



home on the range

WORKING BEYOND OUR BORDERS

by Hazel Wheeler

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*spot a
shrike,
help
save a
species*

In Ontario, the loggerhead shrike has been on the brink of disappearing since the late '90s. Travel down to the southern U.S. though, and it can feel like a different world; shrikes seem to pop up just about anywhere, from cattle pastures to urban parks, and even on manicured sports fields! However, despite loggerhead shrike being more common, the southern populations are still shrinking. In fact, shrike populations across North America are showing significant declines, which is why researchers from across the continent came together in 2014 to form the North American Loggerhead Shrike Working Group. Since then, the group has been working to create a unified conservation plan to address shrinking shrike populations.

Wildlife Preservation Canada has been playing an important role in the working group as we, along with our long-time collaborator Dr. Amy Chabot, bring decades of collective Ontario shrike experience to the table. By collaborating with partners across the northeastern range of the species, we hope to demystify migration routes and wintering grounds for our Ontario birds, and identify threats faced during these important life stages. Through the working group, the wild shrike colour-banding program has also been expanded across most of the eastern states, and we've already seen some exciting results: Last year, a bird banded in Virginia in May made a surprising mid-summer move to Ontario – something we never would have known about without her unique colour band combination!

Beyond research, the working group has adopted our Ontario Landowner's Guide as a key outreach tool, which will be adapted to reflect regional differences in shrike habitat. As important as research is for the species, landowners are also a key part of recovery, as the best habitat areas (and so the majority of the birds) are usually found on privately owned lands. It is great to see the resources we have developed here helping to promote shrike habitat stewardship across the continent!

After almost 15 years of coordinating shrike recovery efforts in Ontario, Wildlife Preservation Canada has found some great company within the working group. The dedication of the group reminds me of that popular quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."



MEET THE TEAM

Every spring, the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery program brings together a talented team of conservationists to meet the needs of a busy breeding season. They spend their season interacting with landowners, scouting for shrikes returning from the wintering grounds, searching for nests, and working at the field breeding and release sites. Their work is vital to the progress of the recovery program. This year's team members introduce themselves here.



Mark Hecnar
Napanee Field Assistant

Originally from Windsor, Ontario, I am a recent graduate of the Fish and Wildlife Technician Program at the School of Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences in Lindsay. Although I have always been a naturalist and avid outdoorsman, it was when I enrolled in the Fish and Wildlife program that my studies morphed a keen interest in the outdoors into a full-fledged obsession.

Although I am relatively new to the vast world of ornithology, the chance to be working in the field this summer with the eastern loggerhead shrike is a fantastic opportunity to improve and build upon my skillset, and gain valuable experience in the field, all the while doing something I love the most... birding!

Apart from avians, the two other passions that govern my life and free time are bushcraft, and history. If not in a field or wetland chasing birds, I can usually be found working on a new outdoors project, or sitting in my comfy armchair reading about the War of 1812.

I currently reside in Kingston, although I will be returning to school on a full-time basis in September. My future plans include attending language classes with the intention of becoming fluent in French, hiking the entire length of the Bruce trail, and hopefully one day, obtain a doctorate of ornithology.



Alain Parada
Carden Biologist

My earliest recollection of any wildlife-related experience goes back to when I first heard the melodious song of the Cuban solitaire in western Cuba. That stunning experience became the spark which kindled my everlasting passion for birdlife. Afterwards, I completed my bachelor degree in Biological Sciences (Havana University) after conducting a year of waterfowl communities' surveys. Upon graduation, I gained experience participating in various research projects centered on the ecology and conservation of neotropical-nearctic bird populations and communities. While I treasure countless joyful moments as a field biologist, conducting population surveys of regional/local endemic species is among my most

treasured memories from those years. Another remarkable memory related to endangered species was an unexpected close encounter with a Kirtland's warbler in north-central Cuba. During my master degree (Trent University), I deployed radio-tags on blackpoll and Canada warblers to study their stopover ecology along southcentral Ontario with the use of Motus. Now, I am thrilled to assist in all stages of the loggerhead shrike's recovery program.



Alisa Samuelson
Carden/Grey-Bruce Biologist

I grew up in Calgary, Alberta with parents who supported my love of nature and animals from an early age. In addition to allowing me to have more pets than most sane people would agree to, most weekends were spent hiking or snowboarding throughout the Rockies and interior British Columbia or volunteering at wildlife rehabilitation centres. I moved to Ontario for my undergraduate degree and received a BSc in Ecology from the University of Guelph. I always expected to move back west, but work opportunities and love have made Ontario my home. I recently received an MSc in Environmental Practice from Royal Roads University, where my final research project assessed the impact of invasive vegetation on avian breeding site selection in urban forests of the GTA. I spent the past winter in B.C. working at a captive breeding facility for endangered owls and am looking forward to using the experiences gained there to help our juvenile loggerhead shrikes prior to their release at the end of this season. I am also excited by the opportunity to spend time on Manitoulin

Island and the Grey-Bruce peninsula surveying reported breeding sites for loggerhead shrikes. My position has been partially funded by the Canadian Government's Youth Employment Strategy and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to assist in the recovery of one of the nation's most critically endangered species.



Nicole Wajmer
Napanee Biologist

Growing up, I have always had a love of nature and wildlife. I spent my childhood summers at my family cottage, just an hour away from Napanee, ON. I decided to complete my undergraduate degree at the University of Guelph because I could major in wildlife biology. It was here that I had my first taste of research, field work, and exam stress. After undergrad, I moved to B.C. to work on a conservation and breeding program for the endangered northern spotted owl. It was here that I fell in love with the mountains, the ocean and conservation biology. I returned to Guelph to complete my Master's degree in aquatic ecology where I studied the genetic influence of behaviour in the migration of Lake Superior brook trout. I jump at every opportunity to explore new areas, whether it be in my own backyard or through travel. This is part of the reason I enjoy fieldwork so much. I am currently completing my Dive Master scuba course – because there is no place better to explore than underwater. I am so excited to be able to contribute the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program, and I can't wait to see what the rest of the summer has in store for me!

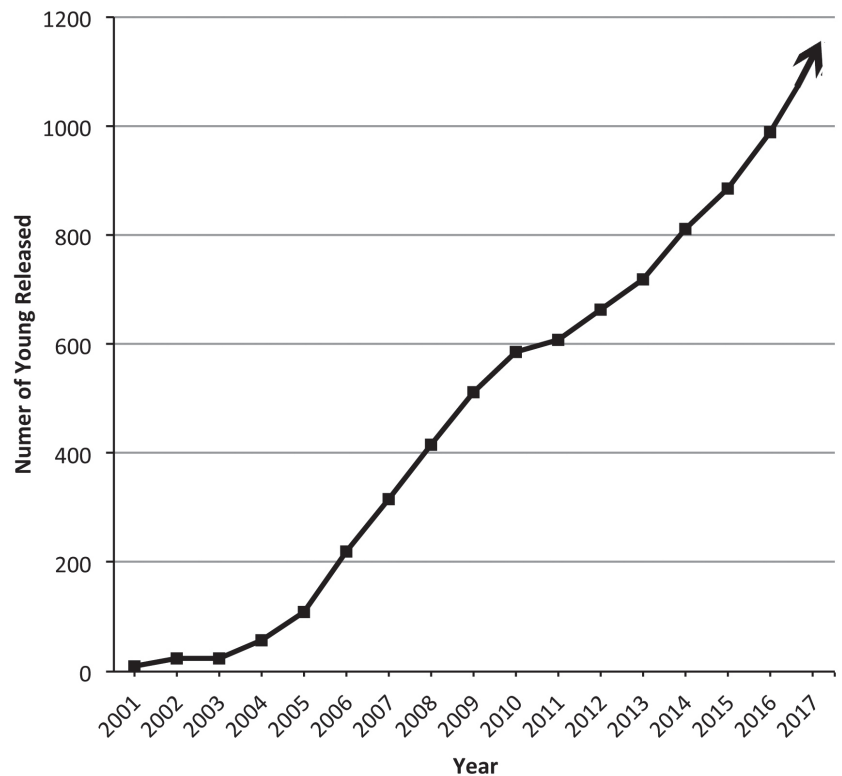
MILESTONES IN SHRIKE BREEDING

by Hazel Wheeler

This year is a big one for the conservation-breeding side of the Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program, as we get set to release our 1000th bird! The first shrike releases were back in 2001, when just 10 young were set free from a budding new breeding program. Since then, the conservation-breeding program has grown by leaps and bounds, and we now have up to 30 pairs of shrike breeding and producing upwards of 100 young each year!

The impact of conservation breeding is clear when you look at the birds on the landscape in Ontario: last year, almost a third of the shrike pairs found in the wild included a bird from the conservation-breeding program, and those pairings contributed over 40% of the wild fledglings found!

How will this year measure up? Time will tell, but right



now it's shaping up to be a banner year, both for the wild and captive population. Look out for our season wrap-up in the fall, to get all the details!

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. You can also contact Wildlife Preservation Canada toll-free at 1-800-956-6608 or via email admin@wildlifepreservation.ca or by writing to RR#5, 5420 Highway 6 N., Guelph, ON N1H 6J2.

Project Partners

Wildlife Preservation Canada • African Lion Safari • Bird Studies Canada • Environment and Climate Change Canada • Couchiching Conservancy • Little Ray's Nature Centre • Mountsberg Raptor Centre • Nashville Zoo at Grassmere • The Nature Conservancy of Canada • Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry • Ontario Parks Queen's University • Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute • Toronto Zoo • York University • 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.

In the subject line, write **"Digital shrike news"**.