (Sept 3).

Tours were held at the Carden Field Site as part of the Carden Nature Festival on June 4 & 6.

#### *Landowner Appreciation Dinners*

The Carden and Grey-Bruce ELOSH Appreciation dinners have both been held and were again very successful this year. The Carden event was co-hosted by Dufferin Aggregates and saw the launch of their new DVD *From Confrontation to Collaboration on the Carden Alvar: A model for resource extraction companies*. Nearly 100 people were in attendance this year, including a couple of prominent people: Ric McGee (Mayor, City of Kawartha Lakes) and Bill Duffy (Mayor, Ramara Township). Twenty-two people (largest group to date) attended a tour of the Carden field breeding site prior to dinner, and were able to see released juveniles in the field. The Grey-Bruce dinner occurred at the Dyer's Bay field site and saw at least 40 people in attendance. A small group received a tour of the site. At both events, staff gave short presentations on the season's results and outreach materials were made available. The Napanee dinner will be taking place Sept 27 at the local Lions Club and we are expecting nearly 85 people.

#### **Program Funding**

WPC is grateful for the funding support for this year's shrike recovery activities from the following sources: Canadian Wildlife Service, the Ontario Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, the federal Habitat Stewardship Program, and Canadian Wildlife Foundation. We are also grateful to Boisset Family Estates, makers of French Rabbit wines, for providing the bridge funding necessary to launch the field season.

By Jessica Steiner, Species Recovery Biologist, WPC