

What Happened to K.W.?

The startling decrease in the numbers of the Kirtland's Warbler came in for a major examination at the Michigan Audubon Society's 1972 Annual Meeting at Alpena. First censused in 1951, the number counted was duplicated in 1961. The 1971 count, though, revealed a 60% decline in population. Why?

Harold Mayfield, author of "The Kirtland's Warbler," and the first speaker, said "I don't know", but added, "I consider most significant . . . the effect of the Cowbird on the Kirtland's Warbler." Dr. N. L. Cuthbert, of Mount Pleasant, supported this view with evidence gained in seven years of intensive field studies, as did William Irwin of the U. S. Forest Service.

Daniel McGeen, of Pontiac, endeavored to discover the answer by constructing a series of mathematical models. His conclusion was that this is a natural cycling. "I do not believe it is the Cowbird or the host controlling this cycle," he said. "I believe it is the habitat."

Mr. Mayfield introduced four possible explanations for the warbler's decline, and discussed the evidences for each one. He warned that in nature it is seldom correct to find a single cause. "Most problems in biology involve multiple causation," he said. Supporting his belief that the Cowbird was the principle cause of the warbler's decline, he noted that "cowbirds take a toll of the host specie, (but) in the case of the Kirtland's Warbler that toll is virtually unprecedented among all the examples to be found in ornithology." He also cited studies that showed that when cowbirds are deliberately removed from an area, the warblers actually do produce a great many more young than they do when they are left alone.

Of the possibility that the prime habitat had declined, he quoted Norman Woods who in 1903 reported that "the bird doesn't seem to use the nesting ground its got," and said that 1971 observations gave the same impression. A third possibility, that the trouble is in the Bahamas (its wintering ground) was discounted since the habitat there has not changed in 100 years. Answering the question, is this just a low point in a quite normal fluctuation, he said that the cowbird pressures made the bird's normal recovery highly improbable.

Dr. Cuthbert told of research into Cowbird control in the warbler's nesting ground, and described methods

Project Response Grows

Response in dollars to the Kirtland's Warbler Project of the M.A.S. continues to grow. As of late March, gifts of over \$4,000 had been received. In addition, a separate study being made on the bird's wintering grounds — the Bahama Islands — had been financed by contributions.

Gifts to the M.A.S. project have come in all sizes. They have come from individuals, Audubon clubs, other conservation groups, and garden clubs. Gifts have come from children's organizations and from school groups in both elementary and high schools. Not only Michigan residents have contributed, but the mail has also come from Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Canada.

To each who has contributed, Michigan Audubon says a big **Thank You**. (P.S., the project will continue for a long time. Those who haven't yet contributed, or who wish to repeat, still have time to become participants.)

Thank You! To Mr. Bernard W. Baker, the donor of the original tract of the Baker Sanctuary, who recently donated to Michigan Audubon Society about 2,000 nature slides. These have been placed in the Edith Munger Audio-Visual Library, in the Michigan Audubon Library at Central Michigan University.

available for control. He told of two warbler nesting areas studies the same year. On one, with no effort to control the Cowbird population, there was 83% parasitism and only two young warblers produced. In the other area, with Cowbird control, there was 5% parasitism and 60 young warblers. In the first area, two years later and with controls now applied, parasitism dropped from 83% to 6% and 38 warblers were fledged.

Dr. Cuthbert observed that the Kirtland's Warbler is susceptible to heavy parasitism when other birds are not. He said that "most birds are perfectly adjusted to the Cowbird, but the Kirtland's Warbler obviously is not."

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

What is ahead on the Kirtland front? William Irwin, of the U. S. Forest Service, said that plans for the future include an **annual census** of the bird, and an expanded program of information and instructions to visitors to the forest. Land management programs will be improved and expanded, and a program of cowbird trapping will be employed to hold parasitism to a minimum. Photography will be restricted to eliminate this as a pressure against nesting success. Research will be stepped up. This is a cooperative endeavor between the federal and state governments, the Michigan and National Audubon Societies, and other interested persons and groups.

The concensus of the discussion was, that the Cowbird is the pressure that puts the Kirtland's Warbler in danger, that efforts to control the Cowbird population are effective, and that the warbler will come back if given the chance.

New Binocular, 'Scope Prices

Due to the dollar devaluation abroad, and increased domestic costs, prices of most quality binoculars and telescopes have increased, effective March 1, 1972. Those who have Michigan Audubon price lists should discard them, and write for new prices.

Michigan Audubon, as a service to its members and friends, maintains a Binocular Sales Department. The binoculars and telescopes which it sells have all been examined (inside and out), corrected, aligned, tested and shock tested, and carry a guarantee of quality. (Some of the glasses tested never reach the market.) All this assures the purchaser of the quality of those hidden parts which cannot be evaluated by outward observation.

Some examples of the new prices are:

Binoculars

| | | |
|------------------------|--------|----------|
| Bausch and Lomb | 7 x 35 | \$279.76 |
| Grade A, regular focus | 7 x 35 | 109.20 |
| Grade A, Super focus | 7 x 35 | 119.60 |
| Grade A, Super focus | 8 x 40 | 130.00 |
| Grade B, | 7 x 35 | 61.88 |
| Grade B | 8 x 40 | 65.00 |
| Miroptico | 7 x 35 | 35.88 |

Scopes

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|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Balscope Zoom 60 | 166.35 |
| Balscope Sr. plus any eyepiece | 135.15 |
| Bushnell Space Master, reg. eyepiece | 114.92 |
| Sentry (regular eyepiece) | 67.08 |

All items listed above include sales tax. There are many other items available through Michigan Audubon, including accessories and mounts. Write for a complete list.

Michigan Audubon Binocular Sales
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