

Mining Journal
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music, entertainment, a carnival, food, and a stock auction at noon Saturday of lambs, steer, hogs and chickens raised by 4-H youth.

gate, and fencing which has expanded the livestock parking area.
Bergdahl expects good weather for the

quite sure who did it.
The voters were from four blocks of Ridge and Arch streets. They had not yet
See Election Page 12A, col. 1

Warbler numbers plunge in U.P.

By JOHN PEPIN
Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — While Kirtland's warbler populations statewide are at near record levels, numbers of the endangered songbirds locally are slumping dramatically.

A June 6-18 survey by biologists and volunteers discovered six singing males over four Upper Peninsula counties. That number is down drastically from a peak U.P. census of 19 males in 1999.

"For the last two years, we had eight males," said Steve Sjogren, U.P. Kirtland's warbler census coordinator.

The birds are counted by listening for their songs. Only the male birds sing. The songs can be heard more than a quarter mile away, and provide an accurate method to census the birds with minimal disturbance.

To guess at the total number of birds inhabiting a given area, biologists double the number of males they've found. This



A Kirtland's warbler is shown in a June 2001 Michigan Department of Natural Resources handout photo. (AP photo)

using nesting activity in the U.P. Mated pairs producing young have been confirmed in the Upper Peninsula each year since 1996, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

But despite the fact that Kirtland's warblers are consistently being heard, seen and recorded in the U.P., their numbers keep dropping.

Sjogren, who works for the U.S. Forest Service's Hiawatha National Forest in St. Ignace, said the reason for the decline is a lack of suitable nesting habitat.

Kirtland's warblers nest only under jack pine trees that are between 4 and 20 years old, with branches reaching down to the ground. The number of warblers found in a given area is directly influenced by available nesting habitat.

As trees grow older, their suitability as nesting sites fades. As habitat declines in the U.P., so do the Kirtland's populations.

See Warblers Page 12A, col. 4

Road agency lobbies for more funds

By JAMES LAKE
Journal Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — The Marquette County Road Commission said next year's state transportation budget will deprive them of \$175,000, and it hopes residents will ask their state legislators to vote it down.

House Bill 5651, the 2002-03 state transportation budget bill, is scheduled for discussion by the state House Transportation Committee Tuesday. The budget includes a gross appropriation of \$3,119 bil-

ity and State to recover administrative expenses.

But the budget bill under consideration includes grants for not only the Attorney General, Environmental Quality and State departments, but those of State Police, Management and Budget, Treasury, and Civil Service and the legislative auditor general agency.

The County Road Association of Michigan, of which the Marquette County Road Commission is a member, said the state

commission they are expecting a court date in early September.

The commission, faced with a \$500,000 shortfall this year that was covered by its fund balance, cut 13 employees from payroll in May through early retirement and layoffs.

The commission began alerting voters last month that its winter maintenance will suffer this year due to a work force.

Warblers

Continued from page 1A

"To sustain them in the U.P., we need to do something about habitat," Sjogren said. "I think if we focused on creating habitat, the numbers would go up."

In 1992, Sjogren found one singing male in a jack pine stand in Schoolcraft County. This was the first time the species had been documented here, although some birds may have been in the area previously and went undetected.

Nesting was later confirmed. When Sjogren first found the warblers, they were in jack pine west of M-94 that was about five or six years old. The stand had grown up after forest fires had burned through the area in the late 1980s.

In other parts of the U.P., a mixture of fire and tree planting on public lands produced warbler nesting areas. Many of those places became suitable at about the same time.

"We had a peak of good habitat in the late '90s," Sjogren said.

Historically, young jack pine stands were created by natural wildfires that frequently swept through northern Michigan. Modern fire suppression programs altered this natural process, reducing Kirtland's warbler habitat, the DNR said.

To mimic the effects of wildfire, state and federal wildlife biologists and foresters now conduct a combination of clearcutting, burning, seeding, and replanting on about 150,000 acres.

But the vast majority of this effort is being undertaken downstate branching out from the core area for Kirtland's warblers near Mio in Oscoda County.

For good warbler nesting sites, jack pine stands should be at least 80 acres, but preferably between 200 and 500 acres. Optimal habitat would have about 1,200 jack pine trees per acre.

Places downstate where pine was planted specifically for warbler habitat held more than 80 percent of the Kirtland's population this year.

Downstate census efforts found 1,044 singing male Kirtland's warblers in June. That figure is only slightly lower than last year's record census which found 1,077.

More planting efforts will produce future warbler habitat downstate. However, in the U.P., no clear analysis has been performed to determine the exact

tat. "There is some," Sjogren said. "But the picture is not real clear right now."

During the 1999 banner year for the U.P. Kirtland's populations, Schoolcraft County had four singing males. Another three were discovered in Delta County. Marquette County had 12 males situated in a few places including south of Ishpeming and near Little Lake.

Comparatively, this year's census found one male each in Marquette, Schoolcraft and Baraga counties. Three males were found on nesting territories in Delta County.

The number of singing males found in 11 northern Lower Peninsula counties was: Alcona 124, Clare 6, Crawford 236, Iosco 74, Kalkaska 23, Montmorency 6, Ogemaw 380, Oscoda 174, Otsego 17, Roscommon 3, and Grand Traverse 1.

Over the years, biologists have determined that the warblers move between the U.P. and downstate habitat areas, sometimes more than once during a single nesting season. The U.P. population was formed by birds dispersing from the downstate core area.

The lowest numbers for the statewide survey occurred in 1974 and 1987, when only 167 singing males were found. The census started in 1951 and has been conducted annually since 1971.

The 2002 survey was a joint effort of the Michigan DNR, U. S. Forest Service, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Military Affairs, and citizen volunteers.

Kirtland's warblers eat insects, winter in the tropics and are Michigan's only endemic bird species. They are found nesting nowhere else.

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