

Migrant Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*)

Pennsylvania Endangered Species

State Rank: S1B Global Rank: G4T3Q

Identification

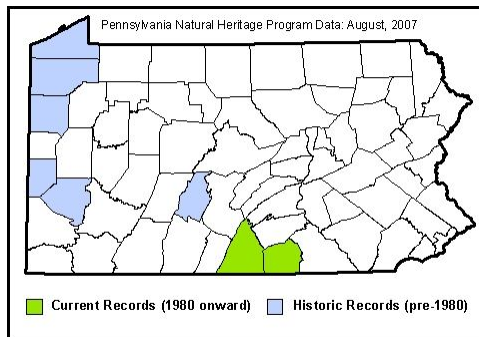
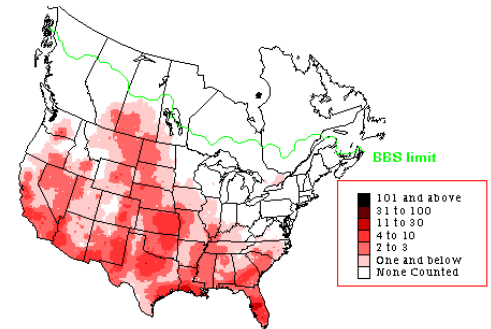
The Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a Pennsylvania-Endangered animal species of concern, is a short-distance to permanent migrant landbird. This species is about 7 inches in length, has a heavy, hooked bill, a black mask, and gray head and back with white underparts. This species has black wings and white wing patches and a black tail with white outer tail feathers. The juveniles and immatures are duller with faint barring above and below.



photo by Ron Austing

Range

Loggerhead Shrikes formerly bred throughout the northeastern United States, even into New England. However, as early successional fields have been reforested, this species has rapidly disappeared from former nesting areas throughout the northeast. A very few remnant populations may remain in the northeast, even in Pennsylvania, where the species is very rare. The species is still relatively common in the western United States, but decreasing in southeastern United States.



Habitat

This species prefers open habitat characterized by grasses and forbs of low stature interspersed with bare ground and shrubs or low trees. In Pennsylvania, this species uses pastures with scattered low trees (especially hawthorns, or other thorny shrub species, and crab-apples), farmsteads, mowed right-of-ways, and croplands. Scattered shrubs or trees, particularly thick or thorny species, serve as nesting substrates, hunting perches, and impaling stations. This species is a predator that preys on small songbirds, grasshoppers, and small rodents but does not have talons like raptors. This species will therefore impale the prey on a sharp thorn in a small tree such as a hawthorn.

Conservation/Status

Shrikes can no longer be regarded as a regularly breeding bird in Pennsylvania. Widespread declines contraction of the breeding range throughout the northeast has prompted several states, including Pennsylvania, to list the species as an animal species of concern. Declines in the northeast have been attributed with pesticide contamination such as DDE, roadway mortality, and subtle habitat degradation. The degree of tolerance of disturbance of this species is still unknown. Regions with severe Loggerhead Shrike declines had lost 39 percent of their unimproved pasture to cropland from 1946 to 1986 and 79 percent since settlement. The widespread decline of this species in the northeastern United States has led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to consider listing the migrant subspecies, *migrans*, as an endangered species. Inventories of suitable habitat should be conducted in Franklin County and throughout southcentral Pennsylvania to determine whether a remnant population remains. Some individuals of this subspecies could be breeding in southcentral Pennsylvania. Should breeding pairs of any subspecies are discovered, intensive research and management should be undertaken.

References

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- Gough, G.A., Sauer, J.R., Iliff, M. *Patuxent Bird Identification Infocenter*. 1998. Version 97.1. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD. <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/Infocenter/infocenter.html>

