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DNR NEWS

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LANSING--The 1990 count of Michigan's most endangered bird species, the Kirtland's warbler, has shown the bird's largest population increase in 29 years, according to officials of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

When the survey was completed last week, a total of 265 singing males were located in seven Michigan counties, along with one warbler each found in Ontario and Wisconsin. This represents a 25 percent increase from 1989 and the largest count since 502 singing males were found in 1961.

"We believe this is a significant turning point in the recovery of the Kirtland's warbler population," said DNR Director David Hales. "Since the jack pine plantations we planted almost a decade ago have grown into suitable warbler habitat, we finally have enough habitat to accommodate more birds."

Several of those plantations showed increases in the number of birds using them this year, Hales added.

The entire world's population of this blue-gray and yellow warbler nests in the young jack pine forests in the northern Lower Peninsula.

The seven counties where warblers were found this year are the same as in 1989. These counties, and the number of warblers in each for 1990, are: Alcona-4, Crawford-59, Iosco-5, Kalkaska-5, Ogemaw-17, Oscoda-166 and Roscommon-9.

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Crawford and Oscoda counties account for 85 percent of the birds. Sixty percent of the total are in an area in Oscoda County that was burned in 1980, known as the Mack Lake burn. Although some current habitat was lost in the 1990 fire near Grayling, the fire apparently did not affect a significant number of Kirtland's warblers.

The survey is done each year during a 10-day period in the first two weeks of June. The 1990 survey was a joint effort with the Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and citizen volunteers.

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