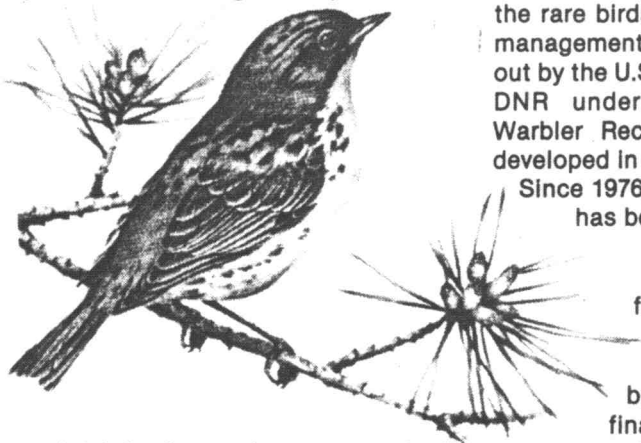


Warbler Habitat Work Results In New Hope

State and federal wildlife biologists see new hope for the world's pint-sized population of Kirtland's warblers in their exclusive nesting grounds in northeastern Lower Michigan. This endangered species is



maintaining its numbers as a result of special habitat work which began in the late 1970s.

Over 200 singing male warblers were identified in special management areas in that part of the State, which indicates that nesting conditions are favorable for a larger share of the tiny, yellow-breasted songbirds.

This year's census was conducted in Kirtland's warbler "Country" by the DNR, the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with key support from citizen volunteers.

The Mack Lake and Bald Hill areas make up the bulk of more than 15,000 acres of jack pine cover which is

becoming the warblers' prime habitat. In addition to these larger areas, smaller management tracts, embracing several thousand acres in northeastern Lower Michigan are growing into choice nesting areas for the rare birds. Habitat work in these management areas has been carried out by the U.S. Forest Service and the DNR under the joint Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan which was developed in the late 1970s.

Since 1976, the U.S. Forest Service has been setting the stage for current production of new nesting habitat by first cutting older growth jack pine stands, then conducting controlled burns in those areas, and finally planting the cut and

burned lands with young jack pines. "The results of this work are apparent in June's annual census of singing male warblers," reports **Bill Irvine**, wildlife biologist for the Huron-Manistee National Forests.

The DNR's efforts under the Recovery Plan were hindered early on due to budget problems, but since 1980 have covered 800-1,000 acres annually. For the most part, the DNR has focused its work on jack-pine plantings. Commercial timber cuttings and prescribed burns have also figured prominently in the DNR's habitat management efforts which, in 1985, amounted to \$190,000 worth of

work. Of that total, some \$18,000 was used from Michigan's Nongame Wildlife Fund to earn \$172,000 in federal matching monies to cost share the DNR's habitat improvement efforts.

Under that work, Montmorency, Otsego and Clare counties will be ready to re-enter the nesting picture for Kirtland's warblers starting next year. "Those counties once had nesting populations of the birds, and we hope our jack pine plantings on state lands in recent years will pay off there with the return of warblers," explains **Jerry Weinrich**, DNR biologist from the Houghton Lake Wildlife Research Station.

Weinrich looks for Crawford and Oscoda counties to continue as Michigan's major nesting grounds for Kirtland's warblers over the next few years, though he sees a growing shift in nesting to the new habitat being created under the management plan.

The new warblers represent an increase of about 50 percent over its recorded nesting number of 1985.

The Recovery Plan is aimed at rebuilding the birds' nesting population to 1,000 pairs. According to experts, that is the minimum level needed to stave off possible extinction of this endangered species.

State and federal experts and private citizens, including notable ornithologists, make up a special recovery team that puts the Plan into action. Members of the team were appointed by the federal government.

Speaking for state and federal interests, Weinrich observes, "We still have a lot of ground to cover in our combined management work, but we have started to turn the corner in terms of bringing into rotation more than enough new nesting habitat to offset the loss of older nesting territories."

Government Selling Mustangs, Burros

The U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is appealing to the Michigan public to adopt some wild horses and burros. To solve overpopulation of the animals on public rangelands in the West, the BLM is rounding up the excess animals and shipping them to other states for new homes.

In Michigan, a temporary "adoption center" for 150 young mustangs and 75 wild burros will be held in Battle Creek August 15 through 17. The

animals are up for adoption at a fee of \$125. per horse and \$75. per burro, which helps cover the costs of round-up and veterinary care. People who promise to give good homes to the animals may apply for as many as four.

Applications and information are available from BLM Milwaukee District Office, P.O. Box 631, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-0631, phone 414-291-4400.