

EASTERN LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Lanius ludovicianus migrans



Physical characteristics



The eastern loggerhead shrike is a species in the passerine family and is medium-sized with a grey body and distinctive black mask. It has black wing bars as well as white wing patches that are visible in flight. Males and females look similar. In contrast to the more common northern shrike (which is larger and has a longer beak), the eastern loggerhead shrike has a pale, unstriped breast.

Diet



The shrike is unique among passerines due to its carnivorous diet, which includes a large number of crop pests. It feeds on insects, small birds, lizards, frogs and even small mammals its own size! Lacking talons, the shrike is known for impaling its prey on thorns or twigs to make it easier to eat.

Habitat



The eastern loggerhead shrike lives in open grassland habitats with scattered trees and shrubs. It likes to hunt from high perches and to nest in thorny undergrowth to protect itself from predators.

Periods of vulnerability



- The reproduction period starts in the spring, in April and early May. Breeding populations were once fairly common in Quebec, but there have been only a few documented cases of reproductive success since the 1990s.
 - Almost all of the nesting habitat is located on private land in Canada. Conservation of the species therefore largely depends on the cooperation of farmers and rural landowners.
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Nesting

- Both males and females help find nesting sites and build nests.
- The nesting season extends from late April to late July.
- This species is a short-distance migrant. Although its breeding range extends into Quebec, this species is now rarely seen in the province.

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Threats



- The intensification of farming activities, the conversion of grazing land to annual crops and urbanization are causing a significant loss of habitat.
- Risk of ingesting pesticide-contaminated prey.
- Vehicle collisions.
- Removal of fences and shrubby hedges where the species perch to hunt and nest.



Sustainable practices



- Restore habitats conducive to nesting by recreating or promoting grassland areas and vegetated strips.
- Reduce the use of pesticides, particularly insecticides and herbicides, near the species' habitat to increase quantity of prey.
- Preserve or restore fences and shrubby hedges to increase available perches.



- As of 2023, **endangered** species listed on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (first added in 2003)
- Recovery strategy for the loggerhead shrike, *migrans* subspecies (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*), in Canada: species-registry.canada.ca/index-en.html#/consultations/948

Sources

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