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APR-26-76

Cowbirds hurt Warblers

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will again do battle with brown-headed cowbirds in central Michigan.

An intensive federal trapping program with a predictable capability of capturing 3,500 cowbirds will be put into operation in late April and continue until mid-July.

Among spoilers of Michigan's most cherished values, the pesky cowbirds are second only to the Buckeyes of Ohio State. The vigorous cowbirds have not made life a bowl of roses for birders who revere the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered species parasitized by cowbirds.

There is good reason for Michigan's strong interest in the Kirtland's warbler. The only known nesting colonies of the species in the world are in Michigan, principally in Ogemaw, Oscoda and Crawford counties.

Nesting habits of the female cowbird markedly hinder the survival success of young warblers. The cowbird does not rear its own young.

The cowbird is strictly parasitic. The female deposits her egg, or eggs, in nests of other species.

The Kirtland's warbler population is seriously affected by this, probably because it nests in the jackpine barrens of Michigan, an area not generally inhabited by a wide variety of other birds. In that particular habitat, cowbirds prefer warbler nests.

A female cowbird may even remove eggs from a Kirtland's nest, then lay her own eggs and never return to the nest.

Nearly 80 per cent of warbler eggs in parasitized nests fail to produce fledglings.

The eggs may hatch, but the warblers don't survive because young cowbirds raised by the foster warbler parents are larger and more aggressive in the nest.

Prior to trapping operations, begun in 1972, 86 per cent of warbler nests were parasitized by cowbirds.

Since trapping began, cowbird parasitism has been less than 10 per cent. Despite the annual success in trapping cowbirds, which has resulted in more warblers surviving in the nest, the net result has not produced dramatic increases in the Kirtland's warbler population returning to Michigan each year.

Other factors are involved. Warbler losses probably occur during migration. A shortage of suitable nesting habitat is a critical problem for the diminutive bird.

In 1975, the FWS reported 179 pairs of Kirtland's warblers were identified in Michigan during the nesting season. The relative scarcity has generated undue harassment from birders anxious to see or photograph the rare warbler.

"We appreciate public interest in the Kirtland's warbler, but the enthusiasm and interest must be directed in an orderly manner that is not detrimental to the species," said state biologist William Shake.

Again in 1976, Kirtland's warbler nesting areas will be closed and posted against public entry during the nesting season. "We feel the species needs this added protection to help insure its nesting success," Shake said.

However, the biologist said the Fish and Wildlife Service is not insensitive to the public's interest in the warbler. Authorized guided tours to the nesting areas will be available on a scheduled basis from Grayling and Mio, at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily, starting May 15.

The Grayling tour, conducted in cooperation with the Michigan Audubon Society, will operate seven days a week, but will end July 10. The Mio tour will be conducted through July 24, but will not be available on Wednesdays.

The Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that all errand tours to minimize the



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HOUGHTON, MI
DAILY MINING GAZETTE

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To trap cowbirds to help Warbler

TWIN CITIES, MINN. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will again do battle with brown-headed cowbirds in central Michigan.

An intensive federal trapping program with a predictable capability of capturing an estimated 3,500 cowbirds will be put into operation in late April and continue until mid-July, according to Jack Hemphill, FWS regional director.

Among spoilers of Michigan's most cherished values, the pesky cowbirds, it seems, are second only to the Buckeyes of Ohio State. The vigorous cowbirds have not made life a bowl of roses for birders who revere the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered species parasitized by cowbirds.

Nesting habits of the female cowbird markedly hinder the survival success of young warblers. The cowbird does not rear its own young, says wildlife biologist in charge of the trapping operation to reduce cowbird parasitism.

"The cowbird is strictly parasitic," Jones said.



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BAY CITY, MI

TIMES

E-42,160 S-44,390

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FWS Again Wars on Cowbird

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will again do battle with brown-headed cowbirds in Northeastern Michigan.

An intensive federal trapping program with a predictable capability of capturing an estimated 3,500 cowbirds will be put into operation in late April and continue until mid-July, according to Jack Hemphill, FWS regional director in twin Cities, Minn.

Among spoilers of Michigan's most cherished values, the pesky cowbirds, it seems, are second only to the Buckeyes of Ohio State. The vigorous cowbirds have not made life a bowl of roses for birders who revere the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered species parasitized by cowbirds.

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Nesting habits of the female cowbird

markedly hinder the survival success of young warblers. The cowbird does not rear its own young, says Wesley Jones, senior staff wildlife biologist in charge of the trapping operation to reduce cowbird parasitism.

"The cowbird is strictly parasitic," Jones said. "The female deposits her

egg—or eggs—in nests of other species.

"The Kirtland's warbler population is seriously affected by this, probably because it nests in the jackpine barrens of Michigan—an area not generally inhabited by a wide variety of other birds. In this particular habitat,

