

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER SANCTUARY DEDICATION

by

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It is a pleasure to be here at Mio and to participate in this historic occasion. It is a historic event for several reasons: first, because we are formally dedicating an area of public land to a very special and unique management endeavor, which in itself would be enough of an occasion for recognition. In addition, this is the first time, to my knowledge, that public agencies have ever dedicated land to be managed primarily for the preservation of one species of small songbird. Certainly it is the first in the United States, and, so far as I know, the first in the world for such a purpose.

This country has long had many refuges and sanctuaries, both public and private, devoted to the special care of colonies of birds or to maintain feeding grounds for spectacular bird concentrations. Many of the earliest federal refuges were small islands or rocks designated as refuges to protect and perpetuate known nesting colonies of Gulls, Terns, Murres, Puffins, Pelicans and similar water birds. The Audubon Society has secured and manages many areas largely for the protection of breeding colonies or feeding concentrations of such spectacular birds as Herons, Ibises, Egrets and Spoonbills. In the middle '30s the Biological Survey purchased two refuges primarily to preserve the vanishing Trumpeter Swan and Whooping Crane. One of the major attractions of Everglades National Park is the great concentrations of water birds along its roads and trails. While all of these and many other areas, including the entire federal refuge system, the national forests and the national parks, furnish habitat and living accommodations for a great variety of birds, none of them has been set aside specifically, nor managed intensively, for the purpose to which this is being dedicated today.

It is fitting on this occasion to recognize the long, painstaking, and basic studies of Kirtland's Warbler by Dr. Jocelyn Van Tyne and Harold Mayfield and those associated with them. Perhaps no other small bird in America has been so intensively studied. The detailed knowledge that they accumulated over the years forms the solid base of this management plan.

With a population of approximately 1,000 individuals nesting exclusively in a few counties in north-central Michigan and wintering in the Bahamas, the Kirtland's Warbler is subject to all of the migration hazards of other small birds, and it is something of a miracle that this small band of birds has persisted as long and successfully as it has. It is especially interesting in view of the fact that they nest only in small jackpine woodlands, and that once the trees attain any considerable size, they abandon that nesting ground for another. Perhaps at some previous date there were many more of these birds than there are at the present time, although no one knows. They depended on a fire ecology, and either Indian or lightning-caused fires kept areas open and developing into suitable habitat for this unique little bird. Man, with his fire protection and efforts to increase the production of useful forest products, has been the greatest destroyer of its useful habitat, since his efforts have been devoted to preventing fire and to encouraging the growth of timber, as far as possible, for future use. It is, therefore, of more than passing interest that about 12,000 acres of state and federally-owned forest lands are, from now on, to be managed primarily to preserve the peculiar type of habitat required by the Kirtland's Warbler, and that the forestry agencies are willing to sacrifice some timber values on these public lands in order to accomplish this purpose.

It is interesting to learn that they are approaching this effort with a variety of methods, all aimed at a common objective. It is fitting indeed that we come here today to recognize formally all of the many years of work of many people who have helped bring this program to its present climax. Some of this land has been managed for the Kirtland's Warbler for a number of years now and should be in

a useful condition for the birds before their presently available habitat nearby becomes untenable.

All over the world similar pressures are being exerted against rare birds and mammals, largely due to human activity. Many species of wild creatures are threatened with imminent extinction through man's activities, even though they may not be directed specifically against the wildlife. Within recent years, the construction of huge dams, the clearing of land, and the use of pesticides for insect control and of herbicides for vegetative control have destroyed essential habitat or have resulted in direct death to the local wildlife. For this reason, within the last two years, the World Wildlife Fund was formed with the purpose of finding out, first, where these endangered species are; secondly, what, if anything, can be done to save them; and third, to raise money to carry out a program once it has been developed. To do this, there is an International Board with world-wide contacts, whose principal reason for existence is to get accurate information on threatened species and to find out what can be done to save them. This Board is not a money-raising organization. Rather, its function is to develop sound projects to help these threatened animals and to channel the funds that may be available to the proper places. It does not propose to set up new organizations or new personnel to carry out these programs; it will work through existing conservation organizations wherever possible.

In a growing number of countries, there are national World Wildlife Fund organizations which are money-raising groups. Such active groups already exist in Great Britain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Germany and in our own country. Prince Bernhard of The Netherlands is the chairman of the International Board in Switzerland and also the chairman of the money-raising organization in his own country. Prince Phillip, The Duke of Edinburgh is the President of the British fund-raising organization, and I have the honor to be the head of the American one. While this work is just getting underway, it already has some notable accomplishments to its credit.

It financed an expedition to capture some of the few remaining Arabian Oryx, and arrangements are now being made to build up a small breeding stock in captivity with the hope that some day, when the people in Arabia become more conservation-minded, breeding stock can be reintroduced into their native habitat. The story of these animals has been told many times. For generations it had been a sign of manhood for a young sheik to go out and kill by his own efforts one of these fleetfooted animals. It is still so regarded, except that today they do it with jeeps and tommy guns, and the animals stand little chance once they are discovered. So far as is known, there are, at most, only a few dozen wild specimens remaining in small and isolated bands, and it was with difficulty that the expedition located and captured three animals.

Funds have been allocated to organize a team of undercover law enforcement workers to break up the illegal traffic in rhinoceros horn, the chief cause of the decimation of the population of these huge beasts. This will be a continuing effort that will cost money for at least a number of years.

Perhaps the most dramatic accomplishment to date is the preservation of part of the Marisma in Spain. This large area had been held as a hunting preserve by a wealthy family for generations, but it was in danger of being broken up and developed, either for agriculture or for resorts. The efforts of the World Wildlife Fund caused the Spanish Government to make a reserve of part of it, and in addition, the Fund has committed about \$1 million to the purchase of additional land. Special gifts were available for part of the cost, but around \$600,000 must still be raised to save this magnificent area. It is the last stand in Europe for a number of interesting birds and mammals, and constitutes a vital waterfowl wintering ground and a nesting area for a huge colony of Flamingos.

In southeastern Asia, the World Wildlife Fund has two active projects designed to help save the fast-vanishing Orangutan. In one project, some animals are being raised in captivity in Borneo, and in the other a man is in the field studying the animals in the hope that we can devise some way to save this species.

To show that this is a truly world-wide movement, I might add that there are definite projects underway in Australia, in India, in Burma, in several areas in Africa in addition to those already mentioned, in the Galapagos Islands and in Central America. In this latter region, money has been given for a study of the Giant Grebe, which nests only on one lake in Guatemala, and in another an effort is being made to help save the last remaining habitat of the rare White-tailed Monkey.

Coming a little closer to home, the World Wildlife Fund has provided money for the Nene Goose restoration program in Hawaii. This last year, 30 birds from England were transported to the Island of Maui and released in the national park there. Last reports are that they are doing well. Plans are being made to move additional birds this coming year, since Peter Scott has been very successful in producing numbers of them in England. The Nene story is a fascinating one which I wish I had time to tell in greater detail, but it is sufficient to say that there are now many times the number of wild birds on Maui and Hawaii than there were a few years ago when this effort was first conceived. Encouraged by the success of the Nene program, the World Wildlife Fund has financed the launching of a similar program to save the Hawaiian Duck, which numbers only a few hundred birds.

There are several projects in this country and in Mexico that are just being developed--some to save habitat, others to finance studies. For the latter, the World Wildlife Fund has contributed money to speed up the National Audubon Society study of the Bald Eagle to determine what is happening to the birds and what can be done to prevent their eventual disappearance. It has initiated a project to save a small population of Grizzly Bears that is known to persist in one small isolated mountain range in Mexico and a similar one to save some of the habitat on which the Attwater Prairie Chicken depends.

From all this you will see that the World Wildlife Fund is using its money to help save habitat, to get better law enforcement, or to save national communities of especial values. To help secure better law enforcement, it is

supporting a school in Tanganyika to train Africans for ranger duty and law enforcement, as well as wildlife management.

It appears that we will be successful in preserving a substantial amount of White-winged Dove habitat both in Texas and in old Mexico, just south of the Rio Grande. Conservation-minded Texans have indicated that they will help finance a program for the preservation of some of the rapidly disappearing dove habitat. Habitat is also used by a number of unique birds that are found in the United States only in these limited areas. In other words, this project will help save habitat for an entire community of wild forms.

More than two dozen prominent and influential leaders in business and industry are being added to the Board of the United States organization. This seems to assure the raising of substantial contributions for the financing of the essential work that is awaiting attention. Some of the projects cannot be delayed much longer. Time is running out for many species of wildlife that are being crowded from all sides by growing human population and the multiple demands that people make on land and water. Many of the land and water development projects that are being proposed, and some that are under construction are of doubtful value, and many will ultimately fail. In the meanwhile, the wildlife suffers a needless loss of living space. It will require concentrated efforts and much money if we are not to lose some of the unique and spectacular forms of life that are in danger. It is encouraging and gratifying to see so many busy leaders in world affairs and large industry agree to help with the World Wildlife Fund.

The major objective of this group is to keep overhead down, and there are few paid employees. At the present time, the entire paid staff of the American Fund consists of one part-time employee, but we expect that we will need a full-time employee sometime in the future. Up to the present, all of the activities in developing programs and in answering a rather voluminous correspondence have been conducted as volunteer work by the members of the Board of Directors. We hope that

the overhead always will be low and that any money that is contributed will go primarily to help in worthy and needed projects anywhere in the world.

This Kirtland's Warbler area, which is dedicated today is typical of the kind of things that must be done many times over in many parts of the world. It is indeed a pioneering project which should furnish guidelines for many others. It appears to be an ideal approach whenever there is time. First, a careful search for facts and then the imagination and courage to use these facts in developing a sound program.

In concluding, may I congratulate everyone associated with this splendid program from its inception to its successful installation. This effort to preserve one small bird will be watched with intense interest all over the world. It certainly indicates an articulate and intelligent concern for small creatures as well as the larger and more spectacular species and may well symbolize a turning point in human attitude toward the wildlife of the world. Such a desirable result would indeed mark this project as an event of profound historic significance.