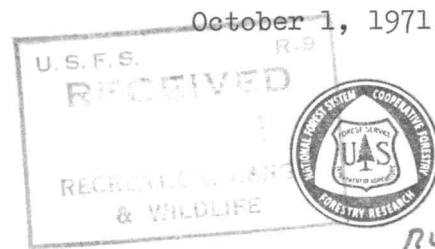


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
Huron-Manistee NF

2650
REPLY TO: 2610 Cooperation

SUBJECT: Meeting on Kirtland's Warbler Management

TO: Regional Forester, R-9



The Huron-Manistee and DNR are jointly sponsoring a meeting and inviting the Michigan, Detroit, Pontiac and National Audubon Societies, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Nature Conservancy, Office of Endangered Species of the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, and others to discuss possible action programs that are needed to reverse the recent decline in the Kirtland's Warbler population.

This meeting has been scheduled for October 23 at 10:00 a.m. at the DNR Training School at Higgins Lake.

Although the agenda is incomplete at this time, we do plan to have Harold Mayfield keynote the meeting, Dr. Cuthbert will discuss the cowbird situation and John Byelich and Bill Irvine will present the nesting habitat situation. We would like to also get someone to possibly shed some light on the winter habitat problems, the research needs and the financing of studies and management. The presentations and discussions will be in the informal mode with the hope that all will participate. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have to offer.

Two rough draft copies of a proposed action plan on the Huron National Forest are enclosed. We would also appreciate comments on this.

You will receive a letter of invitation that we are preparing jointly with the DNR next week, but we would like to invite R.O. representation personally at this time.

Horace H. LaBumbard
HORACE H. LaBUMBARD
Timber & Wildlife
Management Staff Officer

RLP
Enclosures

CC TM
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PROPOSED INTERIM PLAN FOR MANAGING
THE KIRTLAND'S WARBLER AND ITS HABITAT
WITHIN THE HURON NATIONAL FOREST

The Kirtland's Warbler has undoubtedly always been a rare species, and its numbers have probably fluctuated in relation to the availability of its restrictive nesting habitat. Population counts made in 1951 and 1961 showed that the population remained rather stable at about 1000 nesting birds (male and female) during the 50's. However, even though the population appeared to be stable, the Committee on Rare and Endangered Species, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Department of Interior classified the Kirtland's Warbler as an endangered species on the basis of its low numbers, limited geographical range, exacting breeding habitat which is in a transitory stage of timber growth, increasing parasitism by cowbirds and lack of protection on wintering grounds.

The results of the 1971 population counts indicates a 60% decrease in the nesting population to 400 birds. This certainly confirms the ^{classification} endangered species/~~that~~ was accorded this species.

One of the protective measures that has been taken to maintain the species was the establishment of a 4010 acre area by the U.S. Forest Service on the Huron National Forest and three areas of about 2500 acres each by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to provide a sustained area of jack pine stands in the proper stage of growth for nesting habitat. The Biology Department of Central Michigan University in cooperation with these agencies has also been studying the cowbird parasitism problem and control techniques ~~as a measure~~ for decreasing parasitism and increasing the production of young warblers. The results have shown ~~that~~ control efforts do significantly decrease the amount of parasitism on

warbler nests by cowbirds. During the past two nesting seasons the Forest Service has controlled cowbirds on the Huron National Forest Kirtland's Warbler Area. Since the control work was started the population of warblers has been increased and stabilized in the face of an aging habitat on this area.

The establishment of these warbler habitat management areas and the resulting habitat work has provided a significant amount of nesting habitat. Three of these areas were found to have 40% of the 1971 population nesting on them. A stand of fire regenerated jack pine on the fourth area is just about reaching the stage of growth that will be used by warblers for nesting.

These areas are helping to maintain the species, but it now appears that it will be necessary to manage more jack pine stands within the geographical range of the Kirtland's Warbler ^{if we are to} insure ^{the} ~~its~~ survival. ^{of this species.} In the past two years there has been a change in the ^{management} policy to convert jack pine to red pine on national forest land. Many mature jack pine stands are now clear cut and the site treated to regenerate a new jack pine stand. The primary objective of this change of policy has been to better accomplish the multiple-use objectives, which includes timber production and wildlife habitat improvement (~~this~~ includes ^{ing} warbler nesting habitat). However, this will require close coordination in selected ^{areas} compartments to provide sustained amounts of nesting habitat. There are some other immediate and long range steps which must also be taken to aid in the survival of this species.

It is the purpose of this plan to list ~~list~~ the short range and long range measures to be taken by the Forest Service to:

1. Reverse the decline in the Kirtland's Warbler numbers within the Huron National Forest by:
 - a. Increasing the amount of available nesting habitat on a sustained basis.
 - b. Increasing the production of young warblers through the control of nest parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird.
 - c. Exploring the needs and means of additional protection measures.

2. Promote a more comprehensive program involving the participation of other concerned governmental agencies and citizen organizations to deal with the entire biology and protection of the Kirtland's Warbler.

Short range program

The following are steps that can offer almost immediate improvement and protection of some habitats, protection of the bird, and are to be accomplished during the [current] fiscal year: 1972.

1. Three small patches of habitat were found to be occupied by nesting warblers this spring. These patches were surrounded by larger area of jack pine reproduction which had an over story dense enough to make the young jack pine unsuitable for nesting habitat. Removal of this overstory should increase the nesting habitat. This is to be done on areas in: a. Sec 2, T25N, R3E. b. Sec. 7, T25N, R3E. c. Sec. 26, T26N, R1E.

2. Two nesting colonies of warblers and one of ^{the} above habitat expansion

areas are partially on private lands. Development or other treatments of these lands could adversely affect these habitats.

Purchase or protective easements should be attempted as soon as possible to protect the existing habitat. (These parcels should qualify for Land and Water conservation funds, but it may be advisable to seek quicker purchase through the Nature Conservancy for later purchase by the Forest Service.) The tracts are:

- a. SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 6, T25N, R2W. b. W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 26, T26N, R1E.
- c. NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 34, T26N, R1E.

- 3. Expand cowbird control work to attempt to increase the production of young warblers in the Luzerne colony (Sec. 26, 34 & 35, T26N, R1E) and Billman Road burn colony (Sec. 6 & 7, T25N, R2W).
- 4. Investigate the need to put further restrictions on public use of the established habitat management area and institute any needed restrictions that may be feasible.
- 5. Revise the boundaries of the Huron National Forest Kirtland's Warbler Management Area to eliminate those parcels in Sec. 13, T25N, R3E and Sec. 18, T25N, R4E and add an equal or greater area in adjacent section to the west or north of the area. (The jack pine stands in the area to be added are more suitable for managing as nesting habitat than are the stands in the parcels to be excluded.)

Long range program

The following steps will require more detailed planning, ^{them} may be initiated this fiscal year or later, but will entail continuing work, and will require a lapse of time to produce results:

- 1. The following compartments are known to have or have in the past had nesting warbler populations. These compartments are to be

examined and a cutting schedule made to regenerate the jack pine stands in such a manner as to provide sustained nesting habitat on a rotation basis. (These compartments are in addition to the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area.)

Harrisville R.D.	-	Compartments 105 & 106
Mio R.D.	-	" 3, 4, 27, 33 & 34
" "	-	" 110, 111, & 113
" "	-	" 107
" "	-	" 122 & 123
" "	-	" 178 & 179
" "	-	" 228 & 231
Tawas R.D.	-	" 67 & 68
" "	-	" 74 & 75
" "	-	" 155 & 156

2. Add the key private parcels within the above compartments to the Land & Water acquisition plan.
3. Keep the areas that have been or are now being regenerated by means other than fire under observation to determine if such regenerated areas are used by nesting warblers.
4. Make more frequent censuses of key populations, *Recommend A complete census of the Kirtland's Warbler in 1976.*
5. Promote cooperative programs in research and management activities, including studies of winter habitat requirements and availability, migration hazards, pesticide influences, and other problems with the participation of the Forest Service with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife,

National Audubon Society, etc.

6. Encourage the Michigan, Detroit and Pontiac Audobon groups to broaden their financial support to help finance activities beyond what is being done on the established management area. Also encourage financial support from the National Audubon Society and other sources. Attempt to obtain Congressional appropriations or financing through funds that may be available for endangered species work to implement work on this species.