

# Pine Warbler

## BREEDING RECORDS

# KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

(*Dendroica kirtlandii*)



Mayfield (1960) suspected that Illinois was west of the normal migration route of Kirtland's warbler, and he pointed out that most of the Illinois records were old, representing a period in the history of the species when the population was possibly larger. The unquestionable records—those based on collected specimens—are old (Table 27) and support the hypothesis that the total population of Kirtland's was greater at the turn of the century, and hence the Illinois records when there were relatively few observers to detect the birds.

The Illinois records may also imply that Kirtland's warbler, like many eastern migrants, has an elliptical migration that takes birds downwind, southeast in fall, and brings them back farther west in spring because of the influence of prevailing easterly winds at lower latitudes, where they begin the northward flights. Such a pattern might bring at least a few Kirtland's to Illinois fairly regularly in spring but never in fall. Note that all of the unquestionable records, and virtually all the rest, are spring records, 28 April-9 June (Table 27). There are explanations for this fact other than the possible elliptical migration route: (1) increased conspicuousness in spring due to song (note that most of the sexed birds seen have been males) and (2) probably more birdwatching is done in spring than fall although this custom may be changing.

In Table 27 we have listed all the unrefuted Illinois (and border) reports known to us, except Petersen (1964a), because the original observers were known to us to be very inexperienced. Records of nine, (Petersen 1964a) and six (Ford 1956) Kirtland's warblers per day in Illinois are very unlikely. A fall report for the St. Louis area (Comfort 1950) was not for a border locality, and there was some apparent uncertainty about the date (see also Wilhelm 1957, Anderson & Bauer 1968).

Observers of Kirtland's warbler in this region were variously impressed with (1) the bird's tail-wagging behavior, (2) its tameness and slow (for a warbler) movement, (3) that it was in low, edge vegetation or on the ground, and (4) its frequent loud singing (Widmann 1885, Gault 1894, Blackwelder 1899, Moyer 1908). Moyer (1908) described the song as loud and clear, phrased "We-chee, we-chee, we-chee-chee-ccc-ccc," or "We-see, we-see, see-see-rrrr," the first notes always soft, then the volume increasing.

A recent count of Kirtland's warblers on their Michigan breeding ground indicates a total male population of only 242 birds (Tessen 1980). When we consider that the average spring population of a common species of warbler, such as the Tennessee, is about a million birds in just the southern half of Illinois and that our peak counts of that species are about 100 birds per day, we get a glimpse of how remote is the chance of seeing a Kirtland's. The problem is only intensified by the fact that Kirtland's, if they arrive, arrive at or near the peak of the migration of many other species, and are perhaps lost in the crowd.

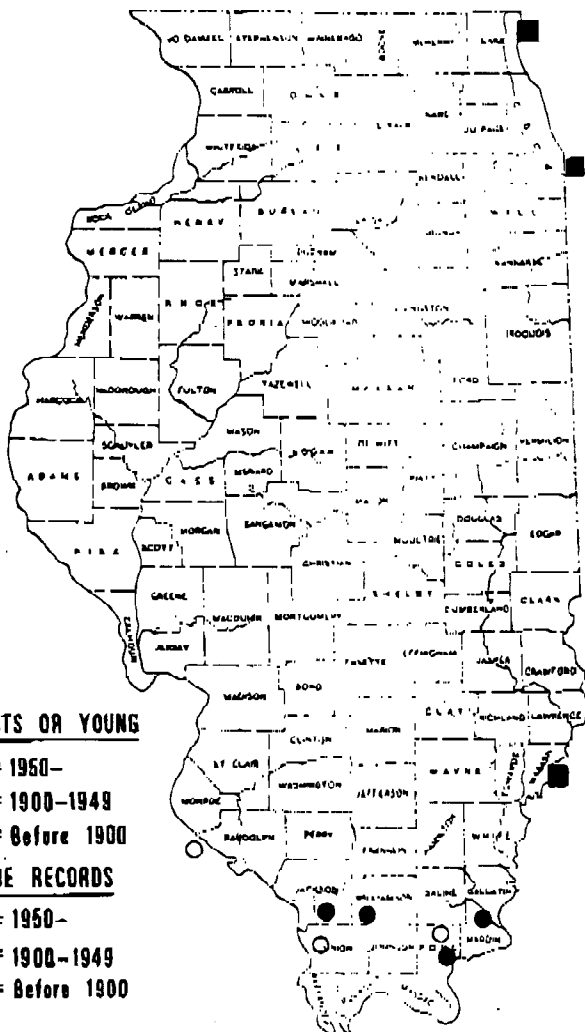


Fig. 75.—Breeding and June records of the pine warbler in Illinois.

Swan unpublished 1971, Kleen 1980a). One pine warbler stayed at Springfield 6-25 November (H.D. Bohlen unpublished 1975). At St. Louis, Widmann (1907) most often noted pine warblers 3-5 October.

Most winter records of pine warblers are for southern Illinois (Cooke 1885 and 1888, Bush 1955, Thom 1968, Lawton 1967, Homoya 1975, Kleen 1975b), but there is at least one late December record for northern Illinois (Balch et al. 1972). Whether pine warblers remain every winter, even in the south, remains to be determined, but the extreme southern tip of the state may well be a regular part of the winter range (Fig. 73).

### Specimen Data

An immature male killed 27 September weighed 13.3 g. and an immature female killed on the same date weighed 13.4 g. The female was very fat.

TABLE 27. — Records of Kirtland's warblers in or near Illinois.

Date	Locality, County, and Region	Specimen(s) Observed	Reference
8 May 1885	St. Louis, MO (S)	Male	Widmann 1885 <sup>a</sup>
7 May 1894	Glen Ellyn, Du Page (N)	Male	Gault 1894 <sup>a</sup>
25 May 1894	Winnebago (N)		Jones 1895 <sup>a</sup>
22 May 1899	Morgan Park, Cook (N)	Male	Blackwelder 1899 <sup>a</sup>
3 May 1908	Bird Haven, Richland (S)	Male	Ridgway 1914
16 May 1908	La Grange, Cook (N)	Male	Moyer 1908
19 May 1910	Glen Ellyn, Du Page (N)		B.T. Gault unpublished 1910
23 June 1910	Glen Ellyn, Du Page (N)	Female	B.T. Gault unpublished 1910
28 April 1932	Blue Island, Cook (N)		Bartel & Reuss 1932, Bartel 1933
18 May 1934	Jackson Park, Cook (N)		Ford 1956
20 May 1945	St. Louis, MO (S)		Wilhelm 1957
12 May 1947	La Grange, Cook (N)	6 birds!	Ford 1956
4 May 1952	St. Louis, MO area (S)		Comfort 1952
10 May 1978	Chicago, Cook (N)		Kleen 1979b
26 September 1978	Chicago, Cook (N)		Kleen 1979b

<sup>a</sup> Collected specimens.

## PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Dendroica discolor*)

(Fig. 76 and 77)

The prairie warbler provides a rare and welcome exception to the rule that species in our general region have had little ecological study. Thanks to Nolan's (1978) 13+ years of study of the prairie warbler in southern Indiana, it is one of

the best studied species in North America, and his findings on the biology will undoubtedly apply to Illinois populations.

### Spring Migration

The earliest reports of prairie warblers in Illinois are 5 April in the south, 20 April in the central region (M. Campbell unpublished 1977), and 22 April in the north (Fawks



Fig. 76. Female prairie warbler at its nest. Photo taken 5 June in Pope County, Illinois.