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Birds

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colored bands are secured in various schemes to allow identification of individual birds at a distance.

A feather is also collected from the bird for DNA analysis to determine the genetic health of the species.

Research data will help biologists understand how to optimize nesting habitat areas.

In the northern Lower Peninsula, 140,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service and state Department of Natural Resources lands have been designated as Kirtland's warbler habitat. Public access there has been restricted.

Of that, about 25,000 acres is now suitable for the birds to use for nesting, according to Christie Deloria, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biological technician from East Lansing.

In the U.P., Deloria said, researchers do not plan to block off any areas or designate them specifically for the endangered songbird.

"As long as there are no problems up here, that won't happen," Deloria

said.

Management of the species would be incorporated into existing forest management programs.

Reasons for closures or restrictions from nesting areas would include habitat or nest destruction, or harassment of the nesting birds, Deloria said.

The Kirtland's warbler is the state's only endemic species. The first evidence of the bird breeding in the U.P. was in 1996. Researchers have attempted to keep the exact locations of nesting areas concealed to minimize disturbance.

Finding nesting territories away from traditional sites in Lower Michigan is important, Bocetti said. The satellite populations now grow—survive if a wildfire or other catastrophe were to wipe out the Lower Michigan birds, she said.

Data gathered from the banding program, which ends this year, will help provide information to create a computer population model. The model will help develop habitat management strategies to preserve the species over many years.

The model also will be capable of

predicting the size of future populations.

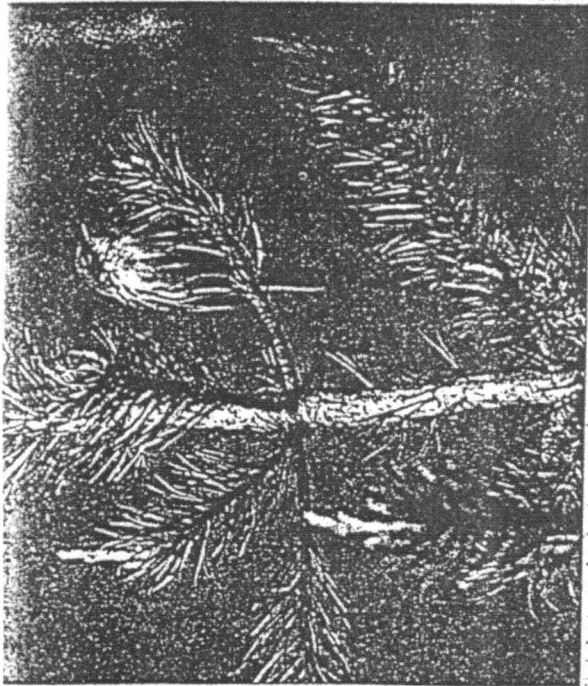
Kirtland's warblers have become endangered because the blue-gray and yellow birds nest on the ground, with very specific requirements for suitable habitat found only in limited areas.

The warblers are found in well-defined young jack-pine stands that have grown up in poor soils after wildfires. Other nesting stands have been located in plantation tree stands. The age of the trees in both location types ranges from five to 23 years and are less than 16 feet tall.

Ornithologists believe the warblers once nested in Wisconsin, Canada and both peninsulas of Michigan.

Statewide, a total of 728 singing males were found during the official state census in early June. That number is up from 692 in 1996. Nineteen males were found singing in the Upper Peninsula this spring, a new record.

The total population is estimated to be double the number of singing males found. The first Kirtland's warbler was found in the U.P. in 1982.



A male Kirtland's warbler is shown here on a jackpine tree. (Photo by Richard P. Smith)

Endangered bird warms up to U.P.

By JOHN PEPIN
 Journal Mining Bureau
 MANISTIQUE — Researchers studying the expansion of Kirtland's warbler nesting territories across the state are encouraged by the discovery of new populations of the endangered species in the Upper Peninsula over the past two years.

"This U.P. population is extremely exciting," said Dr. Carol Bocetti, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division. "It's evidence of habitat availability and young producing and dispersing."

The birds have found their way to the U.P. from traditional nesting sites in Lower Michigan.

"They're doing this on their own," Bocetti said.

Bocetti is among a group of



biologists attempting to find, net and band the species in several locations across the U.P. this month.

Last week, the researchers targeted their efforts on a stand of jack-pine trees in Schoolcraft County where several singing male birds were discovered this spring.

A female was netted at least three times and on Monday, a male was netted in Marquette County.

Banding involves placing a tiny strip of aluminum on one of the bird's legs. On the other,

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