

Hill

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18 June 82

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LANSING---The annual DNR census of Michigan's Kirtland's warblers records a total of 200 singing male birds, a drop of 14 percent from the 232 count in 1981.

Biologists estimate the total number of the tiny endangered birds, native to Michigan, at 400, based on the assumption that a female warbler is present for every singing male. Numbers of the warblers have varied from a low of 167 pairs counted in 1974 to 432 pairs in 1951 and 502 pairs in 1961.

The annual census-taking is a cooperative venture of the Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and local Audubon Societies. Dr. Lawrence A. Rye1 of DNR Wildlife Division coordinates the annual census.

While the census search covers jack pine stands in the Upper Peninsula and Wisconsin, Kirtland's warbler singing males have been located in only six northeastern Michigan counties - Crawford (61), Oscoda (72), Ogemaw (44), Kalkaska (17), Roscommon (5) and Iosco (1).

A special Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team, headed by retired DNR biologist John Byelich, works for preservation of the warbler species and for long-term increase of the bird population up to 1,000 pairs. The team project includes forest management clearcutting to provide suitable jack pine habitat, predator control and protection of the birds' privacy during the nesting season.

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