



Michigan Audubon Society

PRESS RELEASE

7000 N. Westnedge
Kalamazoo, Michigan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAVE THE WARBLERS

FUND DRIVE STARTED

An Alarming decrease in Michigan's Kirtland's Warbler population last year will require intensified efforts in 1975 and 1976 to protect this rare bird from extinction, according to the Michigan Audubon Society.

The Kirtland's Warbler (also known as the Jack-Pine Warbler) nests only in Jack-Pines of a certain height and density and only in a few counties of northern Lower Peninsula.

The effort to preserve this rare warbler has involved cooperation between Michigan Audubon Society and other conservation groups, the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Agriculture and Michigan's Department of Natural Resources.

"The Jack-Pine Warbler population decreased significantly in 1974 down to approximately 354 adult birds, a 23% decrease from 1973", said Robert A. Bradburn, President of Michigan Audubon Society. "The MAS, therefore, is spearheading a campaign to raise \$3,500 in the next six months to provide safe and suitable habitat so that an adequate breeding population will be assured." Funds are expended for construction of traps for removal of cowbirds from the nesting area (cowbirds lay their eggs in the Kirtland's Warbler nests), and the employment of a naturalist during the summer months to assist in making the public aware of the birds plight and help control unauthorized human intrusion into the nesting area.

Mr. Bradburn asked that contributions be sent to the Kirtland's Warbler Fund, Michigan Audubon Society, 7000 N. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007. Checks should be made out to Michigan Audubon Society. The donations are tax-deductible. For those who wish photographs of this endangered species, the MAS has prepared two sets of 35 mm color slides (five slides per set), available by mail for \$2.50 for both sets. (Single sets sold only in over the counter sales.) Also, a color motion picture is available for

in superb color and sound. For slides or film reservation, write the MAS office,
1. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

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natural conditions, the bird's habitat results from forest fires. So, one of
dramatic aspects of the management program has been controlled burning. The Kirtland's
warbler requires a habitat of small jack pines, about 6 to 13 feet tall, with numerous
limbs to keep the lower limbs exposed to sunlight. The lower limbs thus stay alive and
lead down to the thick ground cover in which the nests are built. When the trees get too
large the birds do not nest.

When the timber is harvested. Then a controlled burn clears the land. And this burning
is the key to the regeneration of the area because intense heat is needed to pop open the
pinecones and scatter the seeds from which the new trees grow and thus provide new
nesting sites. Habitat also has been created by direct planting.

The adult male is bluish-gray above with a striking lemon-yellow breast. The song has
been described as "the most beautiful of any warbler... wild and clear."

The bird was first collected in 1851, on the farm of a naturalist, Dr. Jared P. Kirtland,
in Cheverus, Ohio. Subsequently, it was learned that it winters in the Bahamas. But
no one knew where the Warbler nested until 1903, when the nesting area was discovered
on Michigan's AuSable River by a pair of trout fishermen.

The major threat threatening the Warbler is the Brown-headed Cowbird, which doesn't build
a nest of its own but removes eggs from Warbler nests and leaves her own to be
incubated. One facet of the Warbler survival program thus involves trapping and removing
cowbirds from the area. The birds must also be assured of relative privacy and pro-
tection from human intrusion during the breeding season.