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## Rare Kirtland's Warbler Gets New Lease On Life

CADILLAC (UPI) -- A bird threatened with extinction might have a new lease on life as a result of operation "Pop Cone."

Pop Cone was a burn-off of a forested area to preserve the habitat of the Kirtland's warbler. Forest Supervisor Louis A. Pommerening, head of the Huron-Manistee National Forest, described the operation a success.

The warbler nests in limited areas, principally around the Huron National Forest at Mio. Less than 1,000 of the small, lemon-breasted song birds remain in existence.

The Kirtland's warbler is the bird that created a debate in the legislature April 20 when a move was initiated to make it the official state bird. Leaders in the fight were the Michigan Audubon Society and other conservation organizations. The matter was tabled in a committee.

The burn-off served two purposes. It generated heat to open the cone of jack pine trees—the only ones in which the birds nest—and it served as a training program for firefighters.

The blaze jumped across the

area previously had been harvested for pulpwood and the remaining slashings on the square mile area posed fire hazard.

Forest Biologists describe the jack pine cone as "an unusual type." They say it will stay closed for years unless enough heat is generated to open the cones in sufficient numbers for seeds to drop.

"Prescribed burning for the natural regeneration of jack pine gets rid of slash and provides sufficient heat to pop the cones. Millions of seeds are necessary to produce a jack pine stand," Pommerening said.

Kirtland's warblers nest only in new jack pine areas, building nests on the ground in thickets of young trees. When the pine gets too large, the warbler looks for a new habitat.

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## Kirtland's Warbler Wins In 'Operation Pop Cone'

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The burn-off served two purposes. It generated heat to open the cone of jack pine trees—the only ones in which the birds nest—and it served as a training program for firefighters.

The blaze jumped across the fire lane at the beginning of the program but immediately was brought under control without damaging adjoining forested areas.

The jack pine timber in the

area previously had been harvested for pulpwood and the remaining slashings on the square mile area posed fire hazard.

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A new gelled water chemical was dropped from aircraft and a dry chemical was blown on ground areas to test materials and methods of fire control. Several new pieces of mechanized equipment were used to build fire lanes and control spot fires.

The Huron National Forest is on the eastern side of the Lower Peninsula. The Manistee National Forest is on the western side and between them, they include about 870,000 acres of federally owned lands.