



U.S. Forest Service/RON AUSTING

The Kirtland's warbler is the focus of the Kirtland's Warbler Festival, which runs through June 19. The event includes an annual census of the bird.

Fans help count Kirtland's warbler

Associated Press

MIO — Pushing past thick stands of jack pine on a cool, clear morning, biologist Rex Ennis suddenly halts. Cupping an ear, he strains to hear the melodious chirp of the endangered Kirtland's warbler.

He notes the warbler's approximate location on a map, then resumes his trek through a rolling swath of the Huron National Forest. This is the heart of Kirtland's country, the last refuge on Earth for the half-ounce, yellow-breasted songbird.

As of last year, fewer than 1,000 were known to exist — all within an eight-county area of Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula. They migrate to the Bahamas each winter.

Ennis, of the U.S. Forest Service, was among several dozen biologists and volunteers who fanned out Friday for the last day of the annual Kirtland's census.

It is part of a nearly 20-year effort to save the warbler — an effort that has united interests often at each other's throats: environmentalists, the timber industry and government regulators.