

Have Binoculars, Will Travel: In Pursuit Of Rarities, Bird-Watchers Boost Tourism

BY LISA MILLER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Mio, Mich., doesn't have much to offer in the way of tourist attractions. It's not even a real town, just a ZIP Code in the middle of a thick pine forest, about 100 miles north of Flint.

But Mio does have one priceless natural resource, which draws thousands of tourists every year: a very rare yellow-bellied warbler. Every spring, 1,200 Kirtland's Warblers—the world's entire population—fly up from the Bahamas to breed in the pine trees near Mio. And every spring, pilgrims follow, with binoculars around their necks and cash in their pockets.

"Birders have great disposable income," says Virgie Purchase, who owns the Songbird Motel in Mio. "They're great people to have around. They're very quiet, very neat and very clean."

Mio knows what other small towns and cities across the country are discovering: Bird-watchers are big business. Birders want to see birds they have never seen before and will travel long distances and spend enormous sums to do so. They travel south in the winter and north in the summer, filling small-town hotels and restaurants to capacity, renting cars, purchasing guided tours and gobbling up all sorts of gear, from binoculars to apparel. ("Nobody does it without Gore-Tex," says Jane Murphy, a birder and historian from Ithaca, N.Y.) And their numbers are growing—if not exploding.

In just the past five years, membership in the American Birding Association soared to 16,000 from 6,000. Subscriptions to WildBird magazine have risen to 180,000 from 62,000 in 1990. And the pool of potential birders seems almost limitless, particularly as baby boomers get older and less active. Most estimates put the total number of American bird-watchers, from the casual to the expert, at 65 million.

What's the thrill? For Vicki Lang, who works at a rehabilitation center in Carbondale, Ill., it's the idea of pursuing some-

thing as ephemeral as a bird. "You see it, you own it," the 36-year-old says simply.

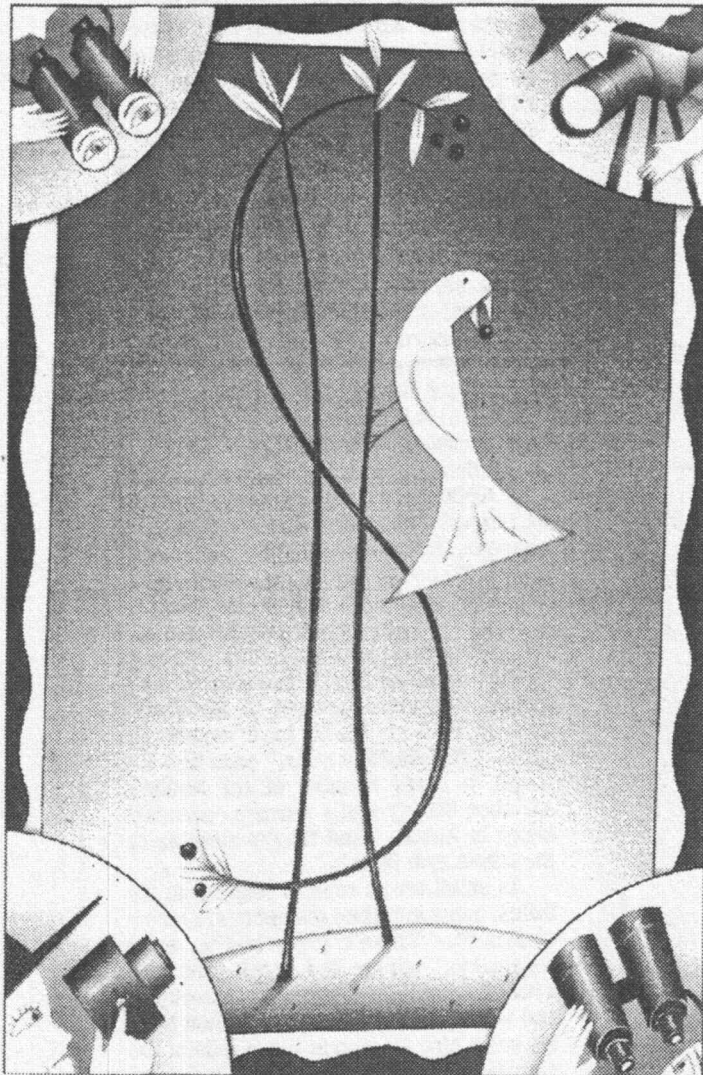
"There's a build-up of anticipation," explains Sandy Komito, 64, of Fair Lawn, N.J. "You never know: Will you find them? Won't you find them? I think I can use the word ecstatic when you do find it."

In a year, Mr. Komito takes 12 to 20 birding trips. He regularly phones birders' hotlines for tips on new or unusual sightings in North America. And whenever he hears about a bird he's never seen, he hops on a plane, "usually within an hour." Last spring, for example, a number of European birds—including more than a dozen Greater Golden-Plovers and two Pink-footed Geese—got caught in a storm on their way north and were blown off course to Newfoundland. Mr. Komito followed them there. The retired contractor estimates that he spends more than \$10,000 a year on his hobby.

Most birders seem willing to go anywhere. For example, Wings Inc., a bird-touring company based in Tucson, Ariz., added 10 foreign countries to its destination list last year.

Even birders with limited budgets take trips when they can. Andy Aldrich, a 44-year-old machinist for Pratt & Whitney, recently traveled from his home in North Burwick, Maine, to East Texas for the fall migration. He did it on the cheap, taking a bus to a train to a low-fare Southwest flight from Baltimore. Once in Texas, he hitched rides and camped in parking lots.

Traveling birders find an increasing number of destinations as more small towns have started marketing their birds as a tourist attraction. Two years ago, Mio launched the first-ever Kirtland's Warbler festival. Seven thousand people came, and each one spent an estimated \$50 a day—in a town where the per capita income is \$8,000. In Socorro, N.M., 14,000 sandhill cranes draw 12,000 people every November. The town of Harlingen, Texas, a pit stop for hundreds of species on their way to South America, just had its second annual birding festival, attracting



Diane Teske Harris

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1,800 people and generating an estimated \$1.6 million for the local economy.

The towns try to capture even more dollars with souvenirs and other miscellany. In Rockport, Texas, home since 1988 of the annual "Hummer/Bird festival," the garden center at the Wal-Mart is stocked with bird-watching merchandise. There's thistle seed, wild-bird feed and instant nectar, as well as hummingbird feeders (two kinds), feeders that look like lampposts, cedar feeders, bird feeders for kids and finch feeders. (Indicating the magnitude of the country's feeder frenzy is the fact that "The Birdfeeder Book," one of 17 birding books written by Donald and Lillian Stokes over the past 20 years, has more than 750,000 copies in print.)

For the Kirtland's Warbler festival, stores in Mio stocked carved birds, as well as mugs, T-shirts and candy jars. "The bird-watchers paid more money than I ever would on anything like that," says Jeff Johnson, a pastor in Mio who works part time at the chamber of commerce.

Sometimes, a bird generates income for a region without any marketing at all. A single pair of Yellow-green Vireos recently set up housekeeping in Laguna Atascosa, a South Texas sanctuary, for three years running. This was unusual because Yellow-green Vireos generally stay south of the border. Tourists spent an estimated \$150,000 a year—not counting air fare—to see the two birds.

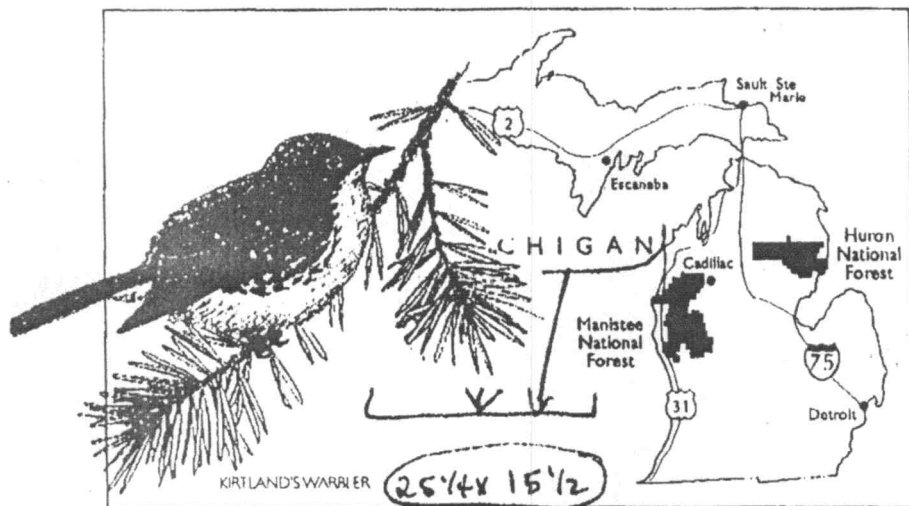
Ironically, affluent birders often travel long distances to stay in less-than-deluxe accommodations. High Island, Texas, for example, has two bird sanctuaries that draw 6,000 people during the spring migration. But the closest hotel is a Best Western, 19 miles away, in Winnie. Another alternative: For a nominal fee, visitors can sleep on the floor of the High Island school's auditorium. "Fourteen percent of the people who go to High Island have incomes of more than \$100,000 a year," says Ted Eubanks, a board member of the National Audubon Society and a tourism consultant based in Austin. "And they're sleeping on the school gym floor."

As small towns rush to respond to the influx, some longtime residents are inconvenienced. "There's more traffic, more congestion," admits Ted Appell, who runs whooping crane tour boats out of Rockport and who is a birder himself. "When birders see a bird we stop in the middle of the highway. We don't care if there's anyone behind us."

But Brien O'Connor Dunn, a big landowner in Texas, has just opened his 4,000-acre ranch to bird-watchers. He is hoping the bird-watching boom will lure new visitors—other than hunters and city slickers—to his property. "You can only shoot a wild turkey once," he says. "But you can take a picture of it a thousand times."

HURON-MANISTEE FORESTS

Michigan



TO THE HISTORIANS of the U.S. Forest Service, the 965,000-acre Huron-Manistee National Forests are wryly known as "the lands nobody wanted." Not in the beginning, of course. The first settlers thought that the immense stands of white pine would last forever. But they were

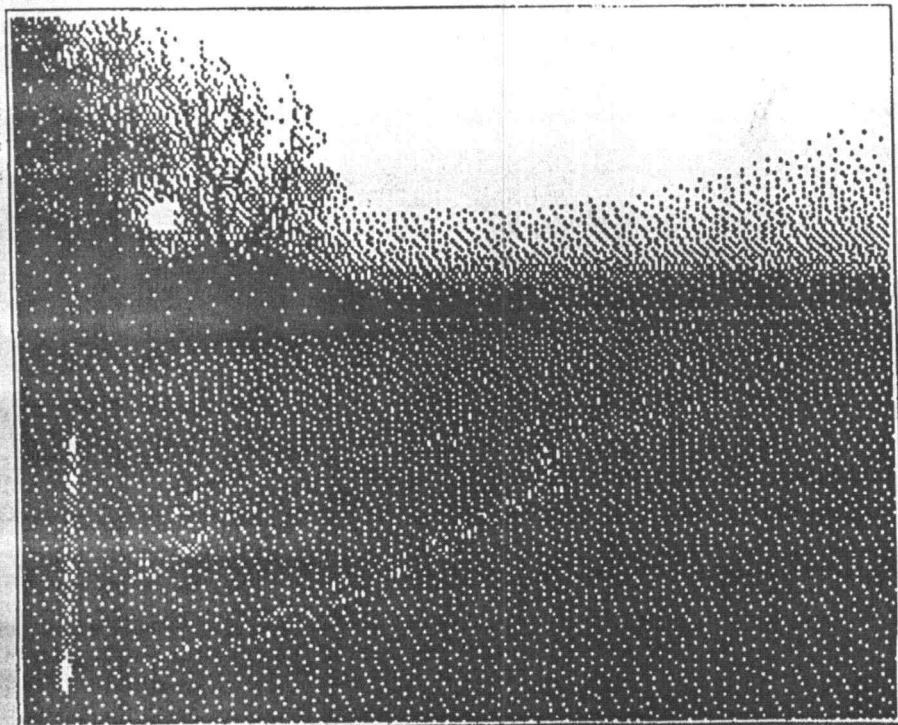
mistaken. By the turn of the century, when President Theodore Roosevelt moved to protect the nation's forests, the area had been clearcut, burned over, and farmed out. So poor and cheap was the land that the young forest Service was able to buy one parcel of 32,504 acres for a mere

HOW TO GET THERE.

For the Huron: From Saginaw, Michigan, take Interstate 75 north about 50 miles to Alger, then from Michigan Route 33 go north 35 miles to Mio.

For the Manistee: From Grand Rapids, take Interstate 131 north about 40 miles toward White Cloud and Baldwin.

CARL JAMES FREEMAN, DRAWING



ICE FISHERMAN'S TRACKS, HURON NATIONAL FOREST

\$77,188.86—or \$2.37 an acre. The Forest was then replanted, mainly in the 1930s by the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps. Most of what you see is no more than 50 to 60 years old, and the reforestation continues.

Huron Forest is a riparian environment. Five large rivers—the AuSable, Manistee, Muskegon, Pere Marquette, and the Pine—and many smaller creeks and streams meander through Michigan's Northern Lower Peninsula, nourishing the Forest's hardwood and conifer communities of jack pine, white-cedar, balsam fir, black spruce, white oak, and balsam poplar.

The forest supports a large herd of white-tailed deer, along with populations of snowshoe hare, raccoon, river otter, mink, beaver, black bear, and bobcat. Wood and painted turtles, five-lined skink, northern water and eastern hognose snakes, and the poisonous eastern massasauga reside here, as well.

The gently flowing rivers are easily accessed by road, but canoeing is the best way to experience the riparian communities. Canoe rentals are

THE REISA PHOTOGRAPHY

Bird Life

More than 180 species of birds have been recorded within the various habitats on the Forest. Wild Turkeys are abundant and can be found in almost all upland areas. In April and May, the gobblers commonly display for hens along roadsides and in openings.

The extensive riverine communities attract American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Osprey, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Black-billed Cuckoo, Barred Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Bank Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, and Golden-winged and Black-throated Blue warblers. Eagles, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser remain along the ice-free portions of the rivers in winter.

Winter also brings avian visitors from the north. Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting, Red and White-winged crossbills, and Pine Siskin mix with the year-round residents, such as Common Raven and Evening Grosbeak. Many of the roads on the Forest are open in winter.

The most sought-after bird of the Forest is the endangered Kirtland's Warbler, a bird of the jack pines. The total population is thought to be on the order of 485 nesting pairs, of which two-thirds breed on the Forest. Kirtland's Warbler requires dense, young jack-pines that regenerate naturally after large forest fires. But modern fire-control efforts have reduced the amount of suitable habitat. In 1980, the Mack Lake Fire burned 25,000 acres of pines, producing the largest natural block of essential habitat in recent decades. Today, federal and state agencies cooperatively

manage the jack-pine ecosystem by harvesting large areas of mature trees and then replanting with jack-pine seedlings to ensure a sustainable supply of habitat.

During the breeding season, access to Kirtland's Warbler habitat is governed by some restrictions as to public entry, but tours are conducted from approximately May 15 to July 4 (see "Other Attractions"). Two species closely associated with Kirtland's Warbler habitat that are uncommon farther east are Upland Sandpiper and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Black-backed Woodpeckers (very rare) may be found in areas recently burned by wildfires. Consult Forest Service personnel about known and potential locations for this species. Spruce Grouse can sometimes be seen in the jack pine plains.

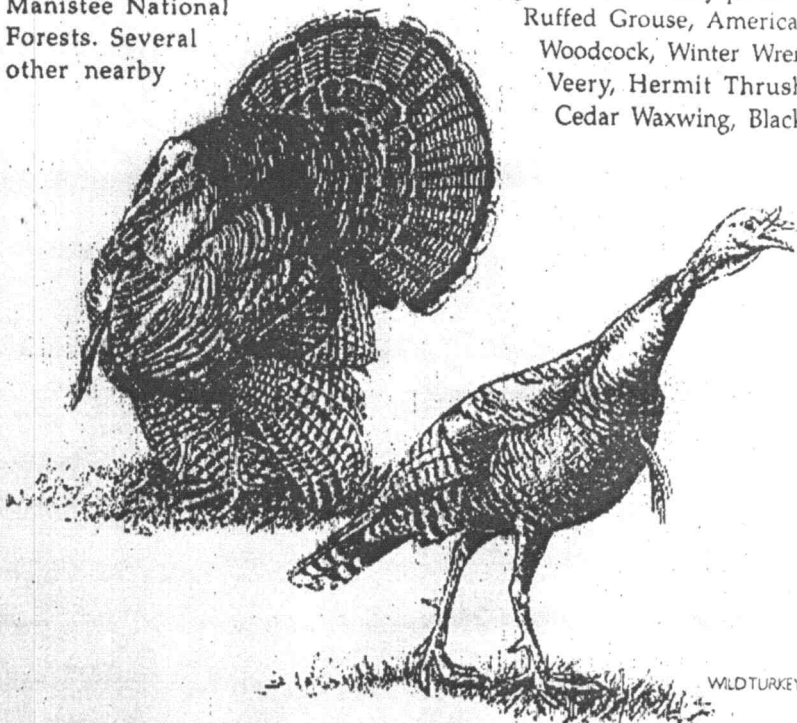
Birding Routes

Kirtland's Warbler draws birders to the Huron part of Huron-Manistee National Forests. Several other nearby

habitats should be visited to see the greatest variety of birds. The Luzerne-Wakeley Lake Route will produce swamp and open water birds, while the Hoist and Reid lakes Route offers birds of forest, pasture, and wetland communities.

Luzerne-Wakeley Lake. This route begins at Mio and follows Michigan Route 72 west for 8 miles to Deeter Road. Then turn left on Deeter Road for 0.5 mile to Galloway Road and left again for 0.75 mile to the Luzerne Swamp parking area and trailhead. Walk north (left) on the short (0.25 mile) segment of a horse trail that winds through a cool, dark northern white-cedar and balsam swamp to a boardwalk. The boardwalk leads to a wooden bridge that crosses a trout stream. Marsh marigold, sundew, turtlehead, partridgeberry, twinflower, and fringed polygala add color to the moss-covered ground.

Birding this area during the nesting season will likely produce Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Winter Wren, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Black-



WILD TURKEYS

throated Green and Canada warblers, American Redstart, Ovenbird, and Northern Waterthrush.

Return to Rte. 72 and continue west for 12 miles to the highway sign for Wakeley Lake Foot-Travel Area. At the parking lot you can acquire a map showing the 17 miles of trails through this semi-primitive area.

The cry of Common Loons often echoes across the lake, and Bald Eagles and Ospreys are frequently seen foraging for fish. Check the alder and willow thickets around the lake for Alder Flycatcher and Common Yellowthroat. Look for Wood Duck and American Black Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Common Snipe at beaver ponds. Vir-

ginia Rail and Sora frequent the cattail swamps. Listen for Black-throated Green and Pine warblers in stands of mature red and white pine. Also found in the forested areas are Broad-winged Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Black-capped Chickadee, Scarlet Tanager, and Evening Grosbeak. After sunset, the hooting of Great Horned, Barred, and Northern Saw-whet owls often can be heard, along with the incessant call of the Whip-poor-will.

Hoist and Reid lakes.

This route begins in Mio. Go east on Rte. 72 for 23 miles to the junction with Michigan Route 65, then continue south for 7 miles to where the two highways split. Hoist Lake is about 0.5 mile south of this junction on Rte. 65. Reid Lake is 3.5 miles east of the junction on Rte. 72. Trail maps are available at both sites.

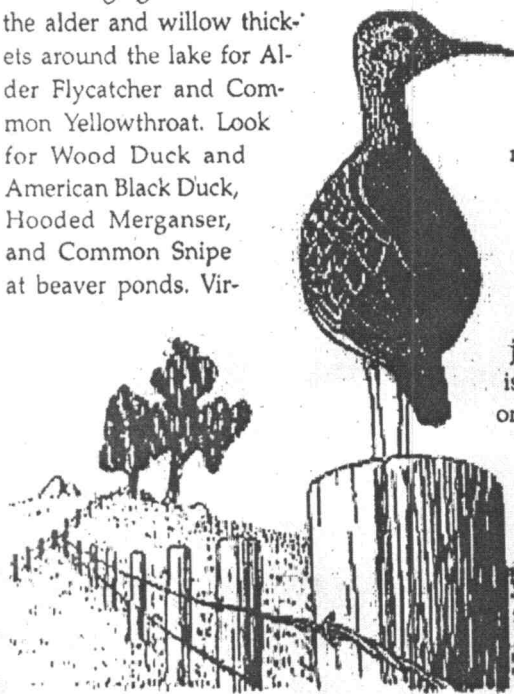
These areas offer tranquil forest settings to soothe the soul as well as enjoy

the birds. You are likely to find Northern Goshawk, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Red-headed, Downy, and Hairy woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Olive-sided and Least flycatchers, Eastern Bluebird, Red-eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green warblers, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bobolink.

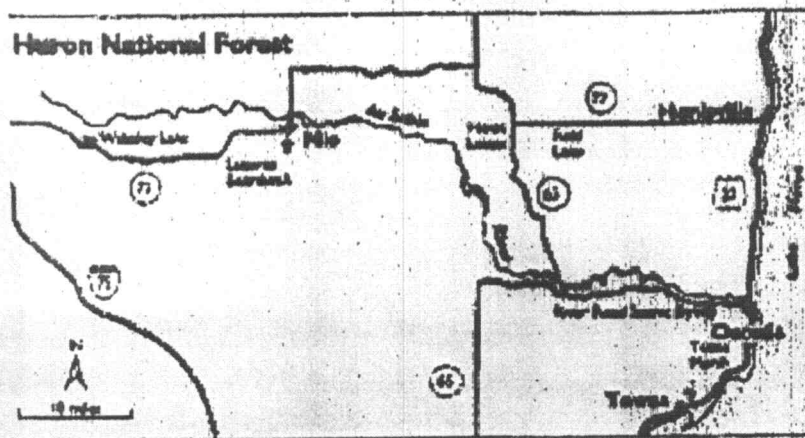
From Hoist Lake, continue south on Rte. 65 for about 15 miles to the River Road Scenic Byway. This 22-mile route follows the Au Sable River east to Oscoda, providing glimpses of the area's history. Stop first at Iargo Spring, a mile east of the Rte. 65-River Road junction. Local Indians believed Iargo Springs held mystical powers and used the location for tribal powwows. The birding can be excellent in the mixed forest at the base of the stairway that descends to the springs. Look for such southern species as Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Louisiana Waterthrush, among the more northerly Golden-crowned Kinglets, Winter Wrens, and Black-throated Green Warblers. The dammed-up river into which the springs flow supports Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Duck, and Marsh Wren.

One half-mile east of Iargo Springs is Eagle's Nest Overlook. Nowadays, a pair of Bald Eagles nests out of sight in the gorge, but the birds are often seen flying up and down Cooke Dam Basin.

A third stop is the Lumberman's Monument Visitors Center, 2 miles beyond the overlook. The pines around the visitors center and along River Road provide nesting habitat for Pileated Woodpecker, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush, Solitary Vireo, Yellow-



UPLAND SANDPIPER



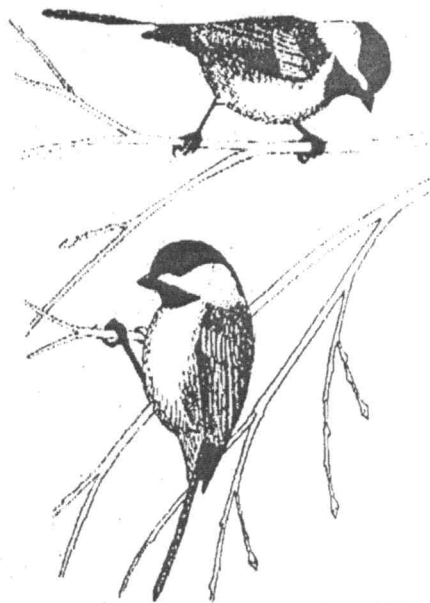
rumped and Pine warblers, and Scarlet Tanager.

Tuttle Marsh is but a short drive from the Monument and is good for numerous wetland birds. Take River Road 7.5 miles east to Wells Road (Forest Service Road 4496), turn right, and proceed about 3 miles to old U.S. Route 23. Turn left on old U.S. 23 for 2 miles to Tuttle Marsh Road, and turn right. This road extends for only 4 miles, but offers good birding along the entire way. Tuttle Marsh Impoundment is 2 miles beyond the junction.

Scan the marsh and impoundment for Pied-billed Grebe, American and Least bitterns, Great Blue and Green

herons, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Black Tern, Hooded Merganser, Virginia Rail, and Sora. Other breeding species to be found in the neighborhood include Solitary Vireo, Golden-winged and Chestnut-sided warblers, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, and Field and Vesper Sparrows. Look for Upland Sandpiper in large, dry openings, Alder and Least flycatchers and Yellow Warbler in willow swamps, Winter Wren in the cedar swamp, Sedge Wren in large, wet sedge openings and Marsh Wren and Swamp Sparrow in cattail marshes.

Continue south another 1.5 miles to the intersection of Tuttle Marsh



BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES

and Davidson Road. The open fields to the north often turn up Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, and Clay-colored and Vesper sparrows.

ACCOMMODATIONS ♦ WEATHER ♦ OTHER ATTRACTIONS

When to visit. Birding is best from mid-May to the end of June. Winter residents arrive in November and stay until March.

Where to stay. Camping on the Forest; motels and bed-and-breakfast accommodations in Cadillac, Mio, Manistee, and Tawas.

Weather and attire. Spring and summer mornings are cool, and winters are cold with snow. Warm jackets, rain-gear, and insect repellent are recommended.

What else to do. Canoeing, fishing, paddle-wheel cruises (Foote and Five Channels Dam Pond), hiking, horseback riding, morel mushroom hunting (spring), berry-picking, fall-color touring (late September to early October), cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

Visit Hartwick Pines State Park, just north of Grayling off Interstate 75. The old-growth pine forest there is good for Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, and Pine warblers, and Evening Grosbeak; Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (shorebirds, auto tour, hiking-trails, views of Lake Michigan); Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area in the Manistee section of the Forest (shorebirds, Prairie Warbler, hiking-trails, more views of Lake Michigan); Mackinac Bridge and Straits (scenery, Fort Michilimackinac, Old Mill Creek sawmill), and Tawas Point and Alabaster (both good traps for migrant songbirds in spring). The Forest Service runs Kirtland's Warbler tours out of Mio during breeding-season. For information contact: Mio Ranger District, 401 Court Street, Mio, Michigan 48647; telephone 517/826-3252. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service runs another Kirtland's Warbler tour from Grayling. For information contact: Grayling Field Office, P.O. Box 507, Grayling, Michigan 49738; telephone 517/348-6371. Reservations required for groups of ten or more on either tour.

For more information. General and campground information, District Office addresses, maps, bird list: Huron-Manistee National Forests, 421 South Mitchell St., Cadillac, Michigan 49601; telephone 800/821-6263.

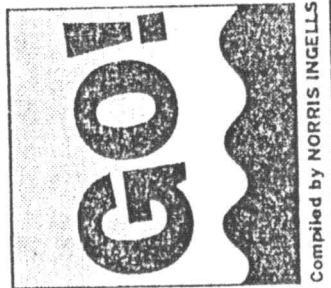


BRODIAEA VICIA

TRAVEL

This little bird's a big draw in Mio

Kirtland's Warbler brings in bird lovers worldwide



Down-state folks — that's us — may find it surprising that Michigan is visited every year by hundreds of people from distant cities and even foreign countries who don't give a dang about automobiles, snowmobiles, pleasure boats, deer hunting, salmon fishing or the latest intrigue in the MSU Athletic Department.

And they aren't heading for famous places like Mackinac Island or Greenfield Village either. Their destination is Mio, a tiny town about 32 miles east of Grayling in North-Central Michigan's Oscoda County.

What's the attraction?

A rare and endangered little blue-gray and yellow bird called Kirtland's Warbler. Adding it to your "life list" of species spotted is considered a must by serious birdwatchers.

Despite a very strong, human-helped comeback in recent years, only 485 singing males were counted last year. It's assumed there's one female for each male counted, so the entire world population is probably less than 1,000.

"One lady" came in from Denver, Colorado, and went away very, very happy," said Diane Szabo, who runs the Songbird Motel in Mio. "Not only did she see the Kirtland's Warbler, but she also saw a pileated woodpecker. There are a lot of interesting birds in our area."

New this year will be Mio's first Kirtland's Warbler Festival, June 10-19. It's being tied in with the town's 50-year-old Iris Show.

There'll be tours of famous flower gardens in the county, a kids' fishing derby, mountain bike and foot races, juried wildlife arts and crafts show, an Au Sable River float and a parade. And, of course, they'll offer daily U.S. Forest Service expeditions into the pine barrens to try to catch a glimpse of the

love it. And the little darlings might even learn something in the process.

It involves teaching children about springs during — you guessed it — spring break to cure their — you guessed it again — spring fever.

"Springs, kind of like children, are all about energy — storing it, releasing it and absorbing it," said Mary Lynn Heininger, developer of the program. "We'll offer hands-on-minds-on, and even feet-on activities to inspire kids' natural curiosity so that they can discover the fascination of springs."

It all takes place April 2-10. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. There's no extra charge beyond the usual museum admission: adults \$11.50; children 5-12, \$5.75. Children under 5, free. Museum and village are located at Oakwood Boulevard and Village Road in Dearborn just west of the southern field Freeway (M-39). For recorded information on programs call (313) 271-1976.

Michigan's state park system is 75 years old this year, and to help you enjoy the birthday party, they've published a new guidebook. It's free, and all you have to do to get one is call 373-9900.

They're also available at DNR offices, and tourist information centers — in Lansing, in the 100 block of West Kalamazoo St.

The full-color guide, sponsored by Pepsi-Cola of Michigan, includes a list of special events, facilities available, phone numbers, and fees.

Speaking of birthdays, William Penn — the man Pennsylvania is named after — would be 350 years old this year. Naturally, there'll be a lot of hoopla associated with this milestone — tours, exhibits, fairs.

If you're interested, write the Philadelphia Visitors Center, 16th St. and JFK Blvd., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102. They'll send you a complete listing.

Norris Ingells is a Lansing State Journal staff writer. Questions? Suggestions? Give him a call at 377-1155.



Courtesy photo

Kirtland's Warbler is a small bird that attracts big attention in North-Central Michigan. This year they're even holding a festival in its honor.

The Michigan Summer 1994 Travel Guide and Calendar of Events is out, free, and available at the Michigan Travel Bureau office in the 100 block of West Kalamazoo Street, across from the Lansing Library.

If you want one mailed to you, write Michigan Travel Bureau, P.O. Box 3393, Livonia 48151-3393 or call 1-800-543-3393.

It covers more than 1,000 events all over the state from April through Labor Day weekend, including dates and phone numbers you can call for additional information. There are charts showing all state parks and what facilities

are available in each, and a list of tourist information centers around the state.

Symbols tell you which events charge admission, and which are wheelchair accessible. Be advised that many small town tourist bureaus aren't staffed this early in the season, so don't be surprised if you get a recording or nobody answers. Wait a few days and try again.

The usually dignified Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn has come up with an idea that sounds like Madison Avenue at its corniest.

But it's a great idea. Kids will

HARRISON — The Michigan Sheriffs' Association is seeking nominations for its 1994 Educational Services Scholarship program, announced Clare County Sheriff Howard A. Haskin, a member of the professional organization.



Ten \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to Michigan high school seniors pursuing a career in law enforcement, Haskin said.

Nomination for the scholarship program must be made by a MSA member and the completed nomination forms must be turned into the local sheriff's office no later than May 20.

Individuals who wish to make a nomination can get the form detailing criteria from "The Sheriffs' Star," the MSA professional journal received by members, or through the local sheriff's offices.



ISA City...
March 23,
1994

Irish show, festival set

OSCODA — The First Annual Warbler Festival will be held in conjunction with the 50th Annual Mio Iris Show, from June 10 to 19.

There will be activities for all age groups. Events will include guided tours of the Jack Pine forest and of famous flower gardens in Oscoda County, a wildlife arts and crafts show, a bonfire and many other activities for all to enjoy.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held to commemorate a 48-mile self-guided auto tour developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the United States Forest Service. The tour roams along the Au Sable River and Jack Pine forests east and south of Mio.

For more information, call or write to the Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County, Mio, 48647, 1-800-800-6133, or contact Virgie Purchase, Festival Coordinator, at 826-5590.



Roundtable talk set

BAD AXE — A community corrections roundtable discussion is scheduled for Thursday at 3 p.m. in the Huron County Courthouse.



Circuit Court Judge M. Richard Knoblock, District Court Judge Karl Kraus and other members of judiciary offices in Huron County are invited to the discussion. Huron County attorneys who act on public defense are invited. The roundtable meeting is open to the public.

For more information contact Nancy Riley, Community Corrections Coordinator at 635-3561.

— Compiled from Times' staff, special writer and news service reports

Balancing act

▲ Katie Siverly, 4, rollerskates near her home. Temperatures are to reach 56 degrees of sunshine.

Gagetown Court

By Mary Drier
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

GAGETOWN — Even though newcomer Republican George R. Wilson, 60, won the tie-breaker draw for Gagetown Village Clerk, village officials are looking for someone to fill the position.

Wilson declined the clerk's position in favor of the treasurer post he won in the general election.

March 14 election results showed incumbent Democrat Elery Sontag, 81, received 29 votes for treasurer and 31 votes for clerk, and Wilson, 59, received 33 votes for treasurer and 31 votes for clerk.

Wilson and Sontag were scheduled to have met to draw lots at the county clerk's office to break the tie for the clerk's position. Because Sontag did not attend, deputy clerk Delores Gangler drew in his place. Wilson won the post with the ballot marked elected. However, he declined the position in favor of the treasurer's seat.

Because of Wilson's decision, council members will have to appoint someone to fill the clerk's position.

Village President Charles W. Wright

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Construction set

By Mary Drier
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

SEBEWAING — Unionville-Sebewaing Area School District officials expect to have all of the necessary steps completed to sell the old middle school by the end of April, and to begin construction on the new school wing in May.

The district will build a new middle school wing at the high school as soon as mother nature cooperates with some warm weather.

Plans are to sell the middle school site at 628 E. Main Street to the highest bidder.

First Kirtland's Warbler Fest Scheduled for June in Mio

The Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County is hosting its first annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival from June 10-19. This festival is being created to celebrate the beauty and uniqueness of the Kirtland's Warbler and the Jack Pine forests it calls home. It will be held in conjunction with the 50th Annual Mio Iris Show, longest-running such Iris show in the world.

Activities for all age groups will be held throughout Oscoda County in the communities of Mio, Luzerne, Fairview, McKinley, Mack Lake, Red Oak and Comins. Oscoda County — the "Kirtland's Warbler Capital of Michigan" — will be host to the Festival and Iris show.

The festival is being designed to be fun as well as educational. Events will include guided tours of the Jack Pine Forest to observe the rare Kirtland's Warbler, tours of famous flower gardens in the county, public viewing of the Iris Show and competition, historical tours, kids-free fishing derby, mountain bike and foot races, judged wildlife-arts and crafts show, an Au Sable River float and cleanup, a parade in downtown Mio, special nature educational games for kids, and a bonfire on the riverbank.

Call 1-(800) 800-6133.

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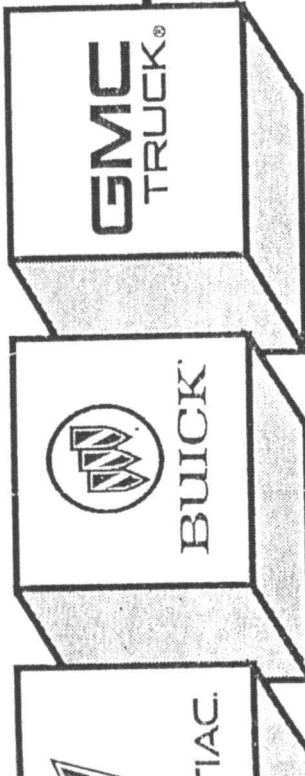
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Upcoming Events

March 26

Springtime Arts & Crafts Show -
Alpena Armory

April 9-10

Home Show Weekend-Cheboygan
AuSable River Steelheaders Trade
Show - Oscoda

April 15

Brown Trout Kickoff Dinner-
Alpena

April 17-23

National Volunteer Week

April 23

Miss Sunrise Side Pageant-
Harrisville

For more specific information on any other of these events contact the Chamber of Commerce or Convention and Visitors Bureau in the city/village listed. To have your events published please send them to Michigan's Sunrise Side, 1361 Fletcher Street, National City, MI 48748 not later than the last Friday of the month.

Another Billboard This Time on US-23

This time Michigan's Sunrise Side billboard appears on US-23 just south of AuGres in Arenac County. The board states: "Thanks for Visiting Michigan's Sunrise Side. For a free travel planner call 1 800 424-3022.

The billboard is made available through the generosity of OCI, Corp., a member and marketer of billboards in the region.

Michigan's Sunrise Side, Inc.

1361 Fletcher Street
National City, MI 48748
(517) 469-4544
1 800 424-3022

Thomas G. Ferguson
Executive Director

Oscoda County Chamber Hosts Kirtland's Warbler Festival, Iris Show

The Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County has undertaken its biggest project to date, designed to bring the communities located in Oscoda County together for a week long festival. The communities of Comins, Fairview, Luzerne, McKinley, Mio, Red Oak, and Mack Lake are well known for providing excellent hunting, fishing, canoeing as well as excellent trails for ORV's, trail bikes, cross country skiing and snowmobiling to those who visit Oscoda County.

However, few stop to realize that over two thirds of the county consists of state and national forest lands, as well as the beautiful and famous AuSable River.

Working closely with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; The Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County will be hosting the First Annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival in conjunction with the Fiftieth Annual Mio Iris Show.

Festivities get underway on Friday, June 10 and will run through Sunday June, 19th. This ten day festival features daily events that are sure to please every member of the family.

Festival organizers list the following events: Kid's Free Fishing Derby, Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new "Jack Pine Auto Tour," Kirtland's Warbler and Blue Bird Tours, including a bird watching tournament, a full day of kids events followed by a free Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social, tours of the Mio Hydro Electric Dam, arts and crafts show, the world's oldest continuous consecutive Iris Show, wild flower and garden tours, a river cleanup with a barbecue following, a nature walk and

bonfire. Also on the agenda for the festival are bike and running events.

A special event the first weekend will be opening of a 48 mile, self guided auto tour developed by the DNR and US Forest Service along the AuSable River and through the Jack Pine forests east and south of Mio.

The Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County and members of the Mio Irisarian Society promise a great family weekend for those who attend.

For more information, call the Chamber of Commerce for Oscoda County, 1 800 800-6133, or contact Virgie Purchase, Festival Coordinator at 1 800 289-2845.

Welcome New Members

West Branch

Chamber of Commerce

422 W. Houghton
West Branch, Michigan 48661
Tim Temple, Executive Director
(517) 345-3821

Northport General Store

3660 E. Huron
AuGres, Michigan 48703
(517) 876-8929
Nancy McKinley, Manager

Charity Island

Transportation, Inc.

PO Box 339
Standish, Michigan 48658
(517) 846-6161 or 800 933-9442

MichCon

1652 Keane Drive
Traverse City, Michigan 49684
(616) 929-2204
Roger Royer

Michigan County Hosts

Oscoda County, Michigan, will host the first annual Kirtland's Warbler Festival and the fiftieth annual Mio Iris Show June 10-19.

The Kirtland's Warbler Festival will celebrate the beauty and uniqueness of the bird and the Jackpine forests it calls home. The county is known as the Kirtland's Warbler Capital of Michigan, and communities all across the county - Mio, Luzerne, Fairview, McKinley, Mack Lake, Red Oak and Comins - will hold activities for all age groups during the festival.

One of the highlights will be the

Saturday, June 11, ribbon cutting ceremony to open a 48-mile, self-guided auto tour developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service. The route winds along the world-famous AuSable River and through the rich Jackpine forests east and south of Mio.

Both festivals are designed to be fun, as well as educational. Events will include daily tours of the forest to observe the rare Kirtland's Warbler, a flower garden, wildflower and bluebird tours, and an historical auto tour.

Saturday, June 11, events will

include a morning kids' free fishing derby in Mio Pond and a parade in the afternoon, followed by an evening street dance. Sunday, June 12, there will be a sunrise service at Mio Pond Overlook and a bird watching tournament will be held in the afternoon.

Tuesday, June 14, will be highlighted by the Senior Variety Show at Comins Center at 3:30 p.m. An AuSable River clean-up will take place Wednesday morning and will be followed by a barbecue at noon for the workers. Thursday will be the Kid's Day at Boney Park in Fairview, which will include special nature educational games. Steiner's Museum will also host children's activities. Thursday evening from 6-8

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Fun Summer Festivals

p.m. will be Cruise Night and a free ice cream social.

Mio Hydro Electric Dam will welcome visitors to an open house Friday, June 17, and Mack Lake will host a walking trail and campfire that evening. The juried arts and crafts show will be open Saturday and Sunday, June 18-19. Mountain bike and foot races will also be held on Saturday at Big Creek Shooting Preserve. The flower bed races will run at 12:30 p.m. The Iris Show will take place at St. Mary's Parish Hall beginning at 1 p.m. and will continue on Sunday.

For more information call 800/800-6133. For camping information contact Mio Pines. ♦

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