



# home on the range

## JOINING FORCES FOR CONSERVATION BREEDING

by Hazel Wheeler

*inside:*

3 | Meet the Team

4 | Helping Landowners Help Species at Risk

The fight to recover shrinking loggerhead shrike populations has an exciting new partner! Conservation Centers for Species Survival, or C2S2, is a collective of U.S. organizations with the mission of “studying and creating self-sustaining populations of some of the world’s most endangered species”. The array of species that C2S2 works with includes reptiles, mammals, and birds, all linked by their rare status in the wild. Last spring, C2S2 added loggerhead shrike to the list of priority birds in their Avian Sustainability Program, thus cementing their commitment to recovery work for this species.

So what does this mean for Ontario’s Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program? Primarily, it means that not only do we have growing partnerships with U.S. folks working on the wild birds (you may remember from last spring’s newsletter), but we also have a growing network of facilities that can participate in the captive breeding of shrikes for release to the wild. We have already been working with one C2S2 facility, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Virginia, which has been breeding shrikes for release in Ontario since 2013. The stage has now been set to allow for other C2S2 facilities to join the captive breeding program as well. More breeding facilities means more space to grow the captive population, and in turn hatch more young to release to the wild. This is incredibly important for Ontario shrikes, as captive-bred birds have clearly been propping up the wild population in recent years, making up nearly a quarter of those birds found in the breeding season..

The breadth of knowledge and expertise in captive animal care and research that C2S2 facilities bring to the table may also open up new avenues for investigating the reasons why loggerhead shrike numbers are shrinking. Though they may not be endangered throughout the eastern U.S. as they are here in Ontario, shrike populations are declining throughout North America, so a cooperative effort just makes sense. By working together, whether to track wild birds, to breed birds in captivity, or to engage more people in the importance of this work, we create a better chance of bringing these birds back from the brink.



*spot a shrike, help save a species*

## MEET THE TEAM

Every spring, the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program brings together a talented team of people to meet the needs of a busy breeding season. This team includes Wildlife Preservation Canada field biologists that spend their time interacting with landowners, scouting for shrikes returning from the wintering grounds, searching for nests, and working at the release sites. And of course the captive-breeding and release program couldn't happen without the teams at breeding facilities, that work year-round to ensure our captive birds are happy and healthy, and step up their shrike care in the breeding season to ensure all the birds raise strong, healthy broods to be released to the wild. This year's field biologists, and the team from one of our captive facilities, introduce themselves here.



Cayla Naumann  
Napanee Biologist

I have always had a passion for wildlife and the natural world around me. I grew up in California as the California Condor Recovery Project was being implemented, and ever since then I have been fascinated by endangered

species recovery. Hailing most recently from Victoria, B.C., where I completed both my Bachelor and Master of Science degrees at University of Victoria, I am looking forward to the change to ecosystems in Ontario. During my bachelor's degree I had the absolute pleasure and amazing experience of two field programs: one in Malaysia studying tropical rainforest ecology and one at Bamfield Marine Science Centre studying temperate rainforest ecology. My master's degree involved the study

of the population genetics of a pathogen in B.C. aquaculture farms. Since leaving school, I've biked down the west coast from Victoria to San Francisco, and worked with birds of prey at Pacific Northwest Raptor Centre. Now I am thrilled to be spending the summer in the field in Napanee, monitoring Loggerhead Shrike and learning more about endangered species management and recovery. I have already had such a great experience and I can't wait to see what the rest of the summer has in store.



Thomas Villeneuve  
Carden Biologist

In my childhood I spent every summer at our family's cottage in Kingston, Ontario spending most days going on nature walks and canoeing up and down the lake. This is where my love of nature, wildlife and especially birds was

born. At my first sight of a black-and-white warbler I became instantly hooked. I've always had a soft spot for birds and it stayed with me throughout my university education. During my undergraduate degree with Carleton University I used feather stable isotopes to predict the overwintering patterns of double-crested cormorants. I enjoyed gaining experience in a laboratory, and seeing how much valuable information is stored in a simple feather sample. During my master's degree, again with Carleton University, I was able to take my work to the field. Here, I deployed portable marine radars to study the migratory patterns of birds along the Lake Huron shoreline. It was amazing to see the overall migratory behaviour of birds around our Great Lakes. This led me

to my next adventure... I am excited to be a part of the Wildlife Preservation Canada team working with their Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program. I will be enjoying every day this summer searching key areas of Carden, Ontario for breeding pairs of eastern loggerhead shrike.



#### African Lion Safari

In 2008, African Lion Safari joined the ongoing efforts of Wildlife Preservation Canada and other partner breeding facilities to save the critically endangered eastern loggerhead shrike. What started as a side project for the bird department has certainly

come a long way for the park, and is now a large part of our daily efforts. Although the eastern loggerhead shrike is not a species our guests can see while “On Safari!™”, it is just one of the many conservation efforts in which our park participates, and that guests contribute to with each visit.

We have seen the on-site facilities expand from humble beginnings, where just four shrikes were held over the first winter, to a current holding capacity of 20 birds. We have also added field enclosures for breeding, and adapted our overwintering pens to create a “Shrike Dating Centre”, where a female can choose her mate for

the season. Taking all the knowledge we gained from those facilities, we have recently designed and built an all-encompassing shrike facility, nicknamed “The Pod”, that can house birds for both for breeding and overwintering. The journey that we’ve had with these timid and unique individuals has been a roller coaster, and each year has seen both obstacles and successes. No doubt there will be more challenges ahead, but we are always working as hard as we can to offer this species-in-need a good and fighting chance at survival. With several female birds incubating clutches of eggs at the park at the time this article is being written, our hope is for a great breeding season ahead. We are always looking to better our best.

Highlighting just one African Lion Safari staff member involved with the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program would be impossible, as this has always been a group effort from not only our bird staff but from everyone who contributes in different ways, and our visitors as well. Looking forward to a successful breeding season for 2016!

#### About the Project

Since 2003, Wildlife Preservation Canada has been responsible for coordinating and implementing the recovery program for the eastern loggerhead shrike in Ontario.

#### Learn More

Visit [www.wildlifepreservation.ca](http://www.wildlifepreservation.ca). You can also contact Wildlife Preservation Canada toll-free at 1-800-956-6608 or via email [admin@wildlifepreservation.ca](mailto:admin@wildlifepreservation.ca) or by writing to RR#5, 5420 Highway 6 N., Guelph, ON N1H 6J2.

#### Project Partners

Wildlife Preservation Canada • Environment Canada • Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources • Couchiching Conservancy • Mountsberg Conservation Area • Toronto Zoo • African Lion Safari • Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums • Bird Studies Canada • The Nature Conservancy of Canada • Over 250 Ontario Landowners • Little Ray’s Nature Centre • Numerous Local Naturalist Groups • and more to come!

*home on the range* is also digital!

You can get all the latest loggerhead shrike news right in your inbox. If you would like to receive this newsletter in an electronic format (PDF), rather than paper, please send an email to: [admin@wildlifepreservation.ca](mailto:admin@wildlifepreservation.ca).

In the subject line, write “**Digital shrike news**”.



# HELPING LANDOWNERS HELP SPECIES AT RISK

*by Hazel Wheeler with The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association*

**D**id you know that the majority of the loggerhead shrike in Ontario are found on privately owned agricultural lands? Landowners play an incredibly important role for our birds, as well as many other at-risk species, and we at Wildlife Preservation Canada try to acknowledge that whenever we can. The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) also recognizes the importance of agricultural lands for species at risk, and has created cost-sharing programs for agricultural producers that want to work with the native species their lands host. One of those programs is the Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program, or SARFIP, which is now taking applications for 2016.

“SARFIP is great for producers who are looking to make improvements on their farms while also supporting farm habitat for species at risk,” said Gord Green, President of OSCIA. “Through offering cost-share funding for these types of projects, both farmers and species at risk benefit from the same on-farm activities.”

Farm businesses in Ontario can access cost-share dollars, up to \$20,000 per farm, for projects that implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) for species at risk. Though our focus from the loggerhead shrike side is the maintenance of grasslands, eligible BMPs go far beyond just those habitats, and can also include activities around croplands, shorelines, stream banks, wetlands and woodlands. Many opportunities are available to support critical habitat through

SARFIP, including cross fencing for rotational grazing, watering systems for livestock, native tree planting, improved stream crossings, native grassland plantings, invasive species removal and erosion control structures, among others.

“Farmers have a unique opportunity to support species at risk alongside their farming practices,” expressed Christine Schmalz, Environmental Programs Manager at OSCIA. “Farmers are on the ground working hard to implement projects that improve on-farm habitat for species at risk; we’re working hard to improve access to the program.”

For more information on eligibility criteria, and to find out if SARFIP is a good fit with your farm, consult the OSCIA website ([www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarfip/](http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/oscia-programs/sarfip/)), or contact OSCIA directly at 519-826-3035 or [SARFIP@ontariosoilcrop.org](mailto:SARFIP@ontariosoilcrop.org).

