

## 2012 Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Field Report Season Results

### Wild Population

#### Monitoring

**Twenty-two pairs** were confirmed in the province this season: 16 in Carden, 5 in Napanee and 1 in Grey-Bruce. This was a slight increase from 2011 (Figure 1). There were no pairs confirmed in Fenellon Falls (Carden), Pembroke/Renfrew or Smiths Falls this season. Single birds were reported in all cores. There was also a confirmed shrike sighting near Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec – significantly outside the historic range in this province.

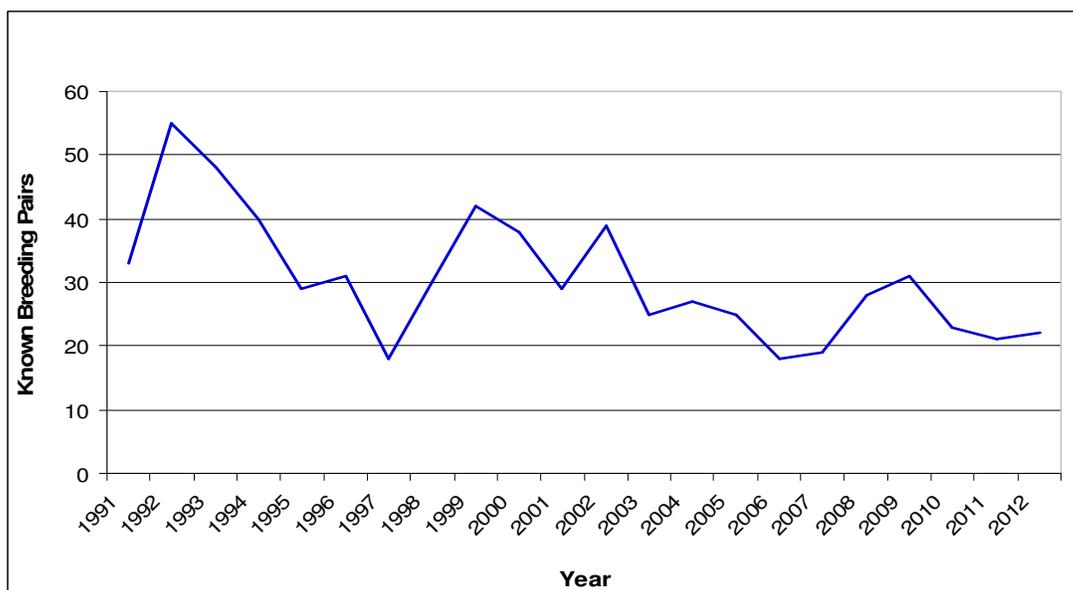


Figure 1: Total number of ELOSH pairs in Ontario 1991-2012

This year documented a substantial increase in productivity due to fewer nest failures, larger clutches and several successful double clutching pairs. In 2011, there were 21 pairs - 14 of these (67%) fledging at least 48 young (average 3.4/pair); no pairs successfully double clutched. This year, **18 pairs (82%) fledged a total of at least 79 young** (average 4.4 young/pair); 5 pairs successfully double clutched.

#### Adopt-A-Site Program

Survey effort was greatly enhanced by an Ontario-wide Adopt-A-Site program, which was established this season in lieu of the Grassland Bird Survey. Volunteers were largely coordinated through the area biologists and were only asked to search for and report shrike sightings.

While only one shrike sighting was reported during AAS surveys, it was an important one; follow-up by staff revealed a pair of shrikes in Grey-Bruce, the only pair documented in this core this season.

Generally, volunteers disliked the reduced focus and scarcity of shrike observations. Recommendations received will be used to improve the program for next season, namely expanding the survey to again include a checklist of species, more consistent communication with volunteers, and assigning volunteers to better areas of habitat. These improvements will hopefully increase volunteer retention and help to grow the program over time.

### ***Returning Captive Birds***

This year saw the return to breeding grounds of one bird previously released from the Ontario field breeding program. A 2006-release bird returned to Napanee and paired with a wild male. This is the first time a 6-year-old captive bird has been spotted in Ontario, and the first time a captive bird has been observed in the Napanee core.

### ***Banding***

The banding program continued this season, and all wild adults banded this year received OR/SI on the right as part of their 4-colour combination, except for a bird initially banded as a wild nestling in 2010 that received OR/SI on the left.

After careful consideration by the Recovery Team and advisors, it was decided to discontinue nestling banding this year. Based on our experience in 2011, it was unlikely that enough young would be banded to assess survival and return rates, which was the ultimate goal of this activity.

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)).

### ***U.S. Sightings***

Over fall/winter 2011-12 there were two confirmed reports of banded ELOSH on wintering grounds. On November 7, a banded bird was observed in Delaware. The bird had bred in Napanee that season. The bird stayed in the area until November 13 and then likely moved south. On November 19, a banded bird was observed in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The bird had been banded in Carden that season. The bird was last seen in the area on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Both birds were resighted in Ontario during the breeding season.

We have already received a couple of reports of fall migrants. On Sept 6 an unbanded HY LOSH was seen in Chatham MA where it stayed for a day (confirmed by photos). Although it can not be confirmed as *migrans*, the age and location make it likely. On Sept 16, a banded ELOSH was observed at the Occoquan NWR in VA; band combination identified it as a captive-release bird hatched at Toronto Zoo and released from Napanee August 15 (Figure 2).

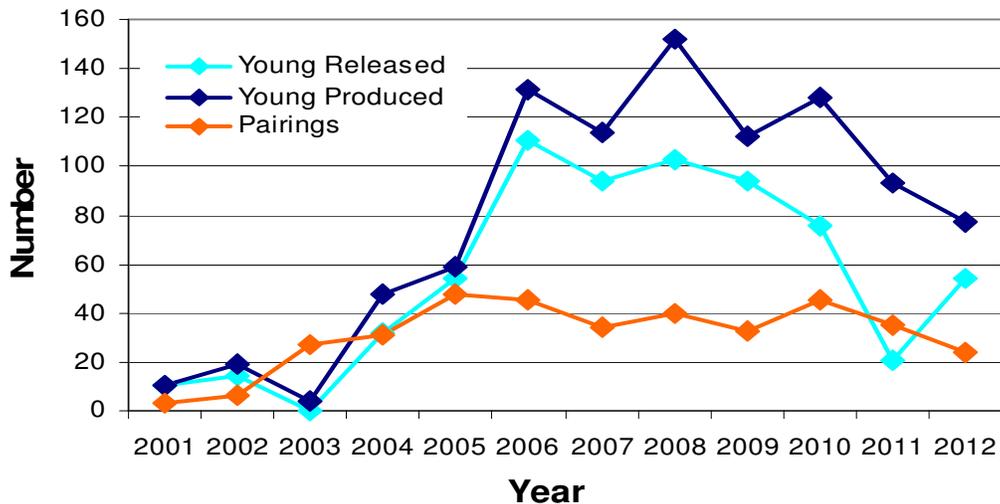


Figure 2: Captive-release bird spotted in Woodbridge VA on Sept 16 (YE/SI:YE/YE)

### Field Breeding and Release

In late April, birds were paired for breeding at four facilities: Carden field breeding and release site, Toronto Zoo, African Lion Safari, and new partner Mountsberg Raptor Centre. Due to funding restrictions, it was decided to shut-down our Dyer's Bay field breeding and release site which had been operating since 2003. Instead, resources were re-focused on a new release site in the Napanee core, with young reared at the partner facilities released from 2 field cages here to supplement the local wild population.

**Fifteen pairs successfully bred this season, producing 77 young** (Figure 3). This is a decrease from the last couple of years, as fewer pairings were available due to recent mortality issues (see 2011 Season Report). **Fifty-four young were released to the wild**; all with unique 4-colour band combinations which included YE/SI on the left. This is a marked increase from the 21 birds released in 2011, but roughly half the number of birds released annually from 2006-2009 (average 101 juveniles/year). The combined effects of recent mortality issues and an aging captive population means that the program is undergoing a re-building period and it will take several years of retaining adequate numbers of young for the captive population to reach its former capacity for releases. This year **12 young were retained** for the captive population.



**Figure 3: ELOSH captive pairings, young produced and young released 2001-2012**

After careful discussion by the Recovery Team last fall, permission was received from Environment Canada to recruit young from the wild in order to provide a much needed infusion of new genes into the captive population. Five young were recruited from the wild Ontario population; three young from two wild nests in Napanee and two young from one wild nest in Carden. The young were collected as 9-11 day old nestlings and successfully hand-reared at African Lion Safari and Mountsberg Raptor Centre. All young display a full range of normal shrike behaviours (e.g. impaling prey, alarm calling, etc.) and are an important addition for maintaining the genetic integrity of the program. They will form part of the breeding population next year.

While the unexplained elevated mortality rate observed last year amongst the captive flock seems to have been abated this season, WPC staff continue to work closely with veterinarians at the Toronto Zoo and the OVC Pathology Lab to investigate potential causes. Since infectious agents have been ruled out, we suspect that stress and possibly reduced genetic diversity may be underlying causes. As such, several modifications to management and diet were made this year, based on recommendations from the experts we've assembled to investigate this issue. As always, we will continue to use adaptive management to improve the program as more information is gathered. Further research on captive population genetics and stress hormones are being undertaken this fall/winter.

### ***Geolocators***

No geolocators were retrieved this year, and none were deployed on captive-release birds.

Given the issues observed with data retrieval from the last 3 geolocators that have been recovered, we attached geolocators to adult birds in the captive population over the fall/winter 2011/12 to help determine whether birds are damaging the device. Results of this trial suggested that the birds themselves are not the cause of the premature failures we've seen in the devices retrieved in 2010 and 2011.

### **Habitat Stewardship and Outreach**

Over the summer months our field biologists in Napanee, Carden and Grey-Bruce met with landowners to investigate potential projects and several priority projects have been identified in each area. In Carden, project planning and implementation continues to be in co-operation with the Couchiching Conservancy. Project development and implementation will occur over the fall/winter.

### ***Media***

Articles pertaining to the Recovery Program appeared this season:

- Articles written by Carden Biologist, Drew White, were printed in the Carden Field Naturalist newsletter “Prairie Smoke” in April and July.
- A reporter for the Napanee Beaver interviewed Amy Chabot (Napanee Biologist) about the new release site in August.

WPC’s Species Recovery Biologist, Jessica Steiner, spoke about the Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program as part of the Kawartha Lakes VIP Agricultural Tour on September 6. The event received some local television coverage.

Issue 16 of shrike newsletter Home on the Range was printed and distributed in early April.

### ***Public Presentations and Site Tours***

WPC’s Species Recovery Biologist, Tara Imlay, gave presentations to the following groups:

- Grasslands in Crisis Symposium at the ROM on February 22-23.
- Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory on April 21.
- Collingwood Nature League was given by WPC’s SRB on May 16.

A display booth was manned for the Carden Nature Festival (June 3-4). Tours were held at the Carden Field Site as part of the Carden Nature Festival on June 3.

If you are interested in having one of our biologists speak to your group regarding the Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program, please contact us.

### ***Landowner Appreciation Dinners***

Landowner and Volunteer Appreciation Dinners were held in each core area and were well attended. The Grey-Bruce dinner was held Aug 9 at the Propeller Club in Wiarton and saw at least 50 people in attendance (a significant increase on past years). The Carden dinner was held Aug 15 at the Kirkfield Lions Club. Nearly 80 people were in attendance, and 22 people attended a tour of the Carden field breeding site prior to dinner. The Napanee dinner was held on Aug 27 at the local Lions Club and a tour of the Napanee release site was held prior to the dinner. Roughly 100 people attended the dinner and 20 people came on the tour of the site. At all three events, staff gave short presentations on the season’s results and outreach materials were made available.

### ***Program Funding***

WPC is grateful for the funding support for this year’s shrike recovery activities from the following sources: Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service; Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ Ontario Species at Risk Stewardship Fund and Species at Risk Research Fund, the federal Habitat Stewardship Program, the federal Science Horizons Program, the Shell Fuelling

Change Campaign and the Baillie Fund. We are also grateful to Boisset Family Estates, makers of French Rabbit wines, for providing the bridge funding necessary to launch the field season.

In addition we would like to thank all program volunteers for their generous donation of time to the various aspects of the program, and of course to the landowners whose continued support and stewardship efforts are essential to recovery efforts.

By Jessica Steiner, Species Recovery