

# FOCUS... *On Endangered Species*

## Endangered Species on National Wildlife Refuges

*By William MacDougall*

On Midway Island, a noisy flock of Laysan ducks now brings new life to an island where wrecked ships and planes long underscored the horrors of one of the fiercest battles of World War II. Two years ago, 20 young Laysan ducks -- the rarest ducks in the United States -- were moved 400 miles from Laysan Island in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge to the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Today, the new flock is thriving with more than 100 ducks, providing a valuable second population.

Midway Atoll Refuge is just one example of the Refuge System's success in working with the Division of Endangered Species and other agencies within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in saving or restoring imperiled creatures since the first endangered species law in 1966, part of the National Wildlife Refuge Administrative Act.

National wildlife refuges are home to more than 280 of the nation's 1,311 endangered or threatened species. So far, 11 of those species have been removed from the list due to their recovery, and 17 others have improved in status from endangered to threatened. More than 500 listed species are now stable or improving.

The recovery of listed species is often a long and complicated process. The biology of some species -- particularly those that are late maturing and have low reproductive rates -- requires an inherently long time for recovery. Habitat restoration, the propagation and establishment of new populations, and the research often necessary to address the threats to species survival can take decades.

Fifty-nine national wildlife refuges have been created specifically to help imperiled species, including two whose stories are detailed in this *Refuge Update*

*Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Area is a collection of lands across eight counties in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The land is managed to protect the Endangered Kirtland's Warbler, whose population numbers have been steadily increasing since the early 1990s. (Cindy Lynne/USFWS)*



### Kirtland's Warbler

**The Kirtland's Warbler has the right idea:** it summers in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan and winters in the Bahamas. The Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Area, managed by Seney National Wildlife Refuge, includes 125 parcels of land across eight

counties in Michigan. The area was established in 1980 and is managed to provide the nesting habitat for the little warbler with a bright yellow breast.

Working in a multi-agency framework, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners with the Forest Service and the state of Michigan -- which together own most of the land inhabited by this species during the breeding season -- to implement research and management for the purpose of recovering the warbler. The Recovery Team meets twice yearly, generating a slow but steady increase in the research and management tools. The Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service and Michigan's Department of Natural Resources jointly manage

