

August 9, 1973

David R. Zimmerman  
603 West 111th Street  
New York, N. Y. 10025

Dear Dave:

In view of the particular interest you expressed yesterday in the history of the Kirtland's Warbler management project, which I had not anticipated, I have refreshed my memory on some of the details.

The enclosed reprint traces the history from 1955 to 1963.

The modern phase began in 1971, as I told you, when the census revealed an alarming decline in Kirtland's Warblers. On October 8 John Byelich (Mich. Dept. of Nat. Resources) and G. William Irvine (Huron-Manistee Nat. Forest) - both wildlife biologists - forgetting that we had a Kirtland's Warbler advisory committee, recently inactive, called together a group of interested people to discuss the plight of the warbler on October 30 in Ann Arbor. Nearly 30 people attended, representative of various conservation and nature societies as well as individuals that had done research on the bird. I was selected chairman of the revitalized committee - as I had been of the earlier committee.

Now to a specific point you raised: The minutes of this meeting, October 30, 1971, shows that Bruce Radabaugh and Robert W. Storer (curator of birds, U. of Mich.) separately offered sets of proposals, both urging cowbird control at all nesting areas. A smaller steering committee, formalized immediately by the Mich. Audubon Soc., met promptly on November 9 and began planning the needs and costs of trapping cowbirds so that the government people could carry these proposals back to their agencies for approval. Support came rapidly, particularly the assurance from the Bur. of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife (the subdivision of that agency concerned with control of wildlife that becomes a pest) that they would supply men and vehicles to service the traps. The traps were put in place in the spring of 1972.

Here is a crucial point I failed to make in conversation with you. Our courage to take the drastic action of killing one species to aid another came from Cuthbert's work (supplemented by Radabaugh's) in 1965-68 showing that removal of cowbirds by trapping and shooting greatly improved the success of K. Warblers as compared with other areas where no control was exercised in the same periods.

Sincerely,