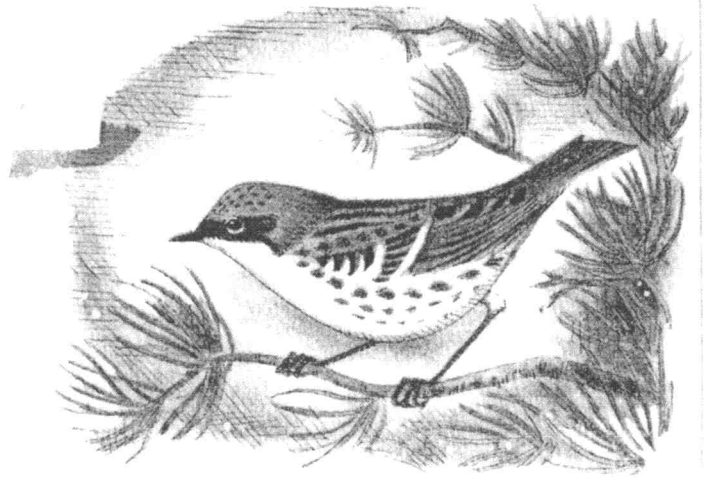


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THE FEDS VS. THE KIRTLAND'S WARBLER



When the Government of the United States, with all its weighty problems and preoccupations, takes to its heart the plight of a little songbird, a rare, yellow-breasted, tail-wagging tunesmith facing eviction from its nesting grounds, the news is well worth cheering. It's like discovering, or being reassured, there really is a Federal soul.

It's a wee broth of a bird, the Kirtland's Warbler. Even has to look up to an English sparrow. But when he begins to sing! With his loud, lively, bubbly tunes, Mr. Warbler will waken anybody or anything within a quarter of a mile. He is the kind of a serenader who enjoys his work and wants to be

heard, and for added emphasis will flick his brownish tail up and down between warblers.

The little fellow was named over one century ago by Spencer F. Baird, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, for his friend, Dr. Jared P. Kirtland, physician, teacher, horticulturist and naturalist, after Dr. Kirtland obtained a specimen of the bird on his farm on the shore of Lake Erie, just outside Cleveland. Dr. Kirtland, a kind of Pied Piper to the animal kingdom, has also had named for him a snake, a mollusk and a fossil plant.

The trouble is that the Kirtland's Warbler appears to be a vanishing species. At last count there were less than 1,000 remaining. They spend the winter in the warm Bahamas, but fly north to breed and nest in just one region, a portion of Michigan's Lower peninsula. The special attraction to them there are groves of scrubby young jack pine trees, beneath which they build their nests of pine needles, fine grasses, strips of bark and weed fiber.

The jack pine, however, is not called a particularly "useful" tree. It is distinct in that only intense heat or scorching fire will release its seeds from the cone. That's how it became widespread years ago, when forest fires swept across the Great Lake States. But in recent years it has been replaced through plantings of sturdier red pine and white pine, the old monarch of the Eastern forests.

But what about the effect on the Kirtland's Warbler? Michigan members of the Audubon Society, staunch champion of American birdlife, became alarmed as they watched the numbers dwindle and heard much more rarely the loud, liquid song in the woods. Together with the Michigan Natural Areas Council, they consulted the state government. It agreed to establish three areas in state forests as warbler refuges. However, it developed that the heart of the warbler nesting ground lies on Federal property, within the 400,000-acre Huron National Forest.

Would the U.S. Forest Service agree to help save the Kirtland's Warbler? Curiously, twenty-five years earlier this agency of the Agriculture Department had worked with the Audubon Society to establish a refuge in the high mountains of California for quite a different kind of vanishing American, the California condor, of whom one hundred now continue the struggle for survival. But unlike the tiny warbler, the magnificent, immense condor is unsurpassed by any bird on the North American continent for the breadth of its wingspread, often extending as much as ten feet from wingtip to wingtip.

The Forest Service was sympathetic to the warbler's plight. So was Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman, an old Lake States bird-watcher in his native Minnesota. One complication was that the Huron National Forest had become noted for its extensive blocks of reforestation, including 10,000 acres of red pine generously donated thirty years ago by the Kiwanis Clubs of Michigan. Besides, the Huron is heavily used—by loggers, campers, hunters, canoeers and fishermen on the Au Sable River. And now, room for the Kirtland's Warbler, too?

"Yes," announced Edward P. Cliff, Chief of the Forest Service, "some where on the land we own in common can be found the space to care for and protect this strange little American bird." Thus, the Forest Service has set aside 4,000 acres, the first plot of land of this size in America to be managed primarily for the propagation of a songbird. Controlled forest fires will be set to release the jack pine and to eliminate competing species. Young trees will be planted, if need be, and older ones cut out.

In the nearby recreation area at Mack Lake, campers may be awakened next summer by the loud arias of the Kirtland's Warbler. To those who love the least and lesser creatures of nature, it will be the sweetest music of the woods.

THE END

What Goes On Here!

WOMAN'S DAY
JANUARY, 1964

Det News
2/2/64

Robin May Get Heave-Ho

By JAMES A. O. CROWE
Detroit News Outdoors Writer

USUALLY IT is easy to go along with the Michigan Audubon Society in its campaigns and programs. It is a lead pipe cinch to approve of its latest.

Officials of the society have asked the Legislature to depose the robin as the official state bird and install in its place the Kirtland's (or Jackpine) warbler.

The robin was declared the official state bird in 1931 following a poll taken throughout the state by the Audubon Society.

The late Mrs. Edith C. Munger, of Hart, who was then president of the society, predicted at the time that the reign

OUTDOORS

of the robin would some day end. A state bird, she said, should be characteristic, not just well known.

Mrs. Munger predicted that a change would be made when nature study became more popular and the people became more familiar with Michigan wildlife.

It's Strictly Michigan's Own

WHEN THE poll was taken 33 years ago, the Kirtland's warbler was almost unknown to the general public of the state.

This is cause for little wonder, because, even today, the bird is one of the most obscure species in the world. One of the reasons for its obscurity is that it is strictly Michigan's own bird. It nests only in a few counties in the northeastern Lower Peninsula.

This beautiful bird, which has one of the most pleasing songs in nature, was not known to exist until 1851. It was spotted in the Cleveland area on its migration flight by a man

named Charles Peace. He shot a male for study and turned the skin over to his father-in-law, Jared P. Kirtland, a naturalist, for whom the bird was eventually named.

It was discovered in 1879 that the strange new warbler, gray above and yellow below, wintered in the Bahamas. For years, its breeding ground was a mystery.

Finally, in 1903, two trout fishermen on the streams of Oscoda and Crawford Counties found nests of an unfam-



JAMES A. O. CROWE

iliar bird in the grass beneath stands of medium sized jackpines. University of Michigan biologists identified the bird as the Kirtland's warbler.

One of the most interesting characteristics of the bird is that it developed as a species that depends on forest fires for its very existence. It will nest only under jackpines of medium size. In nature, these jackpine stands followed soon after naturally started forest fires.

To preserve the birds the U.S. Forest Service and the

Michigan Conservation Department actually start forest fires in their limited range to set up the conditions needed for the bird's continued existence.

It Deserves Special Honors

NOW THAT the shy songster is much better known, Eugene E. Kenaga, current president of the Audubon Society, states that it is "certainly deserving of official honors today."

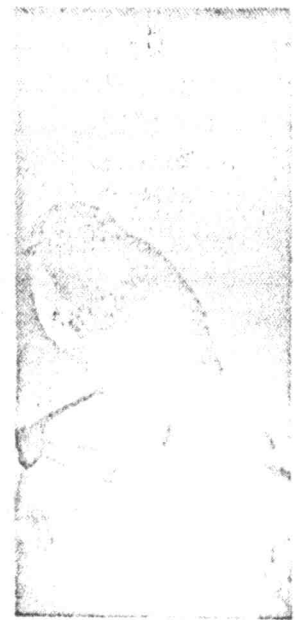
"This colorful little Jackpine Inhabitant," says President Kenaga, of Midland, "nests only in Michigan and nowhere else in the world. Each year thousands of persons visit this state to see and hear and photograph the Kirtland's warbler. The world's only monument to a songbird now stands on the Oscoda County courthouse lawn at Mio.

"Several states have adopted the robin, Connecticut and Wisconsin included. But only Michigan can claim the Kirtland's warbler.

"There are just about 1,000 of these birds in existence, and they have become a symbol of conservation in America. Federal and state agencies, private and local organizations, naturalists and sportsmen, all are working in its behalf.

"No member of Michigan's wildlife family is more unique or more a symbol of our state's wonderful out-of-doors."

We agree.

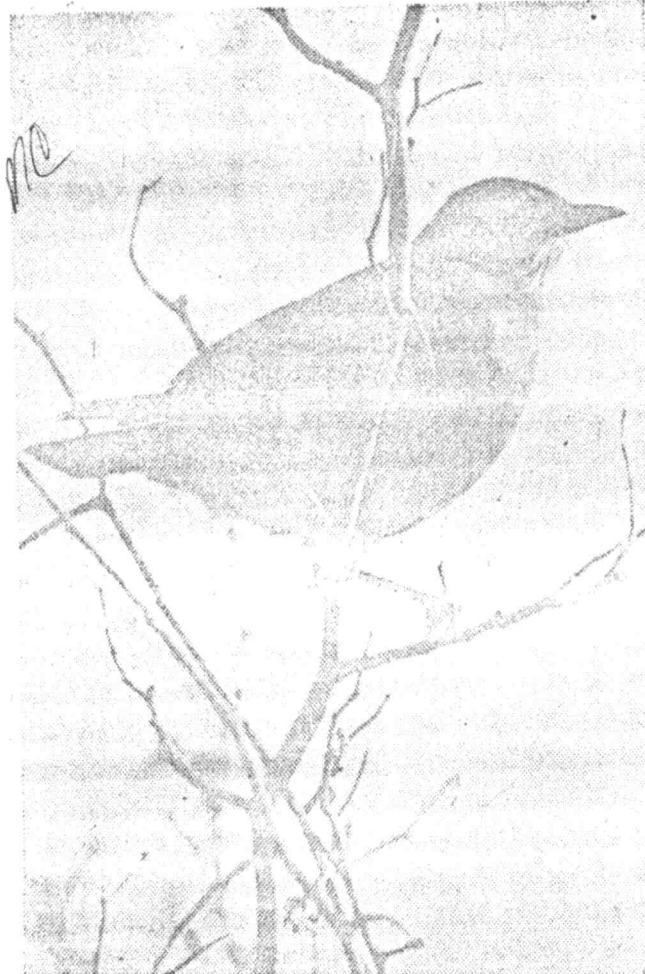


KIRTLAND'S WARBLER
May Replace Robin

DETROIT NEWS
Detroit, Mich.
Feb. 2/64

2/7/64 Orig. & W.O.
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Robin's Friends May Balk



Robin Redbreast, whose reign as "state bird" is being threatened, has held the honor for 33 years

Proposal of the Michigan Audubon Society that the Kirtland's Warbler replace the Robin as Michigan's state bird just might touch off a ruckus.

That possibility was admitted this week by several bird lovers and conservationists, and a hint came from a state representative that "this thing could even have political implications."

The legislator, who asked that he not be quoted ("because I've got troubles enough as it is") reminded that it would be up to the legislature to make the change, if a change is made.

"You can bet on it," he added, "that if a lot of people are heard from for keeping the robin at the top of the list, legislators are going to be wary. All they have to do is think of deer to know how deeply emotionalism can affect public opinion."

Case for the Warbler

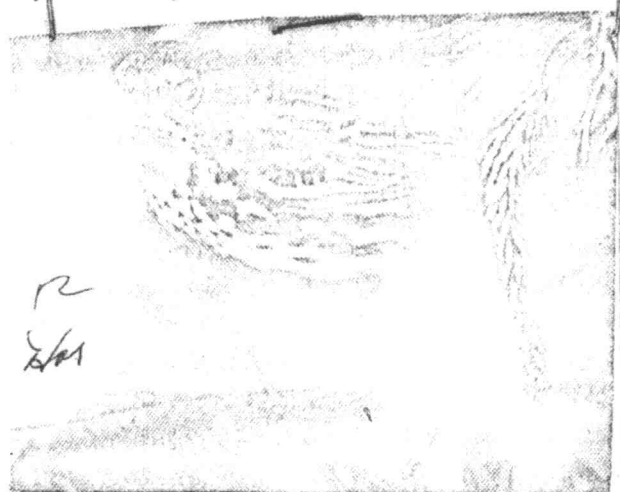
The case for the Kirtland's Warbler as state bird is simple. It is rare. Total estimated population on the continent is 1,000. It nests only in Michigan, and in only a small part of Michigan (northeastern Lower Peninsula) at that. It is a distinctly "Michigan bird." No other state could logically "adopt" it, whereas several other states besides Michigan already regard the Robin as state bird. State and federal agencies have given and are giving its nesting area full protection. A monument to it stands on the Oscoda County courthouse lawn at Mio.

Case for the Robin

The case for the robin is equally simple. It has held "state bird" title since 1931. It is a bird known to everybody and has adapted itself, literally, to life in man's yard. Why, its supporters will ask, should a bird that everybody knows and everybody can see, be "traded," even symbolically, for a bird which few people ever see and even fewer would know if they did see it?

A public opinion poll was taken in 1931, when the Robin was designated "state bird" by the legislature. Approximately 200,000 persons voted for it. Thus far, at least, there has been no hint of a new poll.

Audubon officials recalled that the late Mrs. Edith C. Muger of Hart, who was Audubon president when the Robin was selected, predicted that some day it would be superseded as state bird by a species more characteristic of the state.



The Kirtland's Warbler is proposed as a successor to the robin as Michigan's official "state bird."

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