

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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*Seven*  
~~FOUR~~ PERCENT INCREASE  
IN KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

LANSING--The world's population of the Kirtland's Warbler, a rare songbird found almost exclusively in northern lower Michigan, is on the increase the Department of Natural Resources reports.

A 1979 census of the endangered warbler, just completed, found a total of ~~211~~ <sup>211</sup> males, ~~seven~~ <sup>14</sup> more than was found last year. Assuming an equal number of females, the total breeding population would be just over ~~400~~ <sup>420</sup>.

"We are enthusiastic that the birds seem to be on the increase," says Larry Rye, DNR Surveys and Statistical Services Chief.

Rye notes that this year's total is a ~~four~~ <sup>seven</sup> percent increase over the average population during the last eight years. He cautions, though, against becoming too optimistic.

"There is still a lot of work that must be done to improve future population trends," he explains.

Part of that work is being done this summer by the DNR through prescribed burning of state forest lands. The Kirtland's Warbler prefers young jack pine stands for nesting sites, but modern forest fire control has allowed the trees to mature and has prevented the creation of new areas.

Fire is important to the warbler since it creates the heat necessary to open the cones so seeds may be released. The fire also removes plant competitors and creates a bed of ash ideal for seed germination.

(more)

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"The DNR hopes to burn a total of 2,000 acres this year for warbler habitat," Ryel says.

This year's census found 203 males in six northern lower Michigan counties.

"The largest increase in warblers was found in Oscoda County, which had nine more males than last year," he says.

The 1979 counts by county were: Crawford ~~68~~<sup>71</sup>, Oscoda 71, Ogemaw 40, Kalkaska 21, Iosco 1, and Roscommon 2.

One warbler was found outside of Michigan in Jackson County, Wisconsin.

Participating in this year's census, which was conducted under the general direction of Ryel, were personnel from both the Michigan and Wisconsin DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, University of Toronto, and interested members of the public.

The Kirtland's Warbler, which returns to Michigan each May from its winter retreat in the Bahamas, is officially listed as an endangered species by both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DNR.

A recovery team for the warbler, appointed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and under the direction of John Byelich, a retired DNR wildlife biologist, is preparing a plan for the recovery of the endangered bird.

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