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EPA joins effort to save warbler

K. Manor warbler journal
 Houghton Lake Letter 8/8/91 5-2 p. 7

Restrictions on pesticide use in and near Kirtland's warbler habitat in Roscommon County may be imposed soon as part of the effort to save the endangered bird species. While the pesticide limitations are not yet law, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is asking residents of northeast, southwest and northwest portions of the county (see map) to voluntarily comply with them.

Proposed regulations would restrict use of aminocarb, fenitrothion, methyl parathion and trichlorides would be banned within 100 yards of habitat areas and ground application within 20 yards. Kirtland's warbler habitat areas are stands of jack pine, four to 20 feet tall. Limitations do not apply to isolated jack pine stands of less than 40 acres.

The EPA, which plans to put the regulations into force later this

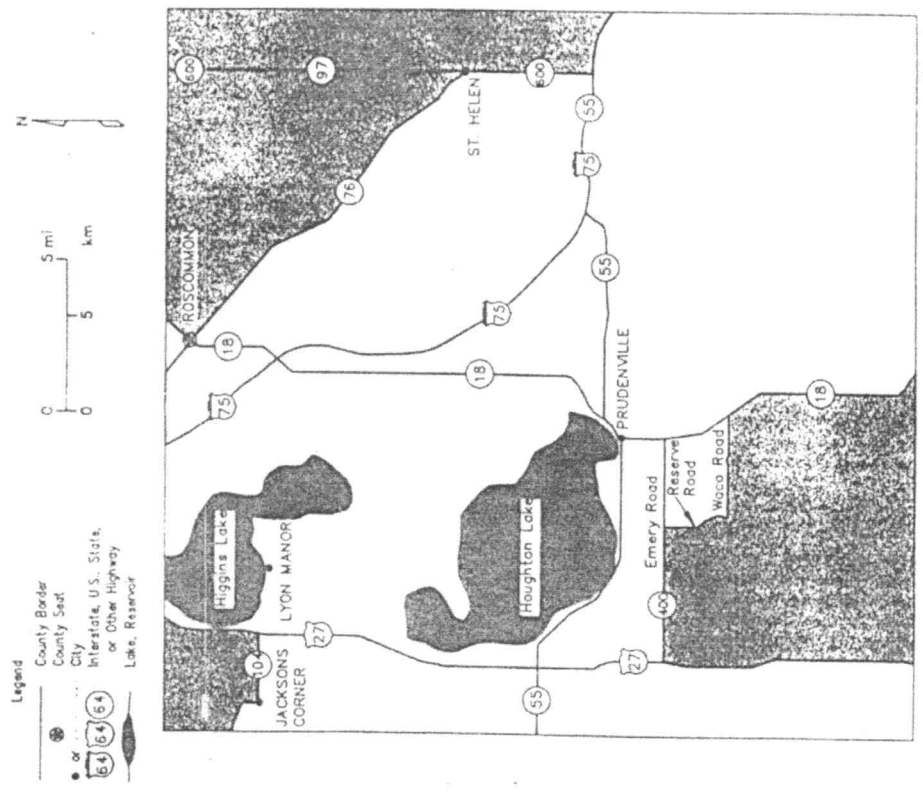
year, is inviting comments on how the rules would affect residents. Comments may be submitted to Interim Endangered Species Protection Program (H7506C), Public Docket and Information Section, U.S. EPA, 410 M St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20460.

Kirtland's warblers nest only in jack pine stands between five and 20 feet in height and at least 80 acres in area. The tiny songbirds nest on the ground under low jack pine branches. The warbler's finicky nesting habits and other natural factors limit the population to about 400 birds. Improved forest fire control, which has curtailed jack pine regeneration and invasion of warbler nests by cowbirds resulted in declining numbers before habitat improvement efforts began in the last few decades.

Biologists speculate drought, logging, hurricanes and pesticides

in the warbler's winter home in the Caribbean may also be detrimental to the birds. Surveys show 800 to 900 birds go south each fall, but only about 400 can be found in Roscommon County, Michigan

Michigan the following June. The 15-year-old Kirtland's warbler recovery plan has a goal of establishing a self-sustaining population of 1,000 pairs of warblers.



Shading Key
 Kirtland's warbler (wood) *Dendroica kirtlandi*. Within the shaded area shown on the map, habitat consists of stands of jack pine 4-20 feet tall (approx. 8-25 years old). Limitations do not apply to isolated stands of jack pine less than 40 acres large. If you are within the shaded area, follow the instructions in the pesticide table or contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (517) 337-6650. The Fish and Wildlife Service will need to know the location and perhaps other details of your application site, as well as the product's active

Warbler numbers leap in '91

Roscommon Co. Herald/News 7-28-91 p. 2
 The 1991 count of the endangered Kirtland's warbler has shown the bird's largest population increase in 10 years.

A total of 347 singing males were located in six Michigan counties, along with one warbler in Wisconsin. This represents a 31 percent increase from 1990 and the largest count since 502 singing males were found in 1961.

"We believe this is a good sign for continued recovery of the Kirtland's warbler population," said Department of Natural Resources Director Helbert Rector.

The 1.3 million trees that were

of warblers in each for 1991 are: Alcona - 7; Crawford - 65; Kalkaska - 7; Ogemaw - 17; Oscoda - 226; and Roscommon - 7.

Crawford and Oscoda Counties account for 84 percent of the birds. Sixty percent of the total are in an area in Oscoda County that was burned in 1980, known as the Mack Lake burn.

The survey is done each year during a 10-day period in the first two weeks of June. The 1991 survey was a joint effort with the Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Michigan Department of Military Affairs, and

USFS tours go in search of rare bird in Mack Lake area

People from around the world will soon be searching out the rare Kirtland's warbler, their travels leading them to Oscoda County, one of the very few places the bird can be seen. With a world population of only 266 birds, the Kirtland's warbler is listed as an endangered species.

Of the population one bird was found in Wisconsin, the other 265 nest in Michigan.

The Mack Lake area, in Oscoda County, is summer home to 159 of the Kirtland's warblers.

Kirtland's warblers begin arriving in northern Michigan in the first two weeks of May from their winter range in the Bahamas.

While the Kirtland's is a big attraction to bird watchers and casual observers, getting to see the bird is not just a lucky walk in the woods. Between May 1 and Labor Day the Kirtland's nesting areas in state and national forests are closed to public entry, except by authorized guided tours.

In the Mack Lake area those tours are guided by Doug Munson out of the United States Forest Service Mio district office.

Tours are also given through the Grayling Department of Natural Resources field office in Crawford County.

Munson has been leading hopeful birdwatchers to Kirtland's warblers

for 10 years.

He averages 300-400 people a tour season, which runs May 15-July 6.

"They come from all over the world, but mostly from the States, Canada and England," Munson said. "A lot of people are repeats, and that gets kind of neat to see them every year."

Munson has also taken birdwatchers from China, Japan and Sweden to view the Mack Lake birds.

"There are travel books with different birding spots listed," Munson said. "People plan their vacations around going to all these different areas."

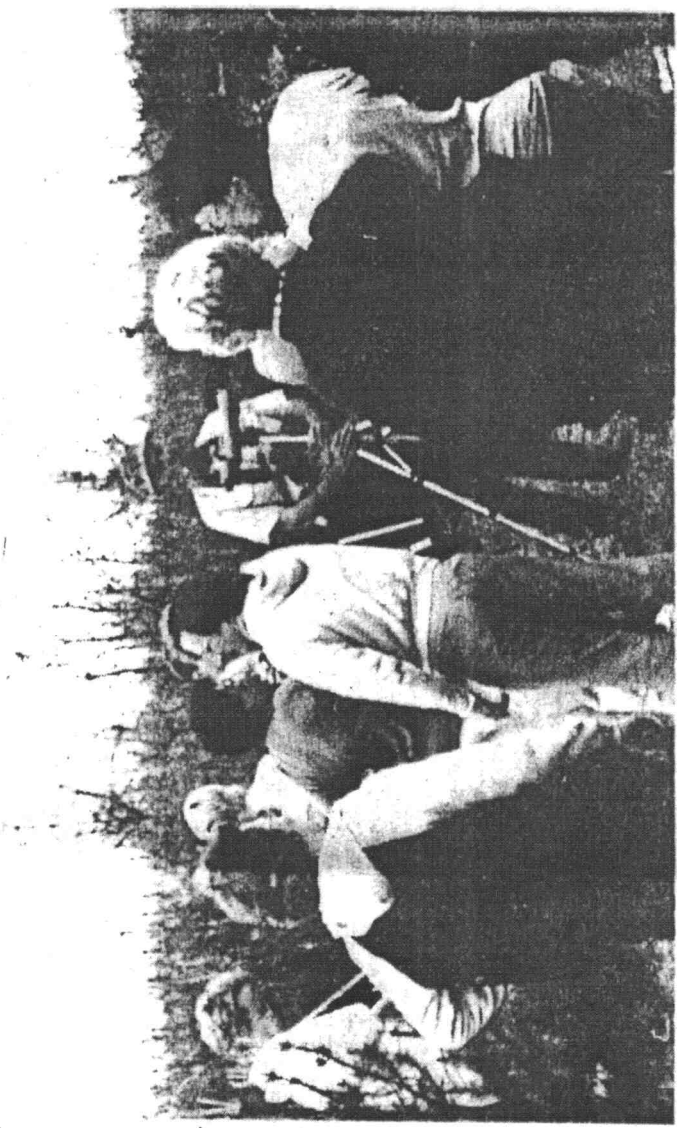
Munson said that in the 10 years he has been leading groups, very few of Oscoda County's local residents have went in search of the Kirtland's warbler.

The Mack Lake tours run from Wednesday to Sunday at 7:30 a.m.

Tours are also given at 11 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The tours begin with a short presentation at the Forest Service office about the Kirtland's warbler, including a short film.

"The orientation lets people know what to expect and how to act, but it's also a chance for the people to relax a little bit," Munson said. "A lot of people come a long way and they're all hyped up."



Doug Munson has guided people to the Kirtland's Warbler for 10 years and has only been skunked a few times. Bird watchers come from around the globe to see the bird.

The birdwatchers then load into their cars and travel to the Mack Lake area for two or three hours.

Munson, who also is required to get a permit to enter the restricted area, leads the group armed with binoculars and spotting scopes down forest roads and old logging trails, listening and watching for the bird.

The tour averages a very slow quarter mile walk, but probably more time is spent standing still and listening.

The Kirtland's warbler's patrols its 8-10 acres of young jack pine forested territory.

The bird patrols its ground regularly and the tour group waits for the

warbler to make its pass. While waiting for a bird to show up, Munson talks about the plants, soil, wildflowers and other birds.

"There's no guarantee we'll see one, but I usually know where three or four might be seen from scouting," Munson said. "I've been skunked a few times, but it's usually because of the weather."

The Kirtland's warbler does not move in rain or very hot weather.

When looking for Kirtland's warblers to show others, Munson said he tries to find birds that come at least 60 feet from the intended trail.

On lucky days, the bird might even come closer.

The tour group never leaves the trail to search for the birds or their nests, which are on the ground. "One of the main points of the tours is not to do anything that will stress or harm the birds," Munson said.

Munson said the best time to spot the Kirtland's warbler is late May and June.

Besides binoculars or scopes, bug spray is the only other item good to have on the tour.

Groups of more than five should call to make reservations.

For more information on the Kirtland's warbler or the tour, contact the USFS at 826-3252.

Tom Weisz

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