
WBBA Grants at Work . . .

Susan Craig received a WBBA grant for 2003 and submitted the following report.

WINTERING LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES (*Lanius ludovicianus*) IN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO - JANUARY 2004

Overview: As part of an ongoing study, I trapped and banded Loggerhead Shrikes in southern New Mexico during January 4 - 8, 2004. The purpose of the trip was to investigate subspecies through in-hand examination and measurements. I also collected data on age, adding to census information on winter survivorship of young birds (those hatched the previous breeding season).

Methods: Capture involved driving along quiet unpaved roads in likely habitat, looking for shrikes perched on utility wires, trees or fences. When a bird was spotted, the trap was deployed through the car's open window. I then pulled the car away a discreet distance and awaited results. All birds were trapped from the roadside using a small walk-in-type trap baited with a small mouse (*Mus musculus*) obtained from a pet store. A series of measurements was taken (wing, tail, bill), and a single feather was collected for DNA and stable isotope analysis.

Results: Trapping took place in Union, Lea, Eddy, and Luna Counties. Birds were banded, measured and released at site of capture. A total of 43 shrikes was caught and banded; no birds were killed or injured during this study. All birds were healthy and of average weight, with one exception; a single bird with an existing injury (dislocated leg) was captured and released unbanded in Luna County on January 8.

Results by county:

	SY-F	SY-M	SY-Un.	ASY-F	ASY-M
Union	1				
Lea	3			3	1
Eddy	4			1	
Luna	5	7	2	4	12

Discussion: Arid scrubland habitat in the southeast part of the state seems to restrict density of birds. I drove many empty miles between captures (13 birds total January 4-6). After crossing I-25 north of El Paso, Texas on January 7, I drove west on Highway 9 to Columbus. I saw not one shrike on the entire road, which was surprising. Turning north from Columbus toward Deming, shrike habitat improved. I started seeing shrikes along the road, and caught 8 birds that day. The Deming area proved to be the mother lode of wintering shrikes; I caught 22 birds on January 8. Short grass in pastures and cultivated areas represent optimal habitat, so the irrigated cropland in the Mimbres Valley south of Deming provides for a good concentration of wintering shrikes. However, weather conditions were not optimal at the start of this trip; cold temperatures in the southeast may have affected results.

My previous banding studies in Texas and Florida reveal that young birds in winter populations total 38%. Percentage of young birds in this New Mexico study is higher; nearly half the birds caught were born the previous breeding season. There appeared to be a preponderance of females in the southeast portion of the state, with more males captured in the southwest. Prior to this study, I'd never encountered sexual segregation in winter populations. This may be simply a coincidence, but warrants further study.

Of the 43 birds captured, I recognized only 6 as belonging to the subspecies *L. l. excubitorides*, which breeds in my primary study area on the eastern plains of Colorado. Wing and tail measurements were quite long for another 20 birds, possibly indicating the subspecies *L. l. sonoriensis*, a bird of the desert southwest. Measurements for the rest of the birds indicate a subspecies with which I am not currently familiar. The question of subspecies should be resolved after DNA analysis of feathers.

Conclusion: Birds captured in this brief study represent an unknown mix of permanent and winter residents. Further in-hand field study will allow better separation of subspecies, permitting identification of resident versus migrant birds. The question of possible sexual segregation is also intriguing. Since my limited time in the field was hampered by cold weather and lack of familiarity with the area, I undoubtedly missed a lot of information.

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Western Station Reports

Summary of 2003 MAPS Season at Livermore Marsh

2003 was the first season of the Livermore Marsh MAPS station (LIVE). The station is at Audubon Canyon Ranch's Cypress Grove Preserve in Marshall, Marin County, California (38°10'13"N 122°53'58"W). It consists of ten standard nets in a mosaic of willow forest, coastal scrub, and freshwater marsh surrounded by grassland and tidal marsh adjacent to Tomales Bay. The nets are close together and the total area of the station is only about 8.6 ha.

We had a total of 358 captures of an estimated 232 individuals of 30 species in 525.33 net-hours distributed over nine sessions. Overall capture rate was 68/100 net-hours. The numbers of individuals by species were 50 Song Sparrows; 30 Swainson's Thrushes; 25 Wilson's Warblers; 20 Wrentits; 19 Common Yellowthroats; 12 American Goldfinches; 9 Bewick's Wrens; 8 each of Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Bushtit; 7 each of Allen's Hummingbird and American Robin; 4 California Towhees; 3 each of Anna's Hummingbird, Western Scrub-Jay, and Barn Swallow; 2 each of Downy Woodpecker, Pacific-slope Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Spotted Towhee, and Brown-headed Cowbird; and 1 each of Virginia Rail, Mourning Dove, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Marsh Wren, and Lazuli Bunting. Sixty-three species were documented within the station during banding sessions, the most notable being a male Lark Bunting, the first spring record of the species in the county.

Jan - Mar 2004

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Golden Gate Raptor Observatory

We had a few unusual events at the GGRO banding station this season, as well as a rarity — not banded — at our Hawk Count site.

We banded a total of 628 Sharp-shinned Hawks in the fall and winter of 2003, a new record for Sharp-shinned Hawks banded in one season at the GGRO. Our previous high was 537, set in 1999. Our Hawk Watch counted 5,208 Sharpies in 2003, a good high number, but not a record. I believe that the reason for the high number of Sharpies captured this season was that the Sharp-shinned Hawk flight was a little more spread out over time, giving us more days with good numbers available for trapping, instead of a smaller number of days of more concentrated passage.

A second event of interest was the recapture of an adult Red-tailed Hawk, caught on November 20th, 2003. This bird was originally trapped and banded in the Marin Headlands on November 5th, 1998, as an SY bird. Surprisingly, out of over 100 banders at the GGRO in each of the years, the same site leader was in charge of the blind where the bird was captured both in 1998 and