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## Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

The Loggerhead Shrike is a perching bird of pastures, fields, and open brush land. It is a sit-and-wait hunter. Its habit of impaling its prey has earned it the name of butcherbird.

The Loggerhead Shrike breeds from Canada's Prairie Provinces to Mexico, the northern Gulf coast, and south Florida. It winters in the southern portion of its breeding range.

Eleven subspecies of the Loggerhead Shrike are known throughout North America, but only *L. l. ludovicianus* breeds in Florida.

**Habitat.** Shrike habitat consists of open grasslands with scattered trees and shrubs for nest, roost, and perch sites. Shrikes often use power lines and fenceposts as hunting perches (Bohall-Wood 1987, Yosef and Grubb 1992). The Loggerhead Shrike is an opportunistic feeder, preying mainly upon invertebrates, but also taking small terrestrial vertebrates, such as mice or birds, usually impaling them on thorns or barbed-wire fences.

Most nests are between 1 and 3 m (3 and 30 ft) above the ground, usually in a crotch in dense foliage (Fraser and Luukkonen 1986). The bulky nests are made of sticks and twigs. Branches of the nest tree or bush are often incorporated into the nest, possibly to anchor the nests against damage from high winds. The nests are lined with herbaceous vegetation and animal hair. The typical clutch consists of 5 or 6 grayish-buff eggs, which are marked with gray, brown, and black (Ehrlich et al. 1988). Incubation lasts 15 to 17 days. The eggs hatch over a 2-day period, and the altricial young remain in the nest 16 to 20 days. They are fed by their parents for 4 to 6 weeks after fledging.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** The Loggerhead Shrike nests earlier than most other songbirds, laying their first eggs February or March. Two or 3 broods are raised per season (Miller 1931, Lohrer 1974).

**Status.** The Loggerhead Shrike is a permanent breeding resident throughout the mainland. In winter it is common to fairly common in north and central Florida, uncommon in most coastal areas, and rare in extreme south Florida (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). The absence of Loggerhead Shrikes from most areas shown on the accompanying map is likely due to a lack of suitable breeding habitat, although inadequate coverage may be responsible for scattered gaps in the peninsula.

Based on results from the Breeding Bird Survey, state surveys, and subjective assessments, the Loggerhead Shrike has been listed on the National Audubon Society's Blue List of declining species since 1972 (Tate 1986). It is presently declining about 5% per year nationwide (Lowe and Butcher 1990). In Florida, although relatively abundant, its decline is pronounced (Cox 1987b). Although researchers have tried to explain many of the population declines, no solution has been found. Land-use changes appear to be the most influential factors affecting Loggerhead Shrike populations, but the effects of other factors such as pesticides, predation, competition, diseases, and parasites are unclear or yet to be studied.

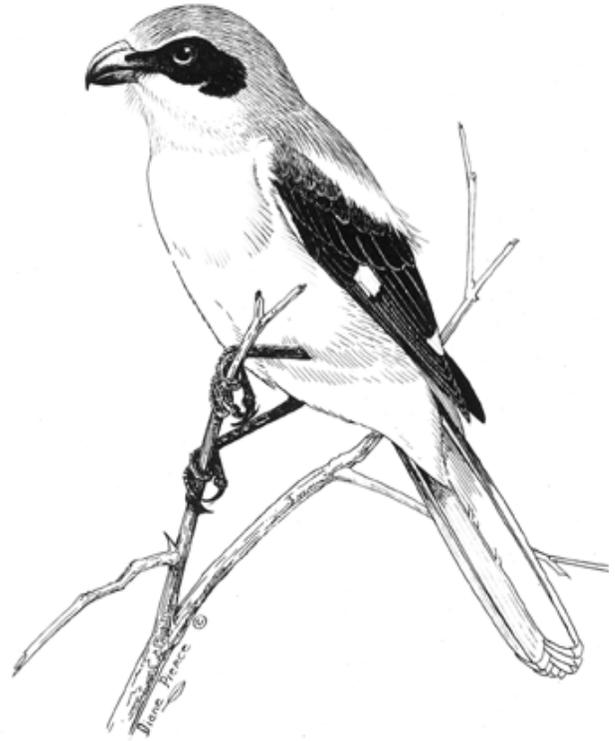


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