



The Ohio State University

Department of Zoology

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SUBJECT: Update<sup>No. 1</sup> on Ohio Wildlife Unit project on Kirtland's Warblers

DATE: 23 April 1986

TO: See distribution list

FROM: Jonathan Bart *JB*

Since the Kirtland's Warbler work that we will be doing involves many people scattered over a fairly wide area, it seems wise for us to prepare monthly updates reporting our activities and describing plans for the future. I anticipate that they will vary considerably in length, but we'll try to insure that one gets into the mail by the end of each month. I've made up a tentative distribution list; please let me know if there are others who should be on the list or if you do not wish to receive the reports. In addition, I hope you will all feel free to contact me at any time about the project. If you have suggestions for general consideration, we'll add them to the next update so that it can become a sort of mini-newsletter.

There have been three major developments during the past month. First, Jim Engel called me recently with the news that our project is in the federal budget for the coming fiscal year which starts October 1. This doesn't guarantee that we will get funding, but it is an excellent sign - the first tangible one we've had about the coming year.

Second, I am happy to report that I have recruited a student, Carol *[Boettig]* Young, to work on the project. Carol is a graduate of the University of Florida at Gainesville. She has impressive credentials - both academic and in terms of work experience - for the job, and I am looking forward to having all of you meet her as time permits.

And finally, I applied to the Columbus Zoo for permission to conduct the project on their grounds and with the assistance of their staff. A few weeks ago their research committee reviewed my proposal and approved it. I am extremely pleased by this development because it will make available to our project the extensive avicultural expertise of the Zoo staff. They will take responsibility for much of the feeding and general maintenance of the birds, and we will reimburse them. In addition, they have allocated a portion of one of their buildings for the project at no cost to us, so we will have a protected, heated site to build our aviaries in.

A few words about our schedule for the next few months. Carol will be able to start on the project in mid June. She'll spend the summer in Michigan studying Nashville Warblers (our surrogate for KW's). In the coming week or two I'll be talking with the KW Recovery Team and the Michigan DNR to determine whether Carol should also participate in some of the KW work, perhaps the annual survey and/or the Mack Lake Burn Area study to become familiar with KW's too. Here is a very tentative schedule for the summer for Carol and I.

*Also, see  
last pg. for  
summary of  
our goals.*

May 10-11: Visit the study area (Carol and I). I then leave for out-of-state fieldwork.

June 15: Carol begins fieldwork on Nashville Warblers and possibly on KW's.

June 25: I return; Carol and I will begin aviary design and construction.

July 30: Target date for completion of aviaries; I leave again; Carol will probably visit banding sites to study catching and holding techniques for wild birds.

late August: Begin catching birds and transporting them to Columbus.

5 September: I return from other field work and will assist Carol if birds remain captured.

I see three general priorities for the summer in addition to accomplishing the work outlined above.

1. Insure that Carol and I get to know everyone involved with the general KW Recovery effort. In particular, we want to develop a comfortable working relationship with the members of the KW Recovery Team and the Michigan DNR.

2. Obtain the highest possible level of expert advice on design and construction of the aviaries and care and maintenance of the birds. We have been in touch already with Zoos around the country and will be visiting some of them this summer. I anticipate then selecting one or two experts and paying them to help us design the aviaries and come to Columbus on a regular basis to review our work. I have two reasons for this. First, we are field biologists, not aviculturalists. We can learn the avicultural techniques, but I want to be sure we get the best possible instruction. Second, should we ultimately have to work with KW's and should - heaven forbid - anything go wrong, we will come under intensive scrutiny. At that point it will be important not only that we be right in everything we've done but, in addition, that we look right. Having the sort of expert assistance I intend to get will help in this regard.

3. Integrate our efforts with the other KW work, especially the Mack Lake Burn Area project. I see considerable potential overlap in these efforts. We may be able to assist in the MLBA effort, and we certainly don't want to be tripping over each other.

Let me extend an invitation to all of you to come visit us in the field. We'll let you know more about what we'll be doing and where we'll be in the next update. I particularly hope that some of the Columbus Zoo staff can come up for a day or so, perhaps when we are catching the birds in late August or early September. We could use the help, and I think any of the staff who haven't been involved in mist-netting operations before would find the experience interesting.

So we have a busy summer ahead. I'm looking forward to speaking with many of you and hope all of you will feel free to contact me. Incidentally, my phone is (614) 422-6112.

I. PROJECT TITLE

Development of reintroduction methods for the Kirtland's Warbler.

II. STATEMENT OF WORK

Rationale

The Kirtland's Warbler (Dendroica kirtlandii) censuses of 1951 and 1961 indicated a stable population of 400-500 pairs. During the next 20 years, however, cowbirds arrived and caused the population to decline precipitously; only 201 singing males were found on the 1971 census. Within a few years of this discovery, a highly effective cowbird control program was in effect, and the population decline had been halted. In the last 10-15 years, the population has remained reasonably stable, but has not increased as biologists hoped it would. A considerable amount of suitable habitat is currently unoccupied. This situation led the Recovery Team to establish "research on reintroduction methods" as its top priority for new research on Kirtland's Warblers during the next several years.

Objectives:

A. Develop procedures for holding Kirtland's Warblers in captivity from late summer until the following spring. The procedures will be developed using the Nashville Warbler (Vermivora ruficapilla) as a surrogate for the Kirtland's Warbler.

B. Develop release techniques for introducing the captive birds to areas in which they have not previously bred. Success of the re-introduction will be judged by whether the birds survive, remain in the area, and breed successfully.

C. Determine whether released birds return to the new areas after wintering in the wild and whether the return rate varies according to whether the birds were first caught as juveniles or adults.

Location

Ohio Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio and central Michigan (Grayling area).

III. REPORTS AND DELIVERABLES

<u>Type</u>	<u>No. of copies</u>	<u>Due date</u>
1. Status reports	Original and 2	Quarterly
2. Final report	Original and 2	30 June 1990

IV. TERM OF WORK ORDER PERFORMANCE

The period of performance of the Work Order is from 1 September 1985 to 30 June 1990.

Distribution:

Recovery Team members

J. Byelich  
G. Irvine  
W. Jones  
H. Mayfield ✓  
R. Radtke  
N. Johnson  
W. Mahalak  
M. DeCapita

US Fish and Wildlife Service

R. Refsnider  
J. Carpenter  
S. Fritts  
C. Faanes

Michigan DNR

J. Weinrich  
S. Taylor  
R. Ness

Columbus Zoo

M. Snyder  
D. Winstel  
R. Pope  
D. Hunt

Others

J. Propst  
P. Aird  
L. Walkinshaw  
R. Nicotera