

## Loggerhead Shrike

## *Lanius ludovicianus*



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**Code:** LOSH

**Rangewide Distribution:** south-central Canada, south through most of the U.S. and Mexico.

### ILLINOIS

**Abundance:** rare migrant and uncommon to rare summer and winter resident, decreasing northward.

**Endangered/Threatened Status:** threatened

**Breeding Habitat:** open fields with scattered trees, open woodland, and shrubland; thorny trees.

**Nest:** a bulky cup of twigs, forbs, and bark strips woven together and lined with finer materials, in tree.

**Eggs:** 5–6, grayish buff, marked with gray, brown, or black near large end.

**Incubation:** 16–17 days.

**Fledging:** from 17 to 21 days.

The breeding range of the Loggerhead Shrike includes south-central Canada, much of the U.S. except the northeastern and northwestern regions, and Mexico. Shrikes inhabit open country with short vegetation interspersed with hedgerows, scattered trees, and bushes, where they are often seen perching on branches or wires along roadsides, waiting for prey. Loggerhead Shrikes eat large insects, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Hedges and trees that have slender, sharp-pointed thorns, such as Osage orange and honey locust, are used for impaling and caching prey; hence its nickname “butcher bird.” As hedgerows have disappeared, shrikes have increasingly used barbed wire fences for the same purpose. They often utilize Osage orange, honey locusts, red cedars, and rose for nesting because they offer concealment and protection for their nests. Loggerhead Shrike populations have declined throughout North America

in recent decades (Yosef 1996). Loss of grassy pastures and hedgerows due to changing agricultural practices and development in the latter half of the 1900s have contributed to the decline (Graber et al. 1973). Increased use of pesticides such as DDT has been suggested as negatively impacting the population but the shrike population has continued to decline even after these pesticides were banned (Yosef 1996).

### Illinois History

In early accounts the Loggerhead Shrike was described as “a more or less common species” (Ridgway 1889) and a common summer resident (Cory 1909). In the 1950s it was still a fairly common species in the Chicago region (Ford 1956). Graber et al. (1973) reported that the population had steadily declined in the northern and central portions of Illinois between 1907 and 1957, and by 1973 the entire northern and central population had basically disappeared. The loss of hedgerows and pastures was thought to be the primary reason for its decline at that time. As a result of a dramatic population decline especially between the 1950s and 1970s, the Loggerhead Shrike is listed as a threatened species in Illinois.

### Breeding Bird Survey Trends

For 1966–2000, the trend estimate for the population in Illinois is –4.5% per year (nonsignificant,  $P = 0.10$ ). The upper Midwest population of the Loggerhead Shrike declined from 1966 to 2000 at an annual rate of –8.4% (significant,  $P < 0.01$ ).

*Credibility Index:* IL = 2 and UM = 2.

### Distribution

Loggerhead Shrikes occurred statewide (they were reported in priority blocks in 80 counties) but were concentrated in the southern and western counties during the atlas project. Records were scattered in the northern and central counties. There is now a fairly large population at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Will County, which was not reported during the atlas project. Although the northern and central Illinois populations were nearly eliminated by the 1970s, atlas data suggest that local and widely scattered populations are occurring in those parts of the state.

### Frequency

The Loggerhead Shrike was reported from 244 (24.4%) priority blocks and 23 nonpriority blocks. It was Confirmed as breeding in 125 (12.5%) of the priority blocks, mostly by observations of fledged young (59 FL records) and adults feeding young (29 FY records). Breeding was relatively easy to confirm.