



Wisconsin Kirtland's Warbler 2010 Season Summary

The following is a brief summary of Kirtland's warbler activities in Wisconsin in 2010. Planning and coordination for these activities were conducted by Joel Trick of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Kim Grveles of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

MONITORING

Adams County

In 2010 Nick Walton served as our primary monitor at the Adams County sites where Kirtland's warblers nested for the past three years. Nick monitored these sites between May 10 and July 16, with the first Kirtland's warbler males observed on May 10, and new arrivals increasing this total to at least 16 males by the end of May, with a peak count for the season of 19 males.

The first female was observed on May 18, and a total of 10 females were eventually found during the season. We hired Paul Schilke as a second monitor who began work in early June. Paul monitored a number of sites around the state, including our satellite Adams County site where we documented a pair nesting in 2009. Paul found a pair of Kirtland's warblers at this site again in 2010, and they again nested successfully.

For the 2010 breeding season, we documented a total of 20 male and 11 female Kirtland's warblers in Adams County. Surprisingly, all 10 of the color-banded males that were present in Adams County last year returned in 2010. We recorded 16 Kirtland's warbler nesting attempts in



Adams County in 2010, including at least 5 renesting attempts. This year we had at least 6 nests that were victims of parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds, and another 6 nests were lost to predation. Due to an extended season and multiple renesting attempts, several nests were either still active when our monitoring ended or not able to be closely monitored as they approached the time of fledging. This resulted in our not being able to confirm the outcome of all nests. We estimate that 12 to 18 young Kirtland's warblers fledged from 3 to 5 nests in Adams County in 2010.

This Kirtland's warbler male that was originally banded in the Bahamas in 2008 has been present at the Adams County nesting site each of the past three years. June 7, 2008 photo.

Marinette County

Volunteer Jack Swelstad again found a single Kirtland's warbler male at the same Marinette County site where he documented nesting in 2009. Paul subsequently observed this bird with a female, though was unable to confirm any nesting activity. A single Kirtland's warbler male was also reported at another site where birds were found in 2008 and 2009, and three males were reported at a third site. However, we were unable to find any of these other birds in the follow-up site visits we conducted.

Bayfield County

A single Kirtland's warbler male was discovered by photographer Robert Royse on Bayfield County Forest land in early June, and a follow-up site visit by DNR wildlife biologist Steve LaValley detected a second male plus a female. Subsequent site visits by Paul failed to find more than a single male, hence we were unable to confirm any nesting activity. This area has an abundance of apparently suitable habitat, so we will be watching it closely next year.



Douglas County

Steve LaValley reported a single Kirtland's warbler male in Douglas County on the same date he saw birds in Bayfield County. However, again the follow-up visit by Paul failed to detect any birds.

Male Kirtland's warbler discovered in Bayfield County, June 6, 2010. Photo by Robert Royse (<http://www.roysephotos.com>)

Washburn County

In early July, we received a credible but belated report from a private landowner of a male Kirtland's warbler that he observed in appropriate habitat on his property on May 14 and 15. Based upon his detailed description, this observation was accepted as a confirmed sighting.

SUMMARY

In 2010, we documented a minimum of 24 male and 13 female Kirtland's warblers present in Wisconsin. Of a total of 16 recorded nesting attempts, 3 to 5 nests were successful, fledging an estimated 12 to 18 young.

COWBIRD TRAPPING

A total of three brown-headed cowbird traps were installed by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) -Wildlife Services at the Adams County nesting sites, and operated from April 19 through June 18. USDA Wildlife Specialist Barry Benson again operated the traps, capturing 151 males and 65 females, for a grand total of 216 cowbirds removed from the site in 2010.

BANDING

Adams County

Banding operations in Wisconsin were again led by retired FWS biologist Ron Refsnider. On May 27 we successfully captured and banded each of the eight unbanded males present at the site. Prior to the season, we had formulated a plan to carefully band nestlings at several nests prior to fledging, in an effort to determine how many locally-produced birds may return to the site to nest in subsequent years. However, we decided to abandon this plan because of the additional risks it would pose to the limited number of birds produced this year. We plan to pursue the banding of nestlings in the future, provided there is adequate production of young to justify the effort.



Retired FWS Biologist Ron Refsnider removes captured Kirtland's warbler from mist net. Adams County, WI May 27, 2010.

Marinette County

On June 7 we visited the three sites in Marinette County where birds had been reported, but were able to find only one of these birds, which we successfully captured and banded.

SUMMARY

A total of nine male Kirtland's warblers were captured and banded in 2010, eight in Adams County and one in Marinette County. Notably, all 10 banded males present in Adams County in 2009 returned in 2010, including one individual that had been originally banded in the Bahamas.

STATEWIDE SURVEYS

A statewide survey of potentially suitable Kirtland's warbler habitat was conducted between 15 May and 15 June by 29 volunteers plus agency staff in 8 Counties (Washburn, Douglas, Bayfield, Vilas, Oneida, Marinette, Adams, and Jackson). During the surveys, singing males were found at three sites in Marinette County, at the second breeding site in Adams County, and at one site in Douglas County. In Jackson County, staff possibly heard a male singing, but this observation could not be confirmed.

Including males located at the main breeding site in Adams County, Wisconsin's official 2010 count of Kirtland's warblers observed during the June 6-20 census period was 23 singing males distributed as follows: Adams County 18, Marinette County 2, Bayfield County 2, Douglas County 1. Additional birds observed outside of the census period include the following: Adams County 2, Marinette County 3, Washburn County 1. One of these additional birds was banded, while the remaining birds were not banded. Because the unbanded birds were observed on various dates in multiple locations, we cannot confirm how many birds were actually present in Wisconsin in addition to the 23 reported for the census period.

FIELD TRIPS

This year for the first time we organized field trips for members of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (NRF). NRF has been our projects' single largest supporter, and we were pleased to be able to offer the opportunity to view Kirtland's warblers to loyal NRF members. We held field trips on May 21 and 22, and between the two days we accommodated approximately 70 participants, all of whom had an opportunity to view a singing male Kirtland's warbler. On the second day, Wisconsin Public Television was also in attendance, filming for a story on Wisconsin Kirtland's warblers to air in October 2010 on the program "In Wisconsin".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our work with Kirtland's warblers in Wisconsin continues to draw great interest and involvement from many people and organizations. Our continued success is a tribute to the many individuals and organizations involved in the project. As has been the case throughout the life of the project, we continue to be dependant upon the critical contributions of our numerous partners.

Plum Creek Timber Company again allowed us to use their lands to conduct monitoring, banding and cowbird trapping, and provided great support and information at our NRF Kirtland's Warbler Field Trip. The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services contributed resources to fund construction and operation of cowbird traps, with the efforts of Wildlife Specialist Barry Benson again proving essential to the nesting success of Wisconsin Kirtland's warblers.

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin provided the bulk of project funding to support Kim Grveles involvement, which included her share of project coordination, public outreach and education, coordination with other DNR programs to promote management of jack pine barrens for Kirtland's warbler, and especially volunteer coordination and organization of statewide surveys. NRF funds also supported Adams County monitoring and banding.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contributed funding through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to help offset the costs of cowbird trap operation, and Endangered Species Act Section 6 funds and Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Grant funds partially funded Kim's involvement in the project. Work in 2010 was also partially funded by a Wisconsin DNR Citizen Based Monitoring Grant.

This year we benefitted from the services of two capable field biologists as Kirtland's warbler monitors, Nick Walton and Paul Schilke. We wish them both the best of luck in future endeavors.

Nancy Livingston again graciously provided lodging for our Kirtland's warbler monitor, and Ron Refsnider contributed his time and expertise to make our color banding efforts a great success. A number of County Forest Administrators provided assistance in identifying potential suitable habitat to survey for Kirtland's warblers. The generous efforts of numerous enthusiastic volunteer birders allowed us to survey for Kirtland's warblers at many Wisconsin sites.

In addition to those named above, individuals contributing to the project in 2010 included volunteers Jack Swelstad, Eric Collins, Jon Motquin, Betsy Bartelt, Matt Welter, Fred and Shelly Bloedorn, Kurt Brownell, Joan and Rich Campbell, Marlene Nelson, Tim Collins, Dan Jackson, Donna DePape, Ingrid Stephans, Ruth and Ray Forsgren, Kirk Hager, Patrick Hager, James McCrady, Joe Palzkill, Paul and Glenna Schwalbe, Karen Siebers, Bruce Steger, Tom Uttech, Troy Walters, Dave Weimiller, John Probst, and Darwin Wile; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff Paul Charland and Rachel Samerdyke, and Wisconsin DNR staff Ryan Brady, Steve LaValley, Tom Prestby, Dave Troester, and Michelle Windsor.