

2013 Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Field Report Season Results

Wild Population

Monitoring

Twenty-four pairs were confirmed in the province this season, however only 19 pairs were actively breeding: 12 in Carden, and 7 in Napanee. Although there were more pairs this year (22 pairs in 2012), the number of breeding pairs is slightly lower than last season. There was no breeding activity in Grey-Bruce; however a single bird was briefly spotted in the area. There were no pairs confirmed in Fenellon Falls (Carden), Pembroke/Renfrew or Smiths Falls this season

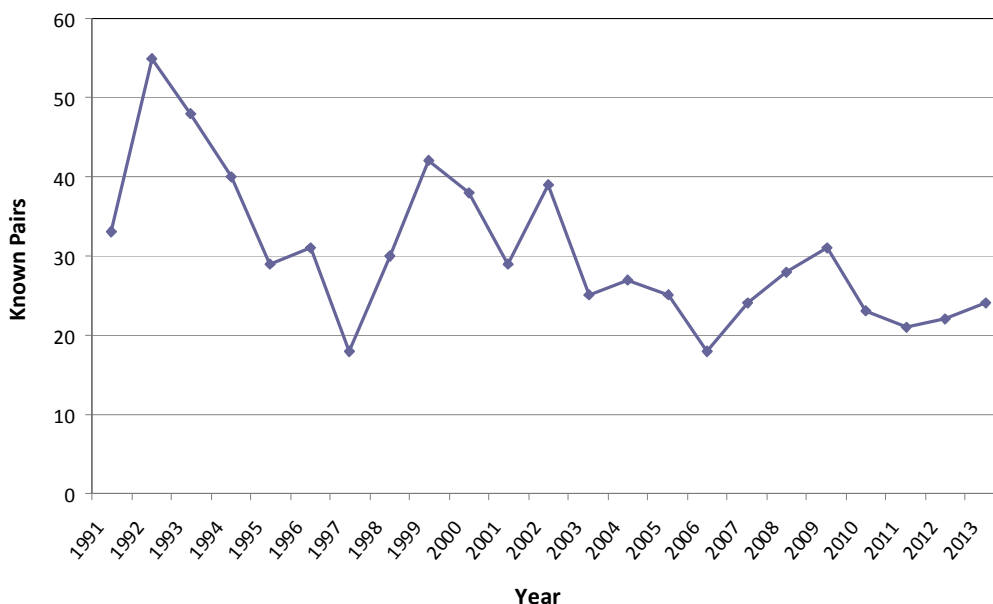


Figure 1: Total number of ELOSH pairs in Ontario 1991-2013

A total of 32 wild young were fledged; 25 young produced in Carden, and 7 in Napanee. Relative to the 2012 wild breeding productivity (82 young fledged in 2012), this is a significant decrease. One pair successfully double-clutched this year, bringing relief to the hopeful recovery team. The cold snap experienced in May caused some pairs to abandon nests, and re-nest. Gladly, many of the pairs who re-nested were successful in fledging young.

Adopt-A-Site Program

Survey effort was greatly enhanced by the Adopt-A-Site program volunteers. Fifty-one volunteers covered over 200 priority habitat patches across the core areas, and were responsible for the vast majority of coverage outside of the Carden and Napanee cores. In addition to surveying for shrike, volunteers completed a checklist for a subset of grassland bird species of interest, including **Bobolink**, **Eastern Meadowlark**, and **Common Nighthawk**.

Returning Captive Birds

An astonishing **six (6)** captive-release birds have been confirmed returning to Ontario breeding groups. One 2008 release bird (release site unknown) in Napanee, and **five (5)** 2012 release birds,

all hatched in Napanee. This is a remarkable 9.2% return rate for the captive breeding program and even more so for the inaugural hacking efforts in Napanee at 16.1%. All 3 of the 2012 release birds returning to Napanee this year were hatched at Mountsberg Conservation Centre – Halton Conservation.

Banding

The banding program continued this season, and all wild adults banded this year received LB/SI on the right as part of their 4-colour combination. **7 adults** were trapped and banded in Carden, and an additional **2** in Napanee.

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).

U.S. Sightings

Over December 2012, there were several reports of migrating LOSH in Virginia. All were unbanded.

We have already received one report of a fall migrant. On September 17, an unbanded Hatch Year (HY) LOSH was spotted in central Mississippi (Figure 2). However, the bird was unbanded and cannot be confirmed as ELOSH.



Figure 2: HY LOSH in Mississippi (Sept 17)

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.

Eighteen pairs successfully bred this year, fledging **87 young** (Figure 3). This is an increase from last season (15 pairs, and 77 young). Captive born young retained from last season allowed more pairs to be formed and provided options for re-pairing where necessary. **Fifty-eight young** were released to the wild, and **16 young** were retained for the captive population.

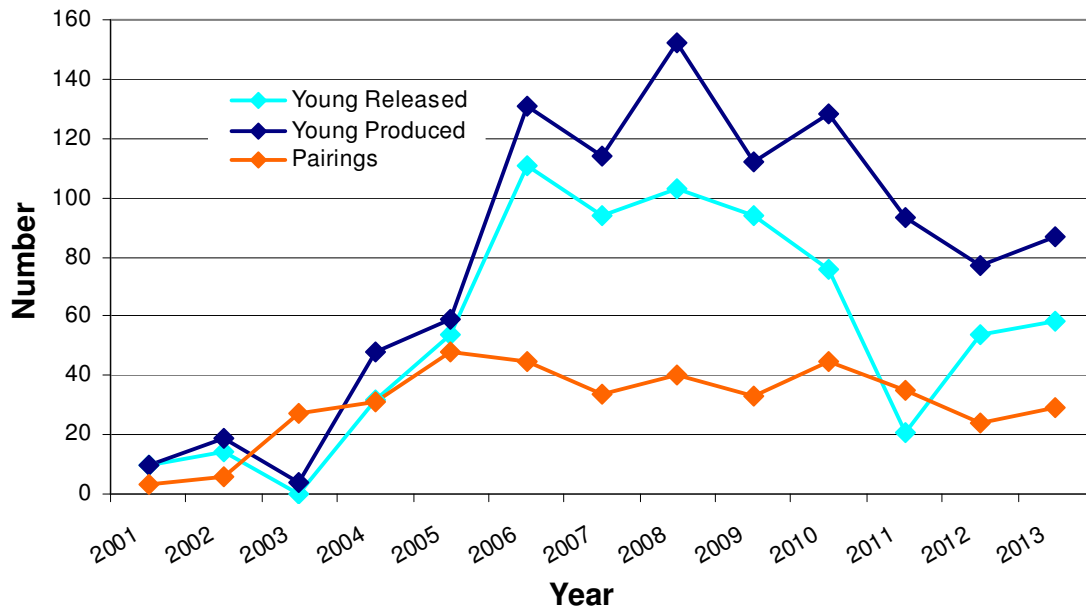


Figure 3: ELOSH captive pairings, young produced and young released 2001-2013

We continued to see reduced mortality this season over recent years, similar to 2012. WPC staff continues to work closely with veterinarians at the Toronto Zoo and the OVC Pathology Lab to investigate reasons for the mortality the program is experiencing.



Figure 4: Newly released captive young

Banding and Geolocators

All captive released young received a unique 4-colour band combination which included LB/SI on the left as to identify them as a 2013 release bird. **38 young** received geolocators this season. Those birds received only RD/SI on the left for ease of identification next season. In addition, all young received a temporary marking as to aid in individual identification while in the release enclosures and during post-release monitoring (Figure 5)



Figure 5: Banding, Geolocator, and Colour Marking

Habitat Stewardship and Outreach

Over August, Area Biologists met with interested landowners to discuss potential stewardship projects for this fall/winter. Several priority projects have been identified in each area. These include fencing and water system projects in critical ELOSH habitat. In Carden, project planning and implementation continues to be in co-operation with the Couchiching Conservancy.

Media

An article on the shrike recovery program was featured on Earth Rangers' Wild Wire Blog <http://www.earthrangers.com/wildwire/risk/scientists-saving-songbirds/>

Local reporter Luke Hendry from the Belleville Intelligencer came out to the Napanee release site on July 22nd to observe banding and geolocator attachment to a group of release young. Mr Hendry took many photographs and interviewed both Jessica Steiner and Emily Bird (Napanee Field Assistant) about the recovery program. An article and large photo spread appeared in the Belleville Intelligencer on July 23rd. The article was also picked up and appeared in the Kingston Wig and the Napanee Guide weekend editions. <http://www.intelligencer.ca/2013/07/22/bird-at-the-brink> and <http://www.intelligencer.ca/2013/07/25/video-shrikes-disappearing>

Acclaimed science writer Lydia Dotto has made several visits to the Carden field site over the course of the season to photograph and document the captive-breeding and release program; she will be pitching this story to a couple of magazines including Canadian Geographic and the National Wildlife Federation's magazine (U.S.); if it is accepted we can expect it to appear next spring.

Public Presentations and Site Tours

Species Recovery Biologist (SRB) and 3 volunteers represented WPC at Migratory Bird Day events at the Toronto Zoo on May 11. A display board was mounted and outreach materials were made available to visitors.

SRB staffed a display at the Carden Nature Festival May 31-June 1.

Our Napanee Biologist, Jonathan Willans, staffed a display booth with outreach materials at several local community events: Napanee Fair Aug 1-5, a public event put on by the Napanee Humane Society August 10, and the Centreville Fair August 31.

WPC Staff gave several tours of the Carden breeding site throughout the season:

- A tour for the Carden Nature Festival on May 31, with 9 in attendance.
- A tour for members of the Guelph Field Naturalists on June 5th, with approximately 12 people in attendance.
- On June 24, Carden Biologist Hazel Wheeler helped deliver a tour of the Carden Alvar area for a VIP birder from Britain, Barrie Cooper, who is the International Education Manager for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and was speaking at The Birdlife World Congress in Ottawa that week.
- A tour for VIP donors on August 10.

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 ELOSH Appreciation Dinners were held in Carden (August 14) and Napanee (August 26) and were well attended. Site tours were offered prior to both events. At both, staff gave short power point presentations on the season's results and field work experiences and outreach materials were made available. Staff received great feedback from the presentation, and pictures of the season were well received.

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, Boisset Wines, makers of French Rabbit wines, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

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