

*2nd draft*

November 2, 1994

Dear

Records at the Oscoda County Courthouse in Mio, Michigan, indicate that you own land south of Farrington Road and between the East and Middle Branches of Big Creek in northwest Oscoda County. Most of the State-owned land in this same area is part of the Big Creek Kirtland's Warbler Management Area and you probably are aware of past efforts to create nesting habitat for this endangered bird in this area. You probably also know that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has purchased several parcels of land in this area during the last few years.

We are writing to you now to let you know of a major project we will be undertaking in cooperation with the USFWS on the public lands in this area in the very near future.

As background for this large-scale project, some information on the Kirtland's warbler: We have found that Kirtland's warblers nest in higher densities and over a longer period of years in larger areas of habitat (1000 + acres) as compared to smaller areas. (They use areas where the jack pines are 6 to 20 years old.) This is probably because their preferred habitat (that which they have relied on for thousands of years) is wildfire-produced stands of young jack pine. The publicly-owned lands in this area offer an excellent opportunity to establish a large contiguous area of nesting habitat for the Kirtland's warbler (with positive effects on many other species of wildlife, over time), because most of the mature timber has been harvested from the state-owned lands in the last 10 years, and most of the timber on the USFWS parcels is either overmature or already dead. Once this area is regenerated to jack pine, the trees will be allowed to grow to maturity, i.e., <sup>about</sup> 50 years.

Specifically, we propose to do the following:

- 1) Harvest merchantable timber from state-owned lands in sections 5, 6 and 7 (T27N, R1E) by April 1, 1995. (see Map 1)
- 2) Harvest merchantable timber from USFWS lands in these same sections by April 1, 1995. (see Map 2)
- 3) Roller chop portions as necessary to allow for machine planting.
- 4) Spare occasional large oak, red pine and all dead standing trees.

- 5) Replant mechanically entire area (approximately 1400 acres) in spring - early summer 1995. (see Map 3) (This will require nearly 2 million seedlings to be planted.) Plant with opposing wave pattern - this provides for permanent wildlife openings and varied densities of jack pine. (diagram attached)
- 6) Assure density of at least 1250 trees per acre by interplanting or seeding in fall of 1995.

If timber sales are not completed by at least May 15, or if for any other unforeseen reasons any portion of this area cannot be replanted in 1995, it will be replanted in fall 1995 or spring 1996.

This is indeed the largest effort we have ever made <sup>in one area</sup> to provide nesting habitat for the endangered Kirtland's warbler. The size of the breeding population of this bird is apparently directly related to the amount of nesting habitat, and this one area near your property could well hold over 100 pairs of this endangered species in about 10-12 years.

We realize that you most likely did not purchase your property because of its proximity to a Kirtland's warbler nesting area, so please let us address other concerns you may have.

#### DEER

Once the timber is removed from this area, and for about 4 years after it is replanted, deer will probably use adjacent uncut areas more than this wide open area, at least during late fall and winter. As the planted area grows up and becomes denser, deer use will increase however. By 10 years after planting, this area will provide excellent escape and bedding cover, and deer use will be much increased especially during the hunting seasons.

#### SNOWSHOE HARES

Similar to deer, hares will avoid this area for some time after it is cleared and replanted. By the time the planted trees are about 10 years old, and for at least the next 15 years thereafter, this planted area will be excellent habitat for snowshoe hares.

#### OTHER WILDLIFE

Besides deer and hares, many other kinds of wildlife will use this area at different <sup>backgrounds</sup> times. For the first few years after planting, grassland species such as upland sandpipers, vesper sparrows, northern harriers (marsh hawks) and possibly even sharptailed grouse will be present. By leaving the dead standing trees, cavity nesting birds like bluebirds and kestrels will use the area. Turkeys will use at least the edges of the open area. As the trees ~~get~~ <sup>grow</sup> older, different birds and mammals will be present. The enclosed poster shows many of the animals likely to use the area as it matures.

#### OAK TREES

Some scattered larger oaks will be left on the area to add diversity, and to provide acorns for animals like deer and turkeys. Some oaks will also be cut. Most of these trees are already mature to overmature, and this kind of oak (mostly northern pin oak) will regenerate from stump sprouts. Most of the oaks present now are the result of wildfires some 50 years ago. These oaks will begin producing acorns again when the new trees are about 20 years old.

THREATENED PLANTS

There are at least two threatened plant species on this area (rough fescue and Hill's thistle). Both of these plants require minimal shade for their existence. Portions of this area which contain the highest numbers of these plants will be left open and not replanted to jack pine.

FIRE

Although it would be preferable to prepare this area by burning before planting, we will not be burning this area. Instead, it will be prepared for planting by whole tree harvesting and roller chopping. Actually, the timber harvests, roller chopping and replanting will serve to reduce the danger of wildfire in this area for some time to come.

ROAD

All new roads constructed for harvesting ~~the~~ timber will be blocked during the planting operation. Some dead end and unnecessary trails will also be blocked. Trails on the county road system and trails used for access to the private parcels will be kept open.

*will probably*

NESTING SEASON CLOSURE

Once the replanted area is used by Kirtland's warblers for nesting (6 to 8 years from now), it ~~may~~ be closed to public entry from May 1 to September 10, in order to protect the ground-nesting warbler from disturbance. This will not preclude use of the existing roads however. The area will still be open for all other compatible uses from September 11 ~~until~~ April 30 (all hunting seasons except part of the spring turkey hunting season). *through*

This has become a rather lengthy letter but we wanted to try to explain why we are doing this major project, and what the effects are likely to be on other wildlife and plants in this area. We've tried to cover many aspects and related concerns, but may have missed some. Please call either of us if we can give more information, or if you have ~~any~~ *other* concerns we can address.

Sincerely,

Sincerely

Jerry Weinrich  
Wildlife Habitat/Research Biologist  
(517)422-5192

Bob Hess  
District Wildlife Biologist  
(517)826-3211

JW/BH/ckh  
Attachments

*send copies to*  
Boushelle  
Weiser  
Burgoyne  
Caveney  
Mitty  
A.C. Miller  
Margola  
Ennis  
Tawny-Wetley  
Robinson  
Soultz  
Innon  
Williat  
Lusbar  
Paulovitch  
Shellenbarger  
Huber

*attach maps + diagram*

4338 Baywood Dr., S. E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
December 22, 1994

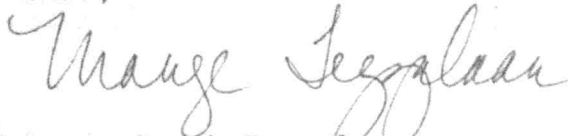
Mr. Phil Huber  
U.S. Forest Service  
District Ranger  
Huron National Forest  
Mio, MI 48627

Dear Mr. Huber:

I spotted an announcement in the *Free Press* about the five-year census for the Kirtland's Warbler. I'd like to participate in some way. Although I live in Grand Rapids, I frequently travel through Mio on my way to the Oscoda/Harrisville area. I'm familiar with the Kirtland's project area east of Mio along F-32 by the Au Sable River. I'm also a birdwatcher, so I have experience in sighting birds.

Since I'm a writer, I might also write about the project. Just for fun, I have enclosed a piece I wrote about birdwatching and trying to spot the Kirtland's at Point Pelee. Can you send me some information on what kind of help you need and the commitment required?

Thanks,



Margery Guest Teggelaar

Enc.

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## Guest Column

People used to make fun of it. But now it's almost cool—bird watching. But don't call it that.

We've got a brand new verb: birding. You can bird in your backyard, at a local park, or you can travel to exotic places like the Everglades or Costa Rica. During migration, we like to travel to Pointe Pelee.

Pointe Pelee is an hour east of Detroit in Canada. The Pointe extends south into Lake Erie. It's called the flyway. That means birds habitually use that route to move from their winter homes (the Bahamas, the Caribbean, Mexico) to their summer nesting areas in the northern U.S. or Canada. It means that birds never otherwise seen in this area pass through in large numbers—bay-breasted warblers, chestnut-sided warblers, white-eyed vireos, Blackburnian warblers, scarlet tanagers.

Pointe Pelee is an interesting place to see birds. But don't miss the people. Migration brings out the hardest of the hardcore birders. These are the guys who used to be portrayed wearing funny glasses and khaki Bermuda shorts. Except now they also carry giant

monoculars mounted on gun stocks and sport Hasselblad cameras with telephoto lenses. We're lower-end birders. Just some regular binoculars and a field guide.

I was stalking one of my favorites: the black-throated blue. White breast, black cheeks and throat, head and back a steely gray-blue. My husband was looking for the palm warbler: bright yellow underparts, rusty cap, and a serious tail-wagging habit. We had checklists and pencils ready.

This turned out to be a red-letter day in the park. Someone had spotted a Kirtland's warbler in the scrub just off the beach. The Kirtland's population has been hovering at about 800 for the last twenty years. Eight hundred left in the world. And it only nests in a very restricted habitat—low jack pine in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan near Mio. That's it.

Birders were racing by us at breakneck speed toward the spot where the tiny bird had been seen. We stood in the path as hundreds of men and women in full Eddie Bauer gear ran at us searching our faces with darting eyes, and calling out, "Kirtland's?" (There was no time for complete sentences.)

Cars were screeching into a parking lot that moments before had been practically deserted. Soon the Provincial Park officer ran by, waving a sign and a hammer and

muttering outloud, "We need site control!" A skinny man whose Land's End jacket was covered with birding badges cautioned us, "If you go over there, be careful. I heard that if people failed to stay on the trail, the park rangers were going to discipline them." I turned to the guy next to me.

"Hmmm," I said, "what do you think they'll do?"

"Oh, stocks or pillory, most likely," he said. "Or they could strip us to the waist and flog us."

We agreed on the worst possible punishment for a birder: They grab your new \$900 Bausch & Lomb's, place them underneath their boots, and grind them slowly into the dust.

The day wore on as we hiked through the woods—looking, always looking. We saw the Wilson's, the yellow, the magnolia, the yellow-rumped, the blackpoll, the kingbird, and the eastern wood pewee.

I went back two or three times to see the Kirtland's. Remarkably, the crowd had moved only slightly, dutifully following the bird down the beach. But I had no luck—he'd always just vanished into the brush minutes before I arrived. I didn't add the Kirtland's to my life list that day. Instead, I settled for this: I saw some people who saw the Kirtland's warbler.

—Margery Guest Tegetaar



BIRD CARVINGS BY GEORGE BOETTNER  
22520 LAWRENCE DEARBORN, MICH. 48128  
(313) 565-3966

February 12, 1995

Dear Mr. Huber:

By way of review of how we met..... last summer when my wife and I drove through Mio, we dined at the restaurant across the street from your offices. I had some bird carvings in the car with me. I had been attempting to try and find the true colors of the Kirtland Warbler, and you were a big help when you gave me the large poster with the bird in the middle of it. Your explanation of the size and shape helped a lot also.

I like to carve as authentically correct as I can, and we followed up our visit to you with a trip to Ann Arbor, where we visited the University of Michigan Museum, and met the director there. She was most gracious and took us behind the scenes to the file cabinets. There she pulled out several drawers with the study skins of the Warblers, and allowed me to photograph as many as I wished, using their colorlight box. A big help for sure.

We are hoping to attend the Warbler festival this spring, but do not have the dates for the event. Do you have the dates set as yet? I would appreciate knowing them so we can make plans to come up again. Many thanks for your help last summer.

I am hoping to carve a Kirtland for your Ranger Station so that you will have one you can show the many visitors that come in and ask about the bird during the season. Looking forward to seeing you during the Festival. Many thanks for your hlep.

Sincerely,

George H. Boettner  
22520 Lawrence  
Dearborn, MI., 48128  
(313)-565-3966

## **In Search of the Kirtland's Warbler**

On the weekend of June 3rd and 4th, 15 people met in Mio, Michigan to observe Michigan's rarest bird, the Kirtland's Warbler and the flora and fauna that inhabit the Jack Pine ecosystem. The bird's primary nesting habitat occurs in scattered locations across the northern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan. The Kirtland's Warbler is a habitat specialist and requires the unique features of the "Jack Pine ecosystem" in order to breed successfully.

The major feature of this ecosystem is of course the Jack Pine which grows in very poor, sandy soil. Growing along side the Jack Pine we saw Dryland Blueberry, Sand cherry, Choke Cherry, sedges, Yellow Yarrow, Ragwort, Common Dandelion, Pussy Toes, Bird's Foot Violet, Great Spurred Violet, Goat's Beard, Little Bluestem Grass, and other plant species.

Saturday afternoon our leader, Linda Babbish, led the group on a 48 mile auto tour through the scenic AuSable River Valley and unique Jack Pine ecosystem. There are eight official tour stops along the way, and we made some unofficial stops to observe wildlife. Not too long into the tour, our attention was drawn to a dive-bombing American Kestrel. The kestrel was swooping down on the top of a large pine tree and upon closer inspection we detected a Red-tailed Hawk perched in the top of this pine tree. We continued to watch this show as the kestrel successfully landed a few blows, until the Red-tailed Hawk had enough and took to the air. Other points of interest on the auto tour were the "snags" or the dead trees left after a clear cut of Jack Pine, the "Ecosystem Management Area" where Jack Pines are being managed through commercial timber harvesting and replanting to maintain the Jack Pine ecosystem, a large group of Yellow Lady Slipper Orchids growing along side the road ( Linda's next bumper sticker: "Caution...! Brake for Wild Orchids") and a 5 car caravan "U" turn (oops!).

Saturday evening Phil Huber, biologist for the U.S Forest Service, led our group on an owl prowl. Our first stop was an "old growth" forest adjacent to the AuSable River which is home to Great Horned Owls and to majestic 100 year old evergreen trees. Although we were unable to call in the Great Horned Owl, the magic of this old forest and the fragrance of the Balsam Fir trees created a sensual experience.

Our next stop took us to an open field next to a wooded swamp. As the darkness closed in on us and the Whip-poor-will continually sang, Phil played the Barred Owl call on his tape player. He continued until we detected an owl silently flying through the trees and a dark form landing in a tree. Eventually the owl responded to our taped calls with a "who cooks for you? who cooks for you? oh-h-h-h-h" call. A short time later another Barred Owl began to call and then a third owl joined in. As we left the owls continued their hauntingly beautiful concert.

Sunday morning Phil Huber took us to the Mack Lake burn area where Kirtland's Warblers are known to nest. It wasn't long before a male warbler began to sing his rich song. The male warbler was co-operatively perched on a Jack Pine snag and continued to sing as our group enjoyed viewing this rare bird.

Before heading back to Detroit, part of our group toured the Wild Turkey viewing side trip where we did see Wild Turkeys as well as the Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Bobolink, and Northern Harrier. Over the entire weekend our group saw or heard 68 bird species including Nashville Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Wild Turkey, Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, White Eyed and Red Eyed vireos, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. Our bird species highlights for the trip were Barred Owl, Clay-Colored Sparrow, and of course the Kirtland's Warbler.

Our very last stop was at O'Brien Lake where we immersed ourselves in the serene atmosphere of this small secluded lake and silently contemplated the wild beauty before our impending departure.

Marilyn Brannigan

Guided tours to see Kirtland's Warblers and other wildlife in the Jack Pine ecosystem are available from May 14 through July 4. Reservations are recommended.

Mio Tours: U.S Forest Service  
(517) 826-3252

Grayling Tours: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
(517) 337-6650



July 9, 1994 // 212 S E 9 1/2 st.. Rochester, Minn 55904

Postmaster//Postmistress  
At MIO Michigan.

Dear Post People Personell;

Quite a number of years ago I read a fascinating book which told of the tiny bird. KIRTLAND'S WARBLER in your area.

Then very recently again, I read an account of how few pairs of those singular, small birds, were left--and all confined in a real small area--I think about 35 miles total area, in a region of 2nd or 3rd growth small pine trees.

I just wonder about this story. If you can write to tell me more facts about KIRTLAND'S WARBLER I will indeed be grateful to you.. I am a U. Methodist pastor-retired--age 87 and I wish to use the story in a sermon. I hope to give real soon. I am age 87 wife is 81, and we are in frail health..but seek daily to do some little good for God and Mankind.

I note by the road map that your town is real small, and located near the North part of the lower peninsula of Michigan.. Once, many years ago wife and I drove over the long connecting bridge at St Ignace and Mackinaw ...It was quite a sight indeed.

I enclose a small gift of \$ four... to aid the tiny birds or to help out your local D N R.. wherever you may choose to place it.

Thanks for your kindness. I did not know to whom to write for this information, but I thought that even a small village would have a Post Office and so I write to you.

Thanks again. God bless you all  
Cordially yours

*Rev. Dave Achterkirch*  
Rev Dave Achterkirch

P S those little birds must indeed be selctive of their HABITAT..

*I enclose 2 of my short poems  
in a stamped envelope for reply.*

Philip W. Huber  
Wildlife Biologist

years census  
w of 167 singing

is very  
vernment

at every year  
nd it most

sitate to write or

USDA Forest Service  
Mio Ranger District  
401 Court Street  
Mio, MI 48647

Rev. Dave Achterkirch  
212 SE 9 1/2 St.  
Rochester, MN 55904

July 26, 1994

Dear Rev. Achterkirch:

Enclosed is the information that you requested on the Kirtland's Warbler. This years census tallied 633 singing males - the highest count ever! This is an increase from a low of 167 singing males in 1987.

We appreciate your contribution of \$4.00. Managing for the Kirtland's Warbler is very expensive and your contribution is greatly appreciated in a time of declining government budgets.

The US Forest Service offers guided tours of the Kirtland's Warbler and its habitat every year between May 15 and July 4th. If you are ever in Michigan, I think you would find it most interesting.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to write or call.

Sincerely,

Philip W. Huber  
Wildlife Biologist

July 29, 1994...212 S E 9 1/2 st...Rochester Minnesota 55904

MUSDA Forest Service  
Mio Ranger dst.  
401 Court st  
Mio, Michigan.

Dear Dr HUBER;

Thank you so very very much. How kind of you to send me all of that wonderful material re. the KIRTLAND'S WARBLER.

Indeed, and surely it is true, you good people who work in the area of protectionism for that lovely, small bird--you folks surely do deserve an high accolade.

For I think it is nothing short of a miracle that in 1987, only 167 of the male birds were counted but this year, on your census you counted the great number of 633 SINGING MALES. That is just great.. God bless you all in nature's habitat and field.

My how dearly I would love to come to your area and perhaps even spy one or more of those SPECIAL little birds. But, though we have a car 6 yrs old..but like new --yet, I'M frail, and at 87 age could not make the trip.

I enclose a real modest gift to help your wonderful work. <sup>54</sup>  
Four won't go very far.  
not reaching unto a star.  
But it may help your wonderful cause  
And with this I must pause.

and said Godbye..

And thanks again, a lot.

cordially yours

*David B. Achterkirch*  
David B Achterkirch

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