

Progress Report



Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour

Dedicated to Kirtland's Warbler Conservation

March 1995

Rivals bury hatchet to save bird

It's enough to make a spotted owl green with envy: The timber industry, environmentalists and government regulators are working together to try to save an endangered bird called the Kirtland's warbler.

Orlando Sentinel, June 1994



Progress Report

The Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour officially opened in June of 1994. This progress report summarizes the accomplishments of this partnership effort in the brief time of its existence. Details on further development of the Tour can be found in the 1995 Interpretive Proposal.

Up-close look at Kirtland's warblers' world and how it is created

The self-guided Kirtland's warbler auto tour south and east of Mio offers a scenic, educational diversion from more traditional Up North activities.

Forty-eight miles long, the tour is a habitat-forestry learning experience. It has more to do with jack pines than warblers and is designed to generate support for, and understanding of, jack pine management.

THE NORTHWOODS CALL/early August Issue

Town's efforts to save bird lauded

"You don't see this type of partnership for a lot of endangered species," said Gary Boushelle, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Region II biologist. "It's a very unique bird and it's a very unique partnership between all of these people."

(U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce) Babbitt shook hands and posed for pictures, praising some people personally for their dedication to the bird.

"I'm going to bottle this spirit up and take it out West with me," said Babbitt, a former Arizona governor.

SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE
(Indiana) June 18, 1994

An Endangered Species

The entire world population of Kirtland's warblers nests in a nine-county area in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan and winters in the Bahama Islands. The warblers nest only in young jack pine forest on sandy soils. Maintaining these young forests requires an intensive timber management program. Public support for this forest management program is critical to its success.

In 1991, the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team conducted a comprehensive assessment of public attitudes and initiated communications and education efforts to support Kirtland's warbler conservation. From that assessment came 16 recommended actions for improving communications and education efforts. Action 9 was development of a self-guided Kirtland's Warbler auto tour.



A Partnership Effort

In September 1992, an Interpretative Team with representatives from agencies, local homeowners, and industry (see inside back cover) was formed to guide development of the Tour.



The Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour is officially opened.

The 48-mile East Loop of the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour was officially opened at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 11, 1994. Attendees at the ceremony included representatives from partner organizations, corporations, local elected officials, and participants in the 1st Annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival. Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a special "bus tour of the Tour" was provided for over 40 partners and other VIPs.

Goals

Qualitative evaluation of the Tour by the Interpretive Team indicates significant progress has been made toward achieving the goals identified for the Tour Plan.

Goal 1. Communicate important messages about Kirtland's warbler conservation to key groups of the public.

Through the promotional activities and the interpretive information provided at stops along the Tour and in the Tour brochure, progress has been made in communicating important messages.



Town's festival honors return of a feathered friend

"The festival is an unabashed attempt to bring tourist dollars into the county, which already has a well-established warbler trade. Federal officials see that as a healthy development.

"People are starting to understand that having a species this unique in their backyards is an asset, not a liability," said Joan Gullfoyle, a spokeswoman for the Wildlife Service in Minneapolis. "They are starting to understand this is something to protect and preserve."

THE DETROIT NEWS AND FREE PRESS
Saturday, June 11, 1994

The Mio Model

by Bruce Babbitt

The residents of Mio have created a success story in their community.

The Mio model is one that offers hope that we can learn to use the Endangered Species Act as a tool for conservation consonant with the needs of local economies and private landowners.

Protecting biodiversity is a worldwide issue, but the job begins at home. We cannot hope to save tigers and rhinos beyond our borders unless we can demonstrate the wherewithal and creativity to conserve habitat in our own backyard. Mio, Michigan, is calling out to all of us to replicate its example.

DEFENDERS: Summer 1994 Guest Opinion.

Secretary of Interior: "County leading nation"

The centerpiece of that cooperation has been the Jack Pine Auto Tour, a 48-mile loop in southeastern Oscoda County and western Alcona County which highlights the endangered Kirtland's warbler, its habitat, the management program for the bird, and other natural points of interest along the route.

"In our past, we don't have a strong tradition of working together," Babbitt said. "This shows you can find something for everyone. I'd like to bottle that cooperative spirit and take it across the United States so other places and people can get together and work toward similar efforts."

"This area has developed the federal model I would like to see on the entire landscape of the nation and is the message I want to take to every state in the Union."

OGEMAW COUNTY HERALD June 21, 1994

Goal 2. Create an additional economic asset dependent on Kirtland's warbler conservation.

Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt attended the June Kirtland's Warbler Festival and drove portions of the Tour. An article by Secretary Babbitt in *Defenders* magazine entitled "The Mio Model" is indicative of the response to the Tour.

The Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County spent \$18,000 of their funds on promotion of the Festival and Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour in the spring and summer of 1994 alone.

The Alcona and Oscoda County Road Commissions have used the Tour to enhance applications for state and federal grants for funding the upgrade of roads on the Tour route. County engineers believe the Tour was instrumental in obtaining several grants

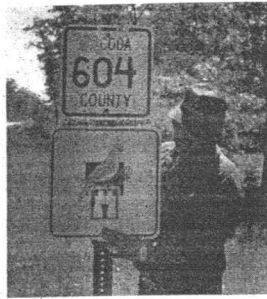
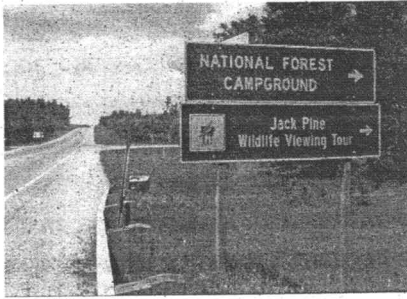
Goal 3. Provide recreational opportunities for people who enjoy viewing wildlife.

Informal assessments by U.S. Forest Service and Michigan DNR personnel indicate that people are using the Tour and stopping at the sites in good numbers. Actual counts to determine use will be initiated in 1995.



Wildlife watchers read the interpretative signs at the "Nearly Ready For Warblers" site.

Signing



Signs denoting the Tour route and viewing sites along the route were erected in cooperation with the Oscoda and Alcona County Road Commissions and Michigan Department of Transportation.

Tour Brochure

A four-panel brochure detailing the Tour route, sites, and key interpretive messages was developed and distributed free of charge through project partners and local businesses. A supply of a second printing of the brochure is nearly depleted. Total distribution to date is approximately 7,000 copies.

No place like home: Half-ounce bird unites tradi- tional foes in fight for habitat

"It is nice not to have the kinds of problems they've got in the Pacific Northwest," said Paul Call, raw materials manager for Weyerhaeuser Co.'s mill in nearby Grayling, which buys some of the pines harvested to bolster warbler habitat.

"The more we understood this little bird and the economic impact it could have, we decided we'd better celebrate," said Vergie Purchase, owner of the nearby Songbird Motel. "It's a great way to promote tourism."

FLINT JOURNAL June 12, 1994

Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour

You have a special opportunity

You can see the summer home of one of the forest birds in the world. Even though their numbers have increased in recent years, there are still fewer than 1,000 of these birds left on the earth.

Even more amazing, each year from May through September all of these endangered birds live and nest within a 60-mile radius of Mio, Michigan. They spend the cold winter months in the Bahamas Islands.

This auto tour not only takes you through areas inhabited by the endangered Kirtland's warbler, but through a variety of habitats providing opportunities to see many kinds of wildlife—brook, bog, eagles and white-tailed deer to bluebirds and beavers. The tour has eight specific stops that are identified with this sign on the map to the right. Several of these stops have scenic overlooks on the AuSable River—world famous trout streams and home to river otters, coon, great blue heron, and other wildlife.

Chances are you will not see a Kirtland's warbler while driving this auto tour because these birds usually stay within their dense jack pine nesting habitat. Although this habitat is closed to public entry during the nesting season, guided tours are available (see back panel for details). The tours are hosted by professional wildlife staff, and often they can get you "close and personal" with these rare birds.

Kirtland's warblers are sensitive to disturbances during their nesting season and while rearing their young. Because of this, nesting areas are posted against entry during the breeding and brood-rearing seasons. They are open to public use the remainder of the year. Please help the Kirtland's warbler by obeying the "Closed to Entry" signs.

The tour route follows state and county highways. You can start at any point along the route, but we recommend starting in Mio and heading south on M-33. From there just follow the roads highlighted in red on this map. Brief information about each of the viewing sites is included around the map.

A 48-mile self-guided auto tour through the scenic AuSable River valley and unique jack pine ecosystem—home of the critically endangered Kirtland's warbler

Beaver Pond—A close-up view of Peterson the pull-out road and McInley Road. A family of beavers has constructed a dam and lodge. Beavers are active at night, but if you stop by this site at dawn or dusk, you might catch a glimpse of them. Evidence of their activity (fallen trees) can be seen any time of day.

Clearcut—Nearly Ready for Warblers. This 211-acre area was cut and replanted in 1988. Kirtland's warblers may be nesting here soon, if they aren't already. The informational signs at this site enable how "ticky" Kirtland's warblers are.

O'Brien Lake—Fascinating picture. Look at the accessible boardwalk. Look at the lake's edge in the perfect spot for fishing and wildlife watching. To get to O'Brien Lake, turn left at the intersection in M-115, then before the O'Brien Lake sign. The road to O'Brien Lake is sandy so caution should be used.

Head Lakes Hiking Trails—Over 30 miles of hiking and cross-country ski trails wind their way through beauty and along small lakes and meadows. A brochure with a detailed trail map is available at U.S. Forest Service offices.

Recreation Management Area—Creating Habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler. The areas surrounding this site are being managed through commercial timber harvesting and replanting to maintain the jack pine ecosystem. The land to the east of the parking area was cut in 1985 and will be planted soon. The open areas across the road to the west were cut in 1991 and replanted with jack pine seedlings in 1992. The cover of trees are clearly visible.

AuSable High Banks Overlook—A Ribbon of Life for Wildlife. From this overlook you get a breathtaking view of the AuSable River. A variety of fall and other wildlife depend on the river and the plants along its banks. CAUTION: The parking area at this site is 100 yards off the main road. Leave no large recreational vehicles by lanes is not recommended.

Scrape—There's Life in Dead Trees. When the trees at this site were cut to make way for paper products, some that were already dead were left standing. The informational signs at this site explain why dead trees are important to wildlife and what you can do to help.

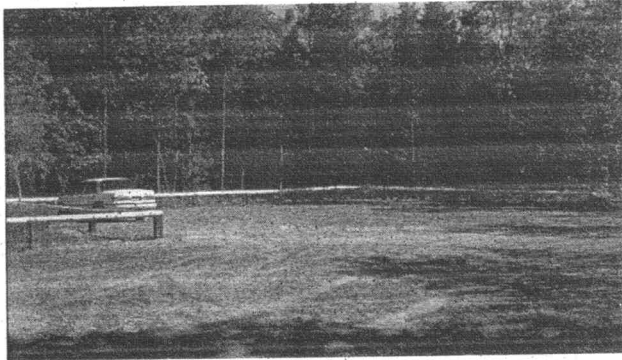
Mack Lake Barn—Critical Home for Kirtland's Warblers. The Mack Lake barn was owned by a farmer for 100 years that spread over 25,000 acres and housed numerous homes and buildings. The barn burned by the fire in 1984 a critically important nesting area for Kirtland's warblers.

Site Enhancements

A number of enhancements to specific sites included on the Tour were accomplished prior to the opening of the Tour. Highlights include:

Snags. An approach and short turnaround loop for the site were created. Two interpretive signs were developed and erected.

High Banks Overlook. The parking area adjacent to this overlook of the famous Au Sable River was expanded and graveled to accommodate expected visitation. A railing was erected around the perimeter of the parking area.

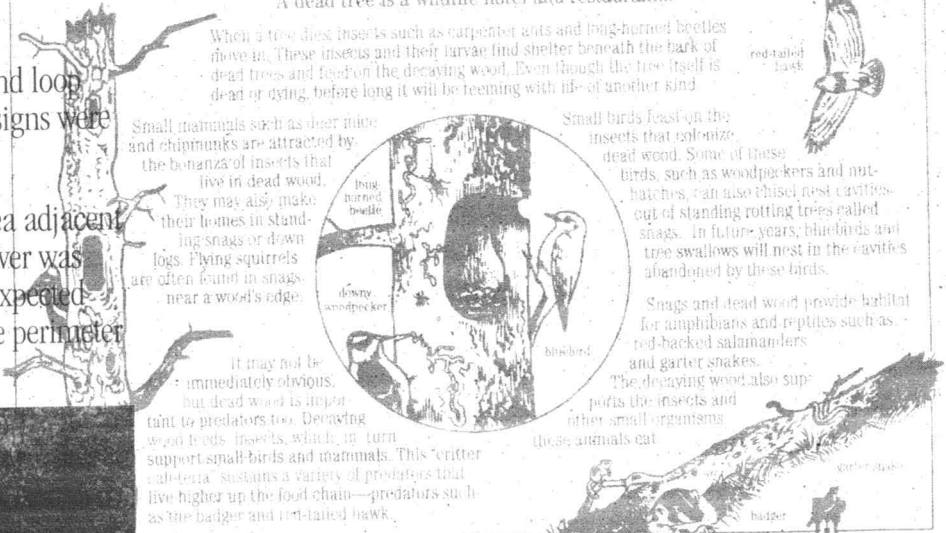


Improved "Highbanks Overlook" site parking area.

Nearly Ready for Warblers. The parking area was graded and graveled, and a railing was erected to restrict use of the area. Two interpretive signs were developed and erected.

There's Life in Dead Trees

A dead tree is a wildlife hotel and restaurant...



When a tree dies, insects such as carpenter ants and long-horned beetles move in. These insects and their larvae find shelter beneath the bark of dead trees and feed on the decaying wood. Even though the tree itself is dead or dying, before long it will be teeming with life of another kind.

Small mammals such as deer mice and chipmunks are attracted by the bonanza of insects that live in dead wood. They may also make their homes in standing snags or down logs. Flying squirrels are often found in snags near a wood's edge.

Small birds feast on the insects that colonize dead wood. Some of these birds, such as woodpeckers and nuthatches, can also choose nest cavities out of standing rotting trees called snags. In future years, bluebirds and tree swallows will nest in the cavities abandoned by these birds.

It may not be immediately obvious, but dead wood is important to predators too. Decaying wood breeds insects, which in turn support small birds and mammals. This "critter cat-tana" sustains a variety of predators that live higher up the food chain—predators such as the badger and red-tailed hawk.

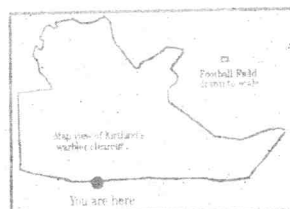
Snags and dead wood provide habitat for amphibians and reptiles such as red-backed salamanders and garter snakes. The decaying wood also supports the insects and other small organisms these animals eat.



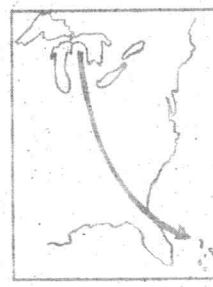
Nearly Ready for Warblers

Why are these clearcuts so large?

Studies have shown that Kirtland's warblers prefer large areas of jack pine forest for nesting. Before European settlement, vast areas of nesting habitat were maintained naturally by periodic wildfires. Today forest managers imitate the effects of wildfires by creating large clearcuts and then replanting these areas with young jack pine trees. The clearcut in front of you is 331 acres in size. It was cut and replanted in 1988. To create the dense forest that Kirtland's warblers require, at least 1,200 seedlings must be planted on every acre of clearcut—that's nearly 400,000 trees out there!



Jack pine management for Kirtland's warblers also benefits many other wildlife species, including deer, coyotes, and bluebirds. By allowing large clearcuts, we provide the Kirtland's warbler and other species with the special habitat they must have to survive. However this is only part of the story.



See you next spring

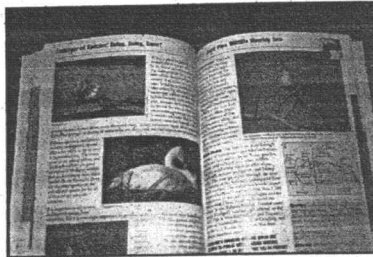
Kirtland's warblers nest in Michigan, but they don't hang around for the cold Michigan winters. Instead, they migrate to the sunny Bahamas—an island group in the Caribbean. The life and journey of the Kirtland's warbler point out the need for all of us to show concern for things that happen far from this place. They also point out that what we do in our own backyards has far-reaching impacts on wildlife half the world away.



Tour Promotion

The Tour has been promoted in a variety of ways including:

- Distribution of Tour brochures to area businesses.
- Featured in the new *Michigan Wildlife Viewing Guide* as one of the best places in Michigan to see wildlife.



Michigan Wildlife Viewing Guide

- Distribution of a leaflet through highway Travel Information Centers throughout Michigan.
- Magazine advertising in conjunction with the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in:

Wild Bird

Birder's World

Fine Gardening

Winging It

- Advertising on place mats used at local restaurants.
- Articles in newsletters and publications of partner organizations, corporations, and agencies.
- News releases and other media relations efforts at the local, state, and national levels.

Birding Briefs

Kirtland's Warbler Festival

The festival also will inaugurate the forty-eight-mile Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service. The self-guided tour takes visitors through a variety of habitats with a diversity of wildlife viewing opportunities.

BIRDER'S WORLD: The Magazine Exploring Wild Birds and Birding June 1994

Warbler tour brings Hess, Chaney honors

Mio's self-guided Kirtland's warbler auto tour has drawn national attention and honors for two Michigan conservation professionals.

Mio district wildlife chief Bob Hess and Huron National Forest Mio district supervisor Connie Chaney will accept top honors for their contribution to the tour at the Oct. 26-29 National Watchable Wildlife conference, in Vermont.

THE NORTHWOODS CALL

September 14, 1994

Awards

Although the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour and Kirtland's Warbler Festival are not yet a year old, they have been recognized with a number of awards:

- National Winner, U.S. Forest Service's Eyes On Wildlife Award
- Eastern Region of the U.S. Forest Service's Public Service Award
- National Association for Interpretation, Interpretive Media Award, 3rd place in the Trail Guide category for the Tour brochure
- The Director's Partners in Conservation Award from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Evaluation

Formal mechanisms for evaluating the Tour are being developed by the Department of Park and Recreation Resources at Michigan State University and will be in place for the 1995 viewing season.



From left to right, Virgie Purchase, Steve Basl, and Jerry Weinrich receive the U.S. Forest Service's Public Service Award at a special ceremony held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Grant to help shape jack pine auto tour

A wildlife viewing auto tour in southeastern Oscoda County has received a \$20,000 grant.

The money, from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will be given to the Michigan Nongame Wildlife Fund. The project is a combined effort of the Department of Natural Resources, United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and local residents.

Bob Hess, DNR Wildlife Division supervisor and co-leader of the project said, "The tour's goal is to help people better understand and appreciate the value of the jack pine forest, its beauty and the opportunities it provides for human enjoyment."

Of course, one of the premier attractions and themes of the auto tour is the endangered Kirtland's warbler bird and the program to provide suitable habitat for the rare species.

"We want to help make the Kirtland's warbler an asset to the area, rather than the liability many have seen it as," said Hess. "People can drive the tour and see and learn how the young forest needed by the bird is beneficial to other species and activities."

"We expect the tour could be a tremendous economic benefit to the area and at the same time accomplish our goal of improving forest management understanding."

THE OSCODA COUNTY HERALD, Tuesday, March 15, 1994

Interpretive Team

Gary Boushelle
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Paul Call
Weyerhaeuser

Dave Case
D.J. Case & Associates

Sandy Caveney
Huron–Manistee National Forest

Connie Chaney
Huron–Manistee National Forest

Michael DeCapita
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Holly Gomez
Mio Pine Acres Campground and Cabins

Erica Haspiel–Szlosek
Huron–Manistee National Forest

Robert Hess
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Phil Huber
Huron–Manistee National Forest

Bill Mittig
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Kim O'Brien
The Ruffed Grouse Society

Bob Ojala
Oscoda County

Virgie Purchase
Mio Pine Acres Campground and Cabins

Dave Smith
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Sandy Sokolak
U.S. Forest Service

Anne Todd
Mack Lake Homeowners' Association

Kate Winsor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Jerry Weinrich
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

The Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour has been made possible through the efforts of many people in the area of the Tour, in Michigan, and across the country not recognized by name in this Progress Report. Their efforts are greatly appreciated by current and future generations.



Special thanks are extended to the project partners who have supported the initial development of the Jack Pine Wildlife Viewing Tour:

ABTCo.	Michigan Department of Transportation
Alcona County Road Commission	Michigan United Conservation Clubs
Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County	Northeast Michigan Sportsmen's Club
Chevrolet/Geo Environmental	Oscoda County Road Commission
Consumers Power Company	Ruffed Grouse Society
Michigan Audubon Society	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Michigan Consolidated Gas Company	U.S. Forest Service
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	Weyerhaeuser Company