

Immediate release.....

Mio.....

The tiny, half-ounce Kirtland's Warbler has been a hot topic in Michigan during the past year, and things are bound to get hotter.

Today the U. S. Forest Service announced that they plan a 500-acre "controlled burn" forest fire near here in April for the express purpose of providing cozy Kirtland's Warbler nesting areas.

The tiny, gray and yellow jack pine songster is the one bird known to nest only in Michigan. Bird watchers come from around the world to see the rare Kirtland's Warbler, and it is believed that only about 1,000 exist. Recently the Michigan Audubon Society introduced a campaign aimed at designating the warbler as official Michigan bird.

Kirtland's Warblers nest in young jack pine with low-growing branches, generally near Michigan's Au Sable River valley. Jack pine, a "fire species" in foresters' terms, does best in a burned over area. Michigan's pine forests are loaded with jack pine cones which never open unless scorched by a fire. So, Kirtland's Warblers have been pressed for new nesting areas since forest fire control saved the Michigan woods.

While modern fire control created the Kirtland's problem, it also holds the solution, according to Louis A. Pommerening, Forest Supervisor of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. "Now we can burn selectively and use forest fire to the advantage of man and nature," Pommerening said.

Four thousand acres of the Huron National Forest in Oscoda County, Michigan, ~~was~~ dedicated to perpetuation of the famous warbler last June. Under timber sale contract with Packaging Corporation of America, old growth timber was removed and used as raw material for paper. Selected seed trees were left by loggers, who just completed the first 500-acre harvest. Slash will be seared by the controlled fire, to pop jack pine cones on the seed trees.

By late summer, 1964, tiny jack pine seedlings should be sprouting throughout the nearly mile-square area, Pommerening said. Within five or ten years, an entirely new warbler nesting area will have been created. Meanwhile, more logging and more controlled fire will aim toward an endless cycle of new growth to delight warblers.

Assisting in the Kirtland's Warbler burn will be fire equipment and manpower mustered from the Michigan Conservation Department and the U. S. Forest Service, as well as loggers and foresters from Packaging Corporation of America. No date has been set, according to Pommerening, who said the fire would be triggered only when conditions were absolutely perfect for success.

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NOTE TO EDITOR:

Classification: Confidential

Subject: "Project Pop Cone"

We'd like to have you or a member of your staff present when we touch off this 500-acre burn, just southeast of Mio, in early April. Since the fire will be dangerous, we cannot invite the public.

So that we can advise you of scheduling from time to time, we'll use the code name "Project Pop Cone" for the burn. (Pardon the pun, but it will be the biggest pop cone party in Michigan.)

We will not know the exact date until the day before the burn; even then, there may be postponements due to weather.

If you are interested in having a member of your staff present at Project Pop Cone, will you please advise us as soon as possible. We'll see that you receive a wire or 'phone call a day or a few hours ahead of time---probably in early April.

Write to:

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