

# Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*)

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This fact sheet is not for official taxonomic identification or species location purposes. It is intended to help landowners become aware of federally designated and protected species.

The list of federally protected species categorized as endangered or threatened is always changing. What is endangered in one geographic location may not be endangered in another. For more information, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Endangered Species, 452 ARLSQ, Washington, DC 20240. Your state natural resource organization also maintains lists of state protected species.

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## **Bird Group**

## **Description**

Kirtland's warbler is the only gray-backed warbler in the eastern United States that wags its tail. This small songbird is about 4.75 inches long (12 cm) with a black-streaked back that extends onto the yellow underside. A white ring circles the eye.



Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*)

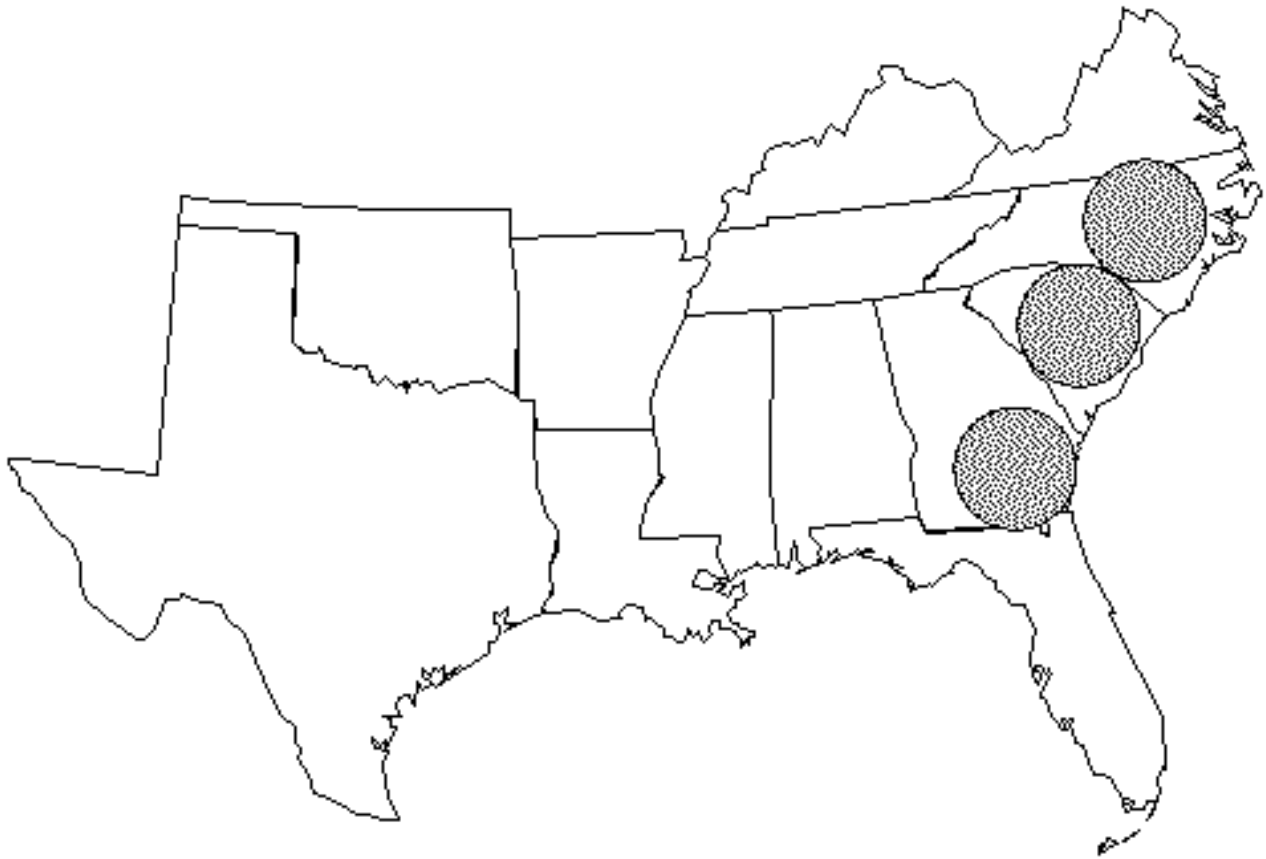
## Habits and Habitat

Despite efforts at management, the population has increased little. The bird selects certain areas for nesting and rejects others that seem similar. It nests only in stands of young jack pine between three and 15 feet tall that have regenerated after a fire. The warbler also likes tracts that are 80 acres or larger. They also require a poor sandy soil that is extremely porous: The rainwater drains away quickly and does not flood the nesting area.

The last few hundred pairs of Kirtland's warblers migrate through the Southeast along the coast on their way to wintering grounds in the pine forests of the Bahamas. These pine forests have been substantially reduced by logging.

The brown-headed cowbird, a species of blackbird, is a major threat because it lays its eggs in the Kirtland's warbler nests. Then the cowbird's nestlings out-compete those of the Kirtland's warbler.

The species has also suffered from forest fire control and forest management, which replaced jack pines with red pines or hardwood.



General Location of Species

## Why Protect Endangered Species?

Many Americans – and their elected representatives – feel natural resource use and ownership carry responsibilities as well as privileges. Conserving endangered species is part of that responsibility.

### **Endangered species are part of our land ethic.**

Land managers make decisions critical to the future of their land, its living and non-living resources, and its productivity. But, over the long run, these private land values have been considered common property.

### **Endangered species are part of life.**

We have only a limited number of available species, or gene combinations. Genetic materials from wild, living things are now used to revitalize species that have been domesticated for centuries.

### **Endangered species are environmental monitors.**

The loss of biodiversity can harm our own life in ways that may be hard to determine. Accelerating extinction rates are a powerful message that ecosystems surrounding us are being severely damaged.

## **Endangered species are valuable.**

Benefits of species preservation include opportunities for improved crop production through crossbreeding with related wild species or new medicines and industrial chemicals from substances found naturally only in the wild. Biodiversity is becoming economically valuable.

## **Endangered species are protected by law.**

Under current legislation and regulations, harming and harassing an endangered plant or animal, destroying its critical habitat, or ignoring pesticide label instructions, can carry severe penalties.

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