

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER-AN
ACCELERATED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ON THE HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST

The Kirtland's Warbler may be on the threshold of extinction. Results of the 1974 census show a population decrease of 23 percent, from 216 singing males in 1973 to 167 males in 1974. Although this drastic decline is believed to be in response to some factor that occurred when the birds were in migration or on their winter range, suitable nesting habitat has declined since the first comprehensive warbler census in 1951.

It is recommended that an accelerated management program be undertaken by the Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources to increase the available nesting habitat. Action should also be undertaken by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Conservation organizations to control cowbird parasitism and initiate intensive studies on an evaluation of winter habitat. Coordination of this effort can be through the Kirtland's Warbler Advisory Committee.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 establishes direction for the management of endangered species on the Huron-Manistee National Forest. Section seven of this Act states that all Federal agencies shall utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of the act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species and threatened species, and by taking such action necessary to insure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them do not jeopardize the continued existence of such endangered and threatened species or result in the destruction or modification of habitat of such species which is determined by the Secretary (of Interior) to be critical.

The jack pine type on the Huron National Forest currently occurs on about 132,000 acres. Kirtland's Warbler habitat is confined to the Grayling sand soils within this acreage. Management for the Kirtland's Warbler will occur on the Grayling sand areas, suitable for management of jack pine. The proposed Wildlife Habitat Management Handbook for the National Forests in Michigan states an objective of providing nesting habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler on a minimum of 25,000 acres of National Forest lands having jack pine stands on Grayling sand soils. This will provide habitat to support a potential population of 500-600 nesting pairs of warblers within the Forest.

Current tentative wildlife funding for F.Y. 1975 is wholly inadequate to implement the provisions of this act for the Kirtland's Warbler. We are therefore proposing the following action plan on the Huron National Forest for consideration:

I. Census (for monitoring population status and evaluating management.)

- A. Preliminary habitat checks.
- B. Intensive singing male counts.
- C. Nest checks.

II. Protection

A. Kirtland's Warbler Management Area entry by permit only between 3/1 and 8/15.

- 1. Sign exterior boundary and interior roads at .1 mile interval.
- 2. Close non-system roads to vehicular traffic.
- 3. Close to all ORV use 5/1 to 8/15 - no ORV trails and establish no trails in this and other Kirtland Warbler designated areas.
- 4. Prohibited activities, except through authorized permit.
 - a. No recorded or initiated Kirtland's Warbler songs.
 - b. No nest searching or photographing.
 - c. No vegetation disturbance.
 - d. No use of vehicles off roads.
 - e. No camping.
 - f. No berry picking.
 - g. No pets.

B. Closure of other areas as needed.

C. Enforce regulations and other laws.

III. Cowbird Control

Cooperate with F & WS in trapping cowbirds in jointly agreed upon areas.

IV. Habitat Management

The objective is to identify Grayling sand soils where jack pine can be managed to provide Kirtland's Warbler nesting habitat. Such stands will be carried on a 40 to 50 year rotation and will provide nesting habitat during 2/5 to 1/2 of that rotation. The potential nesting population would be 500 - 600 pairs. An initial objective will be to provide a minimum of 25,000 acres. To implement this the following steps are to be taken:

A. Three areas with nesting Kirtland's Warbler populations:

1. Kirtland's Warbler Management Area:

- a. 400 acres of nesting habitat now occupied.
- b. 750 acres of regenerated jack pine soon will be ready for warbler nesting.
- c. 750 acres in process of being regenerated.
- d. Starting in 1980, 300 to 400 acres of jack pine stands will be regenerated at five year intervals to maintain 1200 to 1500 acres of nesting habitat on the area.

2. Luzerne Burn:

- a. 290 acres of habitat now occupied, but the warbler population is declining.
- b. Much of the area to the east of the burn in Compartment 107 has been clear cut. Some 300 acres of this should be regenerated to jack pine so as to produce nesting habitat.
- c. Timber sales have been made in Comp. 91 to the west of the burn. These stands should be examined for regeneration potential nesting habitat.

3. Pere Cheney Burn:

- a. 340 acres are not occupied and the habitat will be in good condition for another 10 years.
- b. There are some 100 acres of the above habitat on private land. These parcels should be acquired.
- c. There should be some 300 acres of jack pine regenerated in the near future in close proximity to this burn to sustain this population.

B. Areas of potential Kirtland Warbler nesting habitat:

1. There are eight other areas within the Huron N. F. where Kirtland Warblers nested previously. Stands should be identified in these areas for regenerating jack pine for potential nesting habitat.
2. There are three other areas (McKinley clearcut, Rollways burn, and Eldorado Sale) that have distinct potential for regenerating Jack pine stands suitable for nesting habitat.
3. There are undoubtedly other stands within the jack pine-Grayling sand area within the Forest where there are opportunities to develop potential Kirtland Warbler nesting habitat. Such considerations should be given as these stands are identified in routine compartment examinations.

C. Private Lands

Identify, areas of private land on the Huron, suitable for management of the Kirtlands Warbler Purchase, through L & WC or other funds.

V. Staffing

- A. Current professional staffing is not adequate to handle the wildlife expertise needed on the Forest for our current program let alone any expansion. A wildlife biologist is needed on the Huron National Forest and should be located on the Mio District, but attached to the Supervisor's Office.
- B. An additional Forester position must be established and filled on the Mio District. Their regular timber sale program will be expanding because of additional work needed in the jack pine type for silvicultural reasons. Objectives are compatible with warbler management.

VI. Costs (OSO)(P&M)

Kirtland's Warbler Management Program

F.Y. 1975 - Financed From Allotted Funds:

1. Surveys and Planning	\$ 500
2. Habitat Improvement - 270 acres	5,100
3. Protection (Signing, VIS, etc.)	1,600
4. Planning and Coordination (Forest Biologist Activities)	<u>7,800</u>
	\$15,000

VI. Costs (P&M - 080)

Proposed Accelerated Program

F. Y. 1975 - Needed Funds:

1. Surveys and Planning (Biologist, aid, etc.) - First Priority -	\$25,000
2. Habitat Improvement 300 acres Third Priority	5,000
3. Coop. Winter Survey Second Priority	2,000
	<u>\$32,000</u>

Annual Program - 1976 on:

1. Surveys and Planning	
a. Census	\$ 2,080
b. Compex (130,000 acres)	20,800
c. Intensive habitat surveys	4,000
d. Intensive planning	5,280
	<u>\$32,160</u>
2. Protection	
a. Signing	\$ 830
b. Area closures	1,920
c. Enforcement	5,600
d. Cowbird control (Coordination, etc.)	960
	<u>\$ 9,310</u>
3. Habitat Improvement	
a. Develop habitat on 4,850 ac. @ 900-1000 ac/yr. - 1976 - 80	
(1) Stand improvement-300 ac/yr.	\$ 9,600
(2) Special planting - 220 ac/yr.	6,450
(3) Prescribed burning-600 ac/yr.	6,340
TOTAL 1180 ac/yr.	<u>22,390</u>

ANNUAL PROGRAM COST (including overhead) \$63,860

Note: (Additional funds may be needed for winter habitat surveys. Land acquisition funds from L&MC Fund).

GWJ&RER
9/6/74