

WELCOME BACK, WARBLERS!

An endangered little bird in Michigan
is getting some big help.



Big Trees=Bad News
Kirtland's warblers build nests on the ground under low branches of jack pines. They hide the nests in thick grasses. If the trees get too tall, they make so much shade that the low branches and grasses die off. Then the birds lose their hidden nesting places and start to disappear.

Fussy Nesters

In spring, Kirtland's warblers fly north from their winter home in the Bahamas — islands off the coast of Florida. A small area in Michigan (see cross on map) is the *only* place where these songbirds nest. There they look for small jack pines about the size of Christmas trees.





Bothersome Birds

Cowbirds are pests in warblers' nests. Female cowbirds lay their eggs there (and in other birds' nests as well). Sometimes the cowbirds even get rid of some of the warblers' eggs. Then the warbler parents feed the bigger cowbird chicks while their own chicks starve.

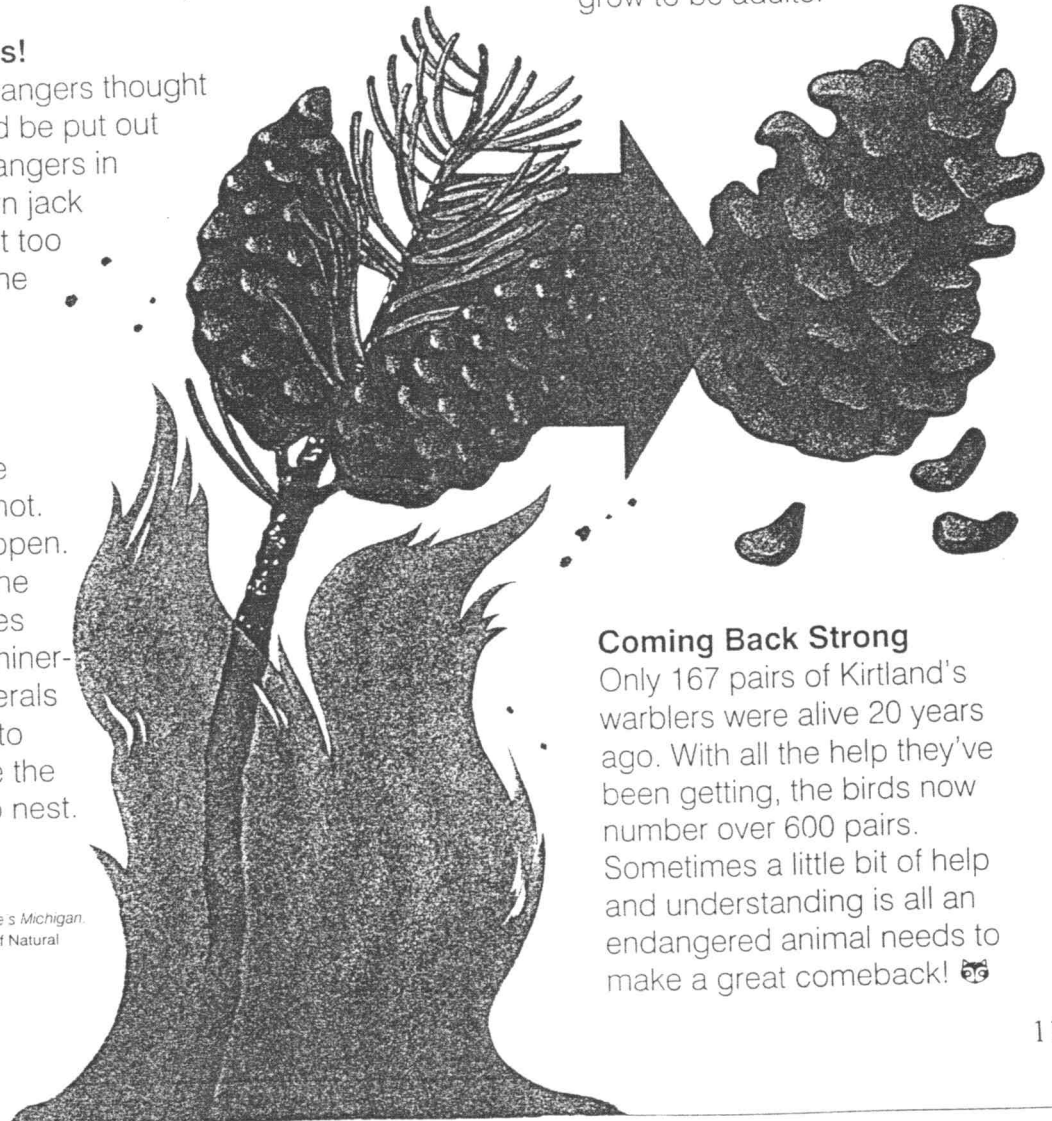
Now forest rangers help the warblers by trapping cowbirds and taking them away. Because there are fewer cowbirds around, more young warblers can grow to be adults.

Hooray for Forest Fires!

Many years ago, forest rangers thought that all forest fires should be put out right away. Now forest rangers in Michigan set fires to burn jack pines when the trees get too tall. The fires get rid of the big, shady trees.

Pop Go the Pine Cones

During a forest fire, pine cones on tall trees get hot. That makes them pop open. Then seeds hidden in the cones fall out. The ashes from the fire also add minerals to the soil. The minerals help the seeds grow into small pines, which give the warblers new places to nest.



Coming Back Strong

Only 167 pairs of Kirtland's warblers were alive 20 years ago. With all the help they've been getting, the birds now number over 600 pairs. Sometimes a little bit of help and understanding is all an endangered animal needs to make a great comeback! 🐦

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DRAWINGS BY PIDGEON