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Huron-Manistee NF
421 South Mitchell Street
Cadillac, Michigan 49601

2600

May 4, 1973

Thank you for inquiring about the Kirtland's Warbler prior to your visit to the Huron National Forest. This affords us the opportunity to inform people of how they can help to protect this rare and endangered species.

As you are probably aware the number of nesting pairs of Kirtland's Warblers declined from approximately 500 in 1961 to 200 in 1971, which is a drop of some 60%. This puts the survival of this species in a very precarious state and the U.S. Forest Service and Michigan Department of Conservation are taking some rather extreme measures to protect it.

Although no one can say exactly why the sharp decline in numbers has occurred, we do know that the degree of Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism of Kirtland's warbler's nests has increased and is higher than the warbler can tolerate and still maintain its numbers. For this reason we started a full scale cowbird trapping program within the warbler nesting grounds in the spring of 1972. Checks of warbler nesting populations on two areas last spring showed that the degree of parasitism by the cowbird dropped dramatically, and in turn the number of young warblers fledged was significantly increased. We hope to see a significant increase in the nesting population this spring as a result. However, we will not know what the warbler population will be until the end of June and one year's control work will not necessarily prove its long term worth. Consequently we plan to continue the cowbird control effort again this spring.

Another phase of our program to help this species is to increase the amount of available nesting habitat. This will be done by managing selected jack pine stands on National and State Forest lands through the use of cutting and prescribed burning that is necessary to regenerate the young pine stands needed for nesting.

We are also helping finance a winter habitat study in the Bahama Islands. There are possibly some factors on that end of the bird's life cycle that could be contributing to its demise.

The rarity of this species and the attention brought about by the recent decline has increased the number of people visiting the nesting areas. This presents a problem to the species in that constant disturbance may put intolerable stress on birds when they are already under the stress of reproduction. The consequences can be nest abandonment and/or a decrease in the survival of young.

It has been suggested by some groups that the warbler nesting areas be closed to the public. We have felt that this could be counter-productive and that the problem can better be controlled through regulation and education of the visitor. Of course, if this is to work it will require cooperation of the public. **THIS IS WHAT YOU CAN HELP!** We ask that you observe the following regulations and suggestions:

1. A permit must be obtained to enter the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area on the Huron National Forest. Permits are available between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the Forest Service Ranger Station in Mio. A permit may be obtained by mail from the District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service, Mio, Michigan 49867 if you give your name, address, number in party and dates of visit. (Programs are given at the Ranger Station on the Kirtland's Warbler.)
2. Disturbance of trees and other vegetation, nests and nesting birds and photographing nests is strictly prohibited. We further suggest that, for the time being, all visitors to nesting grounds refrain from photographing warblers since the art of photographing birds requires one to be in its presence or near it for longer periods than mere observation. Also a photographer usually moves about an area much more to stalk the bird. This longer presence adds to the stress of the birds and moving about increases the chances of inadvertently disturbing a nest. (A series of slides of Kirtland's Warblers are available through the Michigan Audubon Society, 7000 N. Westnedge, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007. We hope this will meet your need for photographs, and **NOE** will not cause a nest to be deserted because you want a photo of your own.)

3.

3. Please refrain from using any recorded songs or imitations of songs while on a nesting ground. This really upsets the males and is an unnecessary stress - probably to both sexes.
4. Walk along roads or trails within nesting grounds and do not thrash about unnecessarily off the trails. Do not permit children to run about, or bring dogs. Do not use off-road vehicles or make other unnecessary noises.
5. Do not camp within nesting grounds. Use Forest Service campgrounds at Mack Lake, Nichols Lake, etc. Hotels are available in and around the Mio and Gungahing areas.

We hope that your search for the Mirthland's Warbler is successful and that you will follow the above regulations and suggestions. For obtaining the precise locations of nesting grounds, please call at our Ranger Station in Mio.

Sincerely,

G. W. IRVINE
Wildlife Biologist

Enclosure

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