

Loggerhead Shrike from Carden Alvar in Virginia

By Jean Iron and Ron Pittaway

THE WINTERING GROUNDS of Ontario's Loggerhead Shrikes have long been a mystery. On 20 November 2011, Ned Brinkley, editor of *North American Birds*, asked us about a colour-banded Loggerhead Shrike that was wintering at Virginia Beach on the Virginia coast of the United States. Elisa Enders found this shrike and noted the band combinations. Its right leg is marked with a blue band above a silver band and left leg is marked with a green band above a yellow band. Ned wondered if it might be from the Ontario population so we put him in touch with Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC), the organization responsible for the recovery of the Loggerhead Shrike in Ontario.

Tara Imlay of Wildlife Preservation Canada replied to Ned that the shrike was banded on the Carden Alvar in 2011 as a second year bird. It spent several days around WPC's enclosed field breeding station where captive shrikes were raising young and it was banded while there. The sex of this bird is unknown because it did not pair and breed. Although morphometrics sometimes can help determine the sex,

this bird's measurements fell within the overlapping range between males and females.

Site fidelity of shrikes on the wintering grounds is poorly known, but since the Virginia shrike banded last summer in Carden was a second year bird, Tara Imlay suggested it may have wintered at the same location in 2010-11. This is supported by observers at Virginia Beach who believe the shrike that overwintered at exactly the same spot in 2010-11 is the same bird (now banded) that is there this winter. This was the first Loggerhead Shrike to winter at Virginia Beach since 1978. Interestingly, a Loggerhead Shrike banded in Montreal (Hampstead) as a hatch year bird on 19 August 1945 was recovered (shot) at Bland Point, Virginia, on 19 February 1946. Bland Point is about 80 km north of Virginia Beach, both on coastal Virginia.

Two overall causes of the decline of the Loggerhead Shrike in Ontario are increasingly intensive row crop agriculture and



Loggerhead Shrike from Carden Alvar showing leg bands at Virginia Beach, Virginia, on 20 November 2011.

Photo by Elisa Enders.

the almost complete disappearance of rough pasturelands with cattle grazing. The hawthorn dotted pastures with cattle make the Carden Alvar the choicest shrike breeding habitat in the province. Another important cause of the decline is road kills mainly during migration and winter. A study cited in *The Birds of North America* found that motor vehicles accounted for 29% of the fall and winter mortality of Loggerhead Shrikes in Virginia — the winter home of a Loggerhead Shrike from the Carden Alvar.

Acknowledgements: We thank Ned Brinkley, Steve Coari, Erica Dunn, Michel Gosselin, Tara Imlay and Ron Tozer for information.

Appreciation for those involved at Darlington

Ron Pittaway and Jean Iron presented OFO Certificates of Appreciation to staffs of Beacon Environmental and Darlington Nuclear Generating Station for organizing the successful viewing of the Willow Ptarmigan for 150 birders on 12 June 2011.

Top: **Presentation of OFO Certificate of Appreciation to the staff at Beacon Environmental on 2 November 2011.** From left to right: Jean Iron, Brian Henshaw, Lindsey Waterworth, Donald Fraser and Ron Pittaway.

Right: **Presentation of OFO Certificate of Appreciation to the staff at Darlington Nuclear Generating Station on 4 November 2011.**

From left to right: James Wood, Ontario Power Generation (OPG) Darlington Security; Beverly Forget, Darlington Nuclear Public Affairs; Ron Pittaway, OFO; Jean Iron, OFO; John Peters, OPG Environmental Assessment; Sue Bragg, OPG Darlington Environment; and Brian Henshaw, Ecologist, Beacon Environmental.

Photo by Julianna MacDonald.

