

Cowbirds, Warblers Don't Mix

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — It's not that the State of Michigan actually dislikes cowbirds, it's just that it likes Kirtland's warblers better.

That's why Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division crews have been pursuing and catching cowbirds for the past year.

The bird snagging resumed this spring and the chasers evidently are getting better. They grabbed 2,000 birds through the first week of June compared to 2,400 in two months in 1972.

The cowbird corraling is the result of the bird's practice of laying its eggs in another bird's nest, often crowding to death more slowly growing baby birds.

Meanwhile, the case of the Kirtland Warbler became serious. A survey last year pegged the population of the tiny songbird at about 450 birds, a drop of almost 60 per cent from 900 in 1961.

Wildlife specialists believe the Kirtland warbler is one of the victims of the Cowbird's "parasitism." If last year's trapping was worthwhile, survival of young warblers should show an increase.

"If the cowbird is, as we believe, a factor limiting perpetuation of the Kirtland's warbler species, we'll see results this year," said John Bevelich, DNR wildlife habitat planner.

Concern for the survival of the species, which return each spring from the Bahama Islands to their northern Michigan nesting grounds, prompted the formation of a special committee from the U.S. Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Michigan Audubon Society and concerned citizens.

Other steps to insure the survival of the warbler include planting young jack pines, a favorite nesting place for the birds, and burning off densely vegetated areas to make room for such planting.

While not specifying the nesting areas in fear of attracting bird watchers who may disturb the warblers, Byelich said a Kalkaska County area is a potential habitat.

This year's Kirtland's warbler survey will be completed at the end of June, he said.

IONIA SENTINEL-STANDARD
1973

