

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Animal Abstract**

**Element Code:** ABPBR01030

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Lanius ludovicianus* L.

**COMMON NAME:** Loggerhead Shrike

**SYNONYMS:**

**FAMILY:** Laniidae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Linnaeus, 1766

**TYPE LOCALITY:**

**TYPE SPECIMEN:**

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** 21+ Species in genus.

**DESCRIPTION:** Slightly smaller than the American Robin; length 23.0 cm (9.0 in), weight 48 g (1.7 oz). Head and back bluish-gray; underparts white, very faintly barred. The head is large in proportion to its body size. Broad black mask extends above eye, thinly across top of bill. Birds in California darker than in other parts of range. All dark bill stout, conical with hook. Rump gray to white. Juvenile paler, barred overall with brownish-gray upperparts; acquiring adult plumage by first fall.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Loggerhead Shrikes are distinguished from Northern Shrikes by their slightly smaller size, 20 cm relative to 25cm. Also, the black mask on the Northern shrike does not extend across the forehead above the beak as in the Loggerhead. The base of the lower mandible is black instead of pale, and the beak on the Northern is about one-half the length of the head (front to back) whereas it is substantially shorter on the Loggerhead. In flight, the tail and wings are darker, and the white wing patches are smaller than in Northern Mockingbird. (National Geographic Society, 1999).

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Color Photos ([www.birdphotography.com](http://www.birdphotography.com))

Distribution Map (i-bird.com)

Color Photo and Distribution map (Yosef, 1996)

Color drawings (Sibley, 2000: p. 341)

Color drawing (National Geographic, 1999: p. 305)

Color drawing (Peterson, 1990: p. 280)

Color drawing of egg (Baicich 1997)

**TOTAL RANGE:** Breeds throughout southern Canada, south through Great Basin; in California to Baja California, Mexico, along Gulf coast to southern Florida. Withdraws southward from northern half of breeding range for winter.

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** "More or less common summer resident throughout open parts of state (except in brushless grassland) below Transition Zone, rather uncommon (at least in midsummer) along Mexican border west of Baboquivari Mountains. Fairly common transient in Transition Zone at least in fall. Winters commonly in Lower Sonoran Zone, less commonly in open Upper Sonoran Zone even into evergreen oaks" (Monson and Phillips 1981).

## **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**BIOLOGY:** Territorial throughout the year. Size of territory may be about 6 ha in grassy hills; 10-16 ha in semidesert. Song is medley of low warbles and harsh squeaky notes. "Song generally sharp, precise, mechanical two-syllable phrases *krrDI* or *JEEuk* (etc.) repeated over and over at short intervals. Calls include a harsh, scolding *jaaa*, grating *teen raad raad raad raad*, and other variations similar to song phrases." (Sibley 2000). Often perches on poles, wires or fence posts. They hunt in open or brushy areas, diving from a low perch, then rising swiftly to the next lookout. They often sit immobile for long periods watching for prey. Lacking the talons of raptors, it stuns or kills flying birds with a blow from its powerful beak. Has habit of impaling prey on thorns either to eat them immediately or to larder them for future use. Shrikes show an amazing memory for the placement of their victims: in Texas, shrikes were reported returning to mummified frogs they had stored eight months before. Species is considered very aggressive in defending territory and both genders participate. Sexes hold separate territories during nonbreeding seasons.

**REPRODUCTION:** During courtship the male feeds the female and performs a flight display. Mock pursuits also occur. Nests in open areas in forests or in open country. May nest in hedgerows or trees. Nest is bulky, cup-shaped, of twigs lined with rootlets, grasses, string, feathers, deer hairs, 8-15 ft above ground. Both males and females select site and gather materials, but female constructs the nest. Female incubates 4-5, sometimes 6-7 dull white to light gray or buff, spotted eggs for 14-16 days. Incubation by both sexes also reported. The nestlings are altricial and downy with bright orange skin. The down is white and very sparse being on the body only. The bill is buffish-yellow with the mouth and the gape flanges being yellow as well. Two broods per season, young tended by both adults, independent in 36 days.

**FOOD HABITS:** Only known predatory songbird. Feeds primarily on insects, small birds, lizards and rodents. Diet varies with season and location. Mice may be half of diet in winter. Small birds taken are warblers, sparrows, mockingbirds, bluebirds, swallows and other passerines. Hunt in open or brush areas in a sit and wait strategy, diving from low perch, and then rising swiftly to next lookout. Sometimes referred to as the butcher bird after its habits

of impaling prey on thorns. This facilitates dismembering the prey in as much as shrikes have no talons.

**HABITAT:** Open country with scattered trees and shrubs, savanna, desert scrub and occasionally open woodland. Often found on poles, wires or fence posts.

**ELEVATION:** Unknown

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Unknown

**POPULATION TRENDS:** In the past few years, the loggerhead shrike has aroused serious concern because of its declining numbers throughout its range in Canada and the United States. It has been declining in North America since the 1960s. Decline has been recorded in all regions of the country, even those areas with great amounts of habitat. Is considered moderately threatened throughout its range.

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** SC (USDI, FWS 1996)  
[C2 USDI, FWS 1991]

**STATE STATUS:** 2 (AZGFD, AWCS 2022)  
[None (AGFD SWAP 2012)]

**OTHER STATUS:** None (USDI, BLM AZ 2005)  
[Bureau of Land Management Sensitive  
(USDI, BLM AZ 2000)]

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Being high on the food chain, they are subject to pesticide poisoning. Fire exclusion, habitat loss, and dependency on edge habitat which increases predation pressure are also factors that need to be considered for this species.

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:** Unknown

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Unknown

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** Unknown

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **REFERENCES:**

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**MAJOR KNOWLEDGEABLE INDIVIDUALS:****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**Revised:** 1995-08-08 (DBI)  
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