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Conservation of Wildfowl

A first European meeting on Wildfowl Conservation under the sponsorship of the International Wildfowl Research Bureau, International Council for Bird Preservation, International Union of Game Biologists, Conseil International de la Chasse, International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Council of Europe was held in St. Andrews, Scotland, 16th to 18th October 1963. It was attended by a representative gathering of research biologists, naturalists, wildfowlers and administrators from 17 countries.

A large number of papers was contributed dealing with the wildfowl situation in various regions of Europe from which an assessment of gaps in knowledge and qualitative deficiencies in information was made. Other subjects discussed were conservation laws in Europe affecting wildfowl and problems of enforcement and educational and publicity measures. A synopsis of existing wildfowl refuges in Europe was made and plans for further wildfowl refuges to complete a basic network of Europe and the Mediterranean arising out of the MAR Conference were discussed.

Problems and proposals for improved co-operation between European countries on wildfowl conservation, adverse and beneficial developments affecting wildfowl were also dealt with. Seventeen recommendations to various international bodies were made including a proposal for regular meetings on European wildfowl conservation to be held every two or three years.

The meeting in Scotland was organized jointly by the I.W.R.B. and the Nature Conservancy of Great Britain. A report of the proceedings has been published.

Kirtland's Warbler

It is refreshing to have recently received details of a surely unique and in any event quite remarkable, intensive forest-management plan, designed solely to ensure the survival of a very small song bird. The bird concerned is the tiny Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) which breeds only in central Michigan, USA and winters in the Bahama Islands. Censuses carried out in 1951 and 1961 showed that less than 1000 examples of the species remained, and it was found that essential for their breeding and survival were thickets of young jack pine trees, not less than 5 feet and not more than 15 feet in height. It appears that as soon as the trees reach the age at which their lowest branches leave the ground, so do the Kirtland's Warblers leave the area. The US Forest Service have set up the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area, of 4010 acres, in the Huron National Forest, to preserve the nesting habitat of this rare little bird. Controlled burning, timber harvesting, and special plantings produce the young pine trees required for nesting.

The example set by this remarkable and praiseworthy enterprise is one which could without doubt be emulated in many parts of the world, when urgently needed research has divulged the precise requirements of some of the truly

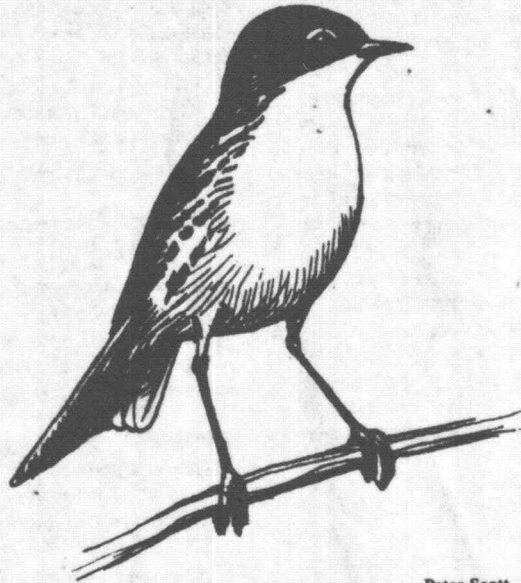
Survival Service Commission

The liaison office of the International Council for Bird Preservation, at the IUCN headquarters, has recently drawn up a check list of birds considered rare or threatened. This list is virtually an index for those bird sheets which will appear in the Red Book of the IUCN's Survival Service Commission. Furthermore, it shows the birds classified according to those five categories decided upon at the most recent meeting of the SSC for all rare creatures, namely:

1. Very rare and believed to be decreasing in numbers.
2. Less rare but believed to be threatened - requires watching.
3. Very rare but believed to be stable or increasing.
4. Status inadequately known - survey required or data sought.
5. Formerly rare but no longer in danger.

The Survival Service Commission is constantly in the position of being anxious to receive up to date information on the distribution and status of rare forms. Not only so that timeous action can be initiated when factual proof of rarity is established, but also so that the various lists can be completed with the symbols which the Commission uses in its indexing. It may be of some general interest to quote these latter, which are:

- "(a)" = full species;
- "(b)" = subspecies;
- "I" = introduced populations believed more numerous than indigenous stock;
- "M" = under active management in a national park or other reserve;
- "P" = legally protected, at least in some part of its range;
- "R" = included because of its restricted range;
- "S" = secrecy still desirable.



Peter Scott

Kirtland's Warbler

The ICBP's rare birds list contains an assemblage of over 300 species and subspecies and although it is inevitable that more will need to be added, and although a very large number is inevitably for the time being in category "4", it is still indicative of a serious situation. In very many areas and countries the destruction of habitat is so rapid and widespread that numbers of some more localized birds pass a point of no return, before it is realized that they have been placed in danger. The list includes many birds for whose steady diminution in population there is little obvious or easy explanation. Perhaps the majority of these are island forms and undoubtedly there is an urgent need for some competent biological investigations at an early date, if many of them are to survive this century.

Oil pollution of the sea

Those concerned with the question of bird 'oiling' will be glad to know that the countries which have accepted the amendments to the 1954 International Convention for the Prevention of the Pollution of the Sea by Waste oil has increased to nine - Canada, France, Liberia, Norway, Poland, Kuwait, Sweden, the United Arab Republic and the United Kingdom. Twenty four Governments have accepted the original convention. At the meeting of the General Assembly of IMCO held in London in October 1963 the need for support of the Convention and the accept-