

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

1976 SUMMARY GRAYLING TOURS

On July 10, the last public tour of 1976 brought the number of visitors to 647 for the season. This represents a fifty percent increase over last year's figure of 433. The 1976 visitors came from 30 states, 2 Canadian provinces, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico. The military area was used for most of the season as a tour route. However, after mid-June, Stephan's Bridge road was closed during daytime hours by the National Guard. The tours were then taken to a recently discovered nesting area south of North Down River road near Trap 45. This location turned out to be a more convenient tour route because of its proximity to Grayling and the ease of finding singing male Kirtlands'. It should be used again next year for tours pending closure and posting of the area by the Michigan DNR.

On June 1, 150 children from Alma, Michigan public schools (grades 1-6) attended the tour. The group was split between morning and afternoon sessions with one tour guide attending each session. The school buses were led to Trap 11 and then to Buck's Crossing. The children were shown the habitat and were able to hear a singing male from the road. No attempt was made to show them a Warbler. Even though the facilities in Grayling are not adequate for such a large group, the teachers seemed satisfied with the tour. If we count this group with our regular visitor tally, the total

number of visitors is 797 for the 1976 season.

Nearly all the visitors came to the Grayling area specifically to see the Kirtland's Warbler. If the number of visitors continues to increase, 'warbler watchers' may soon rival the National Guard's 'weekend warriors' in providing income for the Grayling merchants.

TOUR PUBLICITY

A taped advertisement of the tours was made early in the season and aired on local radio stations. None of the people attending the tours mentioned the radio advertisement, so we do not know if this publicity effectively increased tour attendance. It is surprising how many Grayling residents are still not aware of the tours. Even the Grayling Chamber of Commerce was unable to supply information about the tours to inquiring visitors. Thus, it seems that a more widespread effort to advertise the tours would generate significant results. Perhaps running an article in the Grayling newspaper would help 'get the word out'.

We have also been amazed at the number of bird watchers, often from other states, who still show up to see the Warbler in late July and August. Perhaps running an article in Audubon magazine would also be helpful in publicizing the tours.

The form letter prepared to answer inquiries about the tours was very helpful and should be used again next year.

TOUR GUIDES

We suggest that one of the temporary employees for next year have a background in natural history interpretation or environmental

education. This person could then guide the tours for most of season with one week 'trade-offs' with the trap tenders after the third week in June. Due to the hectic work schedule during the first three weeks of trapping, the temporary employees should not 'trade-off' before the third week in June. Utilizing an employee with an interpretive background could improve the quality of the Kirtland's Warbler interpretive program.

INTERPRETIVE EQUIPMENT

A new lens for the film projector should be procured before the next season along with two new copies of "The Bird of Fire" film. The lens used this year is broken and does not project a clear image. The film used this year was worn so badly by the end of the season that it jammed during projection in three places. A spare film could be used while a worn copy was being repaired.

The typewriter provided by the Sandusky Field office was very useful in answering inquiries about the tours and preparing trapping summaries. A typewriter should be provided again next year.

The DNR arm patches and decals sold very well throughout the season. Sixty-eight arm patches and about 40 decals were sold with the proceeds providing a substantial donation to the DNR Living Resource Fund. However, several times during the season the supply on hand was exhausted preventing the sale of even more patches and decals. Also, a good supply of slides should be available before the season begins. Forty-nine strips of slides were sold this year and again, more would have been sold if we had not exhausted the supply

during the season. The slides are provided by the Michigan Audubon Society and the proceeds from the sale of these go to them.

A cash box with a lock should be available for safe-keeping of the sales receipts. In the past there have been no arrangements for safe-keeping of the slide-armpatch-decal proceeds. A bank account or some other means of keeping this money should be arranged.

Fifteen folding chairs were borrowed from the DNR Gaylord Repair Shop to provide sufficient seating for the tours. This arrangement worked well and the chairs should be picked up before the tours get underway next year.

The room used for the tours is now occupied by the Geological Survey. Another room for the tours should be reserved before the season begins next year.

COMMUNICATIONS

A list of phone numbers for all the field offices and a list of their addresses should be included in the Cowbird Trappers' Information Guide (grey folder). This would be useful when calling the various field offices and when sending the trapping summaries.

TRAPPING OPERATIONS

We would like to present a few suggestions concerning the cowbird trap operation. First, it would save mileage and time if some sunflower seeds could be stored in Grayling for use on the Pere Chaney, Fletcher, Military route. Second, the Blue Jay holding cage in Grayling should be moved to a different location.

When the heavy Blue Jay migrations come through, the holding cage often holds 50-100 Blue Jays and several die every night when this many are held. The visitors attending the Warbler tours often stop for a closer look at the holding cage and may be disturbed by the dead birds. This presents a situation which could lead to bad publicity for the trapping operation. Therefore, we recommend that the holding cage be moved to a less obvious location, perhaps one of the inactive traps south of Luzerne. A more secluded site will probably also increase the survival of the Blue Jays. Birds held in the Grayling holding cage seemed to suffer a higher mortality than those in the Mio holding cage. This may be partly due to the increased human activity around the Grayling location which 'panics' the captive birds.

Third, the record forms used this year were convenient and easy to follow. The Individual Cowbird Trap Records should be modified slightly because they ask for the sex of juvenile cowbirds. Since there is no dependable way to sex juvenile cowbirds, they should be combined into a 'sex unknown' column. Also, the Weekly Trapping Summary sheet should be modified, as there is no column for juvenile cowbirds.

Fourth, extra bands (1B, 1A, 3) should be on hand at the Grayling office during the first few weeks of trapping since the supplies in the banding kits were exhausted during the first week.

Cheryl Belitsky
 David Belitsky
 Al Bourgeois