

Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii* Franklin County

On 14 May 1994, Ken Gabler, Delores Purnell, Charles Brightbill, and Robert Carmack sighted a Kirtland's Warbler in an area known as Little Cove in Warren Twp., Franklin County.

The observation took place around 1300. The bird was studied by these four experienced observers for about fifteen minutes at distances of 25 to 30 feet using Zeiss 10x40 and Swift 8.5x44 binoculars.

The following is the description sent to P.O.R.C. by Ken Gabler.

Size: Large warbler (smaller than a Chat but larger than a Magnolia Warbler).

Upperparts: Gray back and head streaked with black. Face with an interrupted eye-ring (white crescent above and below the eye). Warbler beak. Wings with faint suggestion of wingbars.

Underparts: Black (rather bold) streaks on sides only. Chin, throat, chest and body yellow.

Habits: Very vocal as it interrupted its search for food in blossoms of small trees. Bobbing tail.

Status in Pennsylvania: Accidental. This is the sixth Pa. record and only the second spring sighting of this rare and local North American songbird. The one other spring record is from Allegheny Co. 23 May 1981. The four fall records all fall within a time frame of 21 September to 2 October. Outside of a Chester Co. sighting of 27 September 1964, all the fall reports are from the southwestern counties with Somerset Co. having the honor of possessing two records.

This is a species seldom encountered outside of its restricted breeding range in the Jack Pine forests of north Lower Michigan or its winter home in the Bahamas. Spring birds

apparently migrate in a narrow band between the Bahama Islands and the nesting ground traversing South Carolina, North Carolina, western Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, and southern Michigan (Mayfield 1992). Fall birds seem to head directly to Florida and then cross to the Bahamas, but sometimes wander outside the migratory path (Mayfield 1992, Curson 1994). There is some thought that these birds make the entire journey in one trip, with only strays and stragglers left for the few lucky birders who encounter them.

The southwestern counties of Pa. are situated perfectly north and east of this narrow migration band, and it is not inconceivable that a struggling stray Kirtland's caught in a strong west wind could find itself face-to-face with some startled wild-eyed Pennsylvania birders. Have your notebooks ready. ♣

REFERENCES:

- Curson, J., D. Quinn, and D. Beadle. 1994. *Warblers of the Americas: an identification guide*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston Mass. and New York N.Y.
- Mayfield, Harold F. 1992. Kirtland's Warbler. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 19 (A. Poole, P. Stettenham, and F. Gill, Eds.) Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, D.C. The American Ornithologists' Union.
- Santner, S., D. Brauning, and P. and G. Schwalbe. 1992. *Annotated List of the Birds of Pennsylvania*. Pennsylvania Biological Survey Contribution Number Four.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* Allegheny County

Birding reclaimed strip mines in western Pa. can be quite productive as demonstrated by Paul and Deborah Hess on 30 April 1994. On this date they were exploring a newly discovered grassland 3 miles west of Imperial in Findlay Twp., Allegheny Co. They were enjoying the numerous Savannah (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), Henslow's (*Ammodramus henslowii*), Grasshopper (*A. savannarum*) and Vesper (*Pooecetes gramineus*) sparrows, plus Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*), Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) and Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) when a sparrow flew up and landed in a small tree about 20 feet in front of them. The position of the bird to them was just below eye level, and they were able to study it for about three minutes using 12x50 and 7x50 binoculars. Glancing at the white tail edges it was initially thought to be another Vesper, but upon closer inspection, a breast spot, the brown tone of the back and wings, a face pattern with prominent buffy eyebrow and cheek patch, white tail edges around the tip visible even in profile view and finally the song alerted them to the possibility of it being a Lark Sparrow.

The following written description was sent to P.O.R.C.

Size: About that of Vesper Sparrow (i.e., rather large) or perhaps slightly larger, but appearing a bit less "fat" in breast than a Vesper. Evident was the tail length, longer than Vesper relative to body length, plus a sense of wider and more rounded tail than Vesper as the bird flew away.

Crown: Brown with a median stripe dull white and not very