

THE BAY CITY TIMES
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Kirtland's Birds

Warbler Count Slated in North

LANSING — The third, 10-year census of the world's population of Kirtland's warblers will be held in the Lower Peninsula in early June, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

Under the direction of Harold F. Mayfield of Toledo, Ohio, noted authority on the Kirtland's warbler, the census will cover an area from Ogemaw County north to Presque Isle County and from Lake Huron west to Kalkaska County. Taking part in the work will be wildlife biologists of the Department of Natural Resources and a number of interested naturalists.

The first census, in 1951, revealed a population of 900 warblers. Ten years ago the figure was 1,000. John Byelich, wildlife biologist who is coordinating the department's participation, says he "has a suspicion" the present population may be down from the 1961 figure.

The Kirtland's warbler, sometimes called the Jack Pine Warbler, nests only in Michigan within the area described by this year's cen-

sus. The bird migrates in September and October to its winter home in the Bahama Islands, southeast of Florida. It returns to the Lower Peninsula in late April and early May.

It has been said that ounce for ounce, the Kirtland's warbler has drawn more official interest than any other song bird in history. The world's entire population of Kirtland's warblers would hardly weigh 30 pounds.

The old Michigan Conservation Commission (now the Natural Resources Commission) in 1957 set aside three, four-square-mile tracts in the Lower Peninsula as Kirtland's warbler areas to be managed especially for the tiny birds. In 1962, the National Forest Service established a similar area of 4,000 acres. Total acreage in the state and federal tracts set aside for the bird is 11,690.

Annually bird lovers from about 25 states and several foreign countries visit the areas to watch the sparrow-sized birds and to hear their songs—loudest in the warbler family.

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Warblers go, Michigan acts

A 60 percent decline in the world population of Kirtland's warblers since 1961 has stirred the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources into acting to save the bird from extinction.

The little song bird nests exclusively in the northeast region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Representatives of the U.S. Forest Service and the Michigan Audubon Society are being asked to meet with state biologists. They will attempt to coordinate a plan of action that will, among other things, include efforts to provide maximum nesting cover for the Kirtland's warbler.

Results of a census conducted last June show that Kirtland's warbler numbers have dropped to only about 400 birds since a survey 10 years ago.

The decline came as particularly bad news to DNR wildlife leaders and other inter-

ested parties because they have made a special effort in recent years to preserve and improve the birds' nesting niche in this state.

In 1958, the department of natural resources, with cooperation of the Michigan Audubon Society, set aside three tracts of state-owned jackpine lands in Crawford, Oscoda, and Ogemaw counties for the benefit of Kirtland's warblers.

The Forest Service, in 1963, dedicated a 4,000-acre block of Huron National Forest lands in southeastern Oscoda County for the tiny birds, whose bluish-gray upper markings blend colorfully with their yellow breast.

"We had hoped that would have enabled the birds to at least hold their own, but it's obvious now that we've got to do a whole lot more for Kirtland's warblers," said John Byelich, the department's wildlife biologist who coordinated last June's bird census.

