

# KW NOTES

## A Summary of Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Efforts

### Tour Information

Free guided tours to Kirtland's warbler nesting areas departed from the Holiday Inn in Grayling, and from the U.S. Forest Service District Ranger Office in Mio.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service tours were offered from May 15 to July 4. The Holiday Inn in Grayling provided a meeting place for the tours. This year, 724 people from 38 states and 5 countries enjoyed the tour.

The U.S. Forest Service conducted tours May 13 to July 2 from Mio. Five hundred ninety-three people from 23 states and 4 countries had a chance to view a Kirtland's warbler.

Once again, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Natural Resources, and Holiday Inn cooperated in the production of 25,000 copies of a tour leaflet which were distributed at highway information centers.

### Information/Education

#### Second Annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival

The Second Annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival was held in Mio, Michigan June 15-18, 1995. New events added this year included a 5K and 10K race, and wildlife presentations on Kirtland's warblers, bears, and birds of prey. The public had an opportunity to take the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour on county buses. Interpreters were on hand to explain the diversity found in the jack pine ecosystem. Children were invited to attend the presentation "Migration Headaches" and learn what warblers must face during their migration from Michigan to the Bahamas.

#### Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour

A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Ruffed Grouse Walk site, an interpretive stop on the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour, took place during the Kirtland's Warbler Festival. The Ruffed Grouse Walk site was developed thanks to a large grant from The Ruffed Grouse Society and matching funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The site includes a 4,000 foot, handicapped accessible trail, cleared by prison workers, with five stops interpreting aspen management.

Interpretive signs have been completed on seven stops of the Tour, with the east loop nearing completion. Approximately \$45,000 have been raised to support the Tour. An additional \$45,000 is needed to complete the Tour.



## Information/Education (continued)



The Tour is being evaluated to determine how many people are using it, whether the intended messages are getting across, and its impacts on the local economy.

Tour brochures and maps are available at many businesses in Fairview, Mio, and Luzerne and also from Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Forest Service, and Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County offices in Mio. A 12 minute slide-tape program explaining the cooperative development of the Tour is available from the Forest Service or DNR in Mio.

### Presentations

Jean Richter (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, East Lansing) attended the Fourth Annual Watchable Wildlife Conference in Estes Park, Colorado, September 19-23. She helped facilitate a session entitled: *Influencing Conservation Behavior: Information is Not Enough!* Participants of this session formed six small groups; the Kirtland's warbler case study was presented to one of the groups. The group was asked to brainstorm a plan on how natural resource managers can motivate visitors and local residents to support conservation efforts for the warbler. Jean also staffed an exhibit table during the *Interact* session of the conference. Promotional material for the Kirtland's warbler (i.e. festival T-shirts, posters, invitations, mugs, candy jars, hand bags, post cards, booklets, etc.) were on display, thanks to Virgie Purchase of Mio who sent Jean a box of warbler souvenirs. Information on the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour was also available. The material was to give participants an idea of the things being done in Michigan to help develop awareness and support for the Kirtland's warbler.

Mike DeCapita (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, East Lansing) gave a presentation on Kirtland's warbler tourism projects to the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism, Environmental Concerns Task Force on July 25 in Washington, D.C. The Conference is a government and industry group convened by the President to develop a comprehensive national tourism strategy. Environmental concerns was one of 9 broad categories considered by various task forces prior to a national meeting to be held October 30 - 31, 1995. Mike described the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour, Kirtland's Warbler festival in Mio, and the regular Kirtland's warbler viewing tours, with particular mention of the Holiday Inn of Grayling involvement.

Bob Hess (DNR, Mio) and Connies Chaney (U.S. Forest Service, Mio) gave several warbler presentations, with emphasis on outreach successes. Presentations were given at a wildlife conference at Michigan State University, to the Missouri Department of Conservation, and to the Tennessee Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

**Information/Education  
(continued)**

**Singing Male Census**

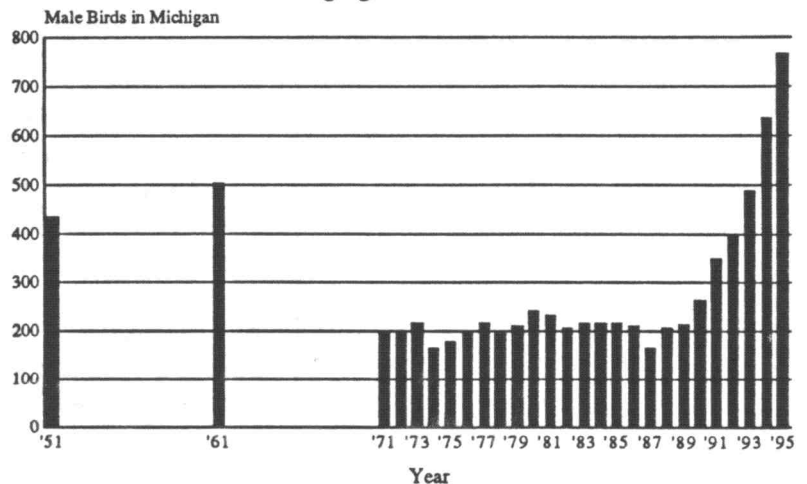
Department of Natural Resources wildlife personnel gave a presentation on Kirtland's warbler biology and management at the 4th Midwest Birding Symposium at Benton Harbor on September 16th. Over 850 individuals attended this event. The Symposium organizers donated \$500 to the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour.

Michigan's population of the endangered Kirtland's warbler is the largest ever counted since the census began in 1951. Researchers, biologists, and volunteers counted 765 singing males during the official census completed in mid-June. The count represents a 21 percent increase over the record number of 633 singing males established in 1994. The numbers of singing males has increase every year since the record low count of 167 in 1987.

Ninety percent of the warblers were located in Oscoda, Ogemaw, and Crawford counties. Fifty-seven percent of the warblers were located in the areas specifically planted for nesting habitat. Birds were also located in Alcona, Clare, Iosco, Kalkaska, Montmorency, Otsego, and Roscommon counties. Eight singing males were found in four Upper Peninsula counties: Bargara, Delta, Marquette, and Schoolcraft. The eight singing males are the highest number counted in the Upper Peninsula since the first one was discovered there in 1981. Female warblers were also observed with two of these males; this may represent an expansion of the Kirtland's warbler into habitat in the Upper Peninsula.

Although a formal census was not conducted in Wisconsin this year, one male was reported in Jackson County. Singing males have been reported in Jackson County for the past nine years. No birds were found in Ontario; however one female was sighted at Point Pelee National Park during migration.

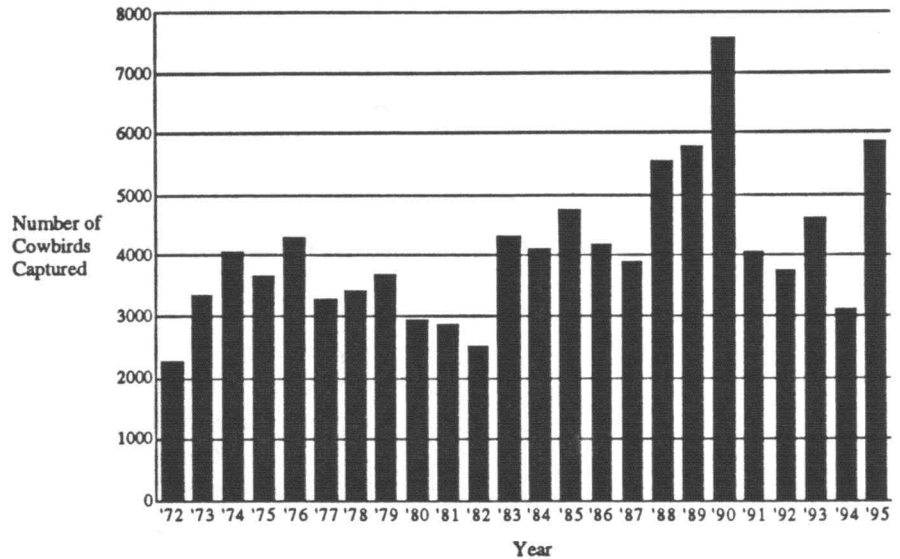
**Kirtland's Warblers in Michigan  
Singing Male Counts\***



\*No counts made 1952-60 and 1962-70

## Cowbird Control

During this 24th year of the cowbird control project, 5,855 cowbirds were captured, compared to 1994's total of 3,011. Sixty-six cowbird traps, a new record, were operated for 11 weeks this season.



## Habitat Management

### Habitat Management Strategy Update/Revision

U.S. Forest Service and Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologists are revising the long-range habitat management strategy for the Kirtland's warbler. This revision is benefited by the Geographic Information System (computerized mapping). It includes a review of land management practices on public lands in the jack pine ecosystem identified as Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas. To date, the text portion of the strategy plan is 75% complete.

### Jack Pine Planting and Regeneration

Department of Natural Resources crews completed jack pine planting on June 16th. 1,376,000 jack pines were planted on 1,055 acres in the Big Creek Management Unit. In the Clear Lake-Tomahawk Creek Unit of Montmorency County, 438,000 trees were planted on 365 acres. Contractors hand planted 31,000 fill-in trees in this Unit as well. Due to the drought conditions in early summer, some trees that were planted this season are expected to die. Crews will assess the situation this fall and in 1996. Some fill-in hand planting or direct seeding may be needed to replace dead trees.

Also this year, DNR Forest Management crews seeded 2,000 acres of jack pine. These areas will be reviewed to determine how many acres might contribute to warbler recovery efforts.

## Habitat Management (continued)

The U.S. Forest Service planted 1,354 acres throughout the Huron-Manistee National Forest. Some habitat on Forest Service lands is naturally regenerating. Those areas will be surveyed to determine how successful the natural regeneration method is.

In the Big Creek area of Oscoda County, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service planted 46 acres by direct seeding. A timber sale of 234 acres was completed in the Big Creek Kirtland's Warbler Management Area.

A group of Alma middle school students spent a May afternoon hand planting seedlings at the DNR's planting site in the Big Creek Management Area. They also raised and contributed nearly \$400 for the purchase of seedlings for Kirtland's warbler habitat regeneration.

Six years ago a group of developmentally disabled young adults from the Lansing area spent a day interplanting seedlings, by hand, at a planting site in the Pere Cheney Management Unit. Their efforts were rewarded this year when singing male Kirtland's warblers were found in this area for the first time.

## Research



### University of Michigan

**Landscape Ecosystems of the High Plains of Northern Lower Michigan; and the Occurrence of the Kirtland's Warbler.**

Data gathered by two students of the University (Wayne Walker and Dan Kashin, working under Dr. Burton V. Barnes) will help answer questions about how Kirtland's warblers relate to different landforms (physiography, vegetation, microclimate, etc.). The study has two parts: Part one is being conducted in the Mack Lake burn area. It relates to the changing pattern of occurrence of the warblers over time and space i.e., the different kinds of landforms and landscape ecosystems occupied over time. Part two is being conducted in current and former areas occupied by the Kirtland's warbler. Here, researchers wish to determine the kinds of landforms and ecosystems that were historically most favorable to warbler occupancy so that one may have a landscape basis to help predict the location of potential management areas.

### National Biological Service

**Development of a Population Dynamics Model for the Kirtland's Warbler.** The first draft of the Kirtland's warbler population computer model has been developed. The model simulates the births, deaths, and movements of the entire Kirtland's warbler population over time. At the end of the simulation, it provides a graph of the projected number of adult males each year.

**Research (continued)****Banding Program**

There were 109 Kirtland's warblers captured and banded during the spring banding program - 104 males and 5 females. The late summer banding program started in July and continued through September 8th.

**Foraging Behavior of the Kirtland's Warbler**

Jennifer Fussman, an Ohio State University graduate student under Dr. Jon Bart, completed a three week pilot study this summer. She observed warblers searching for food in jack pine sites of varying ages, in pure jack pine sites versus sites mixed with deciduous trees, and in plantations versus wildfire sites. The goal of her research is threefold: 1) to identify the most important foraging locations in the substrate; 2) to determine how often the birds forage in vegetation other than jack pine; and 3) to determine whether males and females forage in different locations on the substrate.

From 1988 to 1990, researchers mapped Kirtland's warbler habitat in the Bald Hill, Mack Lake, and St. Helens areas. A contract with the University of Georgia's Geography Department helped determine the structure of 38 territories that were actually used by Kirtland's warblers. A full review of the information has yet to be completed.

**Other**

The winter meeting of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team is scheduled for February 7 and 8, 1996 at the Holiday Inn in Grayling. Requests for information regarding this meeting should be directed to Rex Ennis, Huron-Manistee National Forests, 1755 South Mitchell Street, Cadillac, Michigan, 49601, (616) 775-2421.

"KW Notes" is produced twice a year by the Information and Education Committee of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team. "KW Notes" provides a quick summary of planned activities and accomplishments of the Kirtland's warbler recovery efforts.

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