



# GREAT LAKES REGION NEWS

For Immediate Release

*Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Federal Bldg, Fort Snelling  
Twin Cities, Minn. 55111*

## NEW HOPE FOR ENDANGERED WARBLER

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Chances for survival of the Kirtland's warbler in north central Michigan were recently enhanced by the establishment of a team of experts who will give priority to reversing the current downward trend in the bird's population.

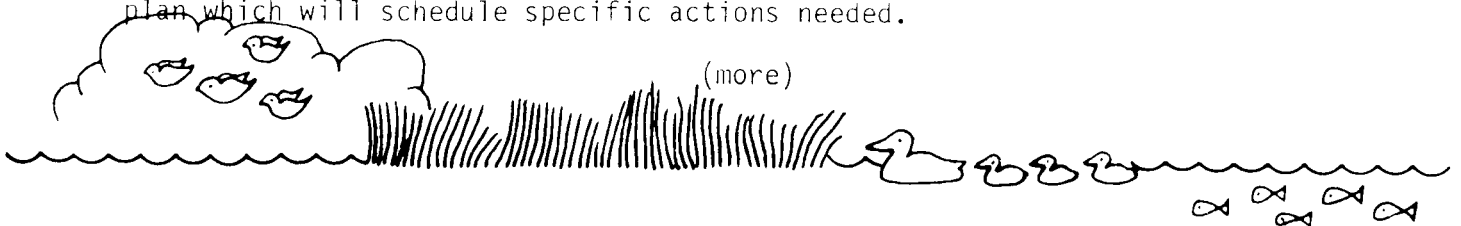
The Kirtland's warbler is one of ten endangered species that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has selected for priority treatment. "Recovery teams" are also being formed for the American alligator, red wolf, eastern timber wolf, Indiana bat, Delmarva fox squirrel, dusky seaside sparrow, Mississippi sandhill crane, Everglade kite, and blue pike.

The ten teams are the first of an estimated 50 such groups that will be formed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to work with endangered species on or after July 1, 1975. There are now 109 animals listed as endangered in the United States.

Heading up the Kirtland's warbler recovery team is John Byelich of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Other team members are Nels I. Johnson of the same department, Robert E. Radtke and George W. Irvine of the U.S. Forest Service, William F. Shake and Wesley R. Jones of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Harold F. Mayfield, a recognized world authority on the species.

The team's primary objective is to guide actions to restore the Kirtland's warbler to a healthy balance in the wild after drawing up a detailed recovery plan which will schedule specific actions needed.

(more)



KIRTLAND'S WARBLER -- ADD !

The Kirtland's warbler (Dendroica kirtlandii) is a small perching bird of the order Passeriformes. The only known nesting colonies in the world in recent years are in the adjoining counties of Crawford, Oscoda, and Ogemaw in the lower peninsula of Michigan. The species migrates to the Bahama Islands for the winter.

The warbler is very demanding in its nesting requirements. It builds its nest on the ground under branches of young jack pines. Logging and subsequent wildfires during the early 1900's in Michigan helped to create good conditions for the species, but recent fire prevention programs have reduced nesting habitat. In order to improve the situation, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service have set aside about 10,800 acres that are managed to provide optimum habitat for the Kirtland's warbler.

Despite intensive protection efforts, the number of Kirtland's warblers declined from about 1,000 in 1961 to only 400 in 1972. Since satisfactory breeding habitat conditions were being maintained, the problem was found to center on nest parasitism by cowbirds. The brown headed cowbird, originally a bird of the short-grass plains, has gradually moved into Michigan. The female cowbird characteristically lays its eggs in the nests of other species. When nests of Kirtland's warblers are so utilized, the adult warblers generally raise the larger, more aggressive young cowbirds, rather than their own hatchlings. To counter this problem, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is conducting a program to control cowbird parasitism in the nesting range of the Kirtland's warbler.

Information on recovery team activities and progress may be obtained by writing or calling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Building, Fort Snelling, Twin Cities, Minnesota 55111 (telephone 612/725-3520).