

Kirtland's Warbler Habitat Indicators

There are numerous qualitative indicators of warbler habitat, but unfortunately there are few quantitative ones. Little work has been done to establish numerical parameters for the plant communities utilized as nesting habitat or those suitable for conversion to nesting habitat. However, the habitat potential of a jack pine stand can be estimated by looking at the associated plants and their growth characteristics. Plants indicating habitat potential are:

Blueberry	<u>Vaccinium spp.</u>
Sweet Fern	<u>Comptonia peregrina</u>
Sand Cherry	<u>Prunus pumila</u>
Reindeer Moss	<u>Cladonia rangiferina</u>
Wire grass	<u>Carex spp.</u>
Juneberry	<u>Amelanchier spp.</u>
Turkeyfoot (Big Bluestem)	<u>Andropogon Gerardi</u>
Little Bluestem	<u>Andropogon scoparius</u>
Bearberry	<u>Arctostaphyllum uva-ursi</u>
Blackberry	<u>Rubus spp.</u>
Bracken	<u>Pteridium aquilinum</u>

The presence of a significant number of hardwoods in a stand, primarily oaks, aspen or willow, usually indicates that a stand will be unsuitable for warbler management. There is no research available as to what is significant and what is not, but the current "best guess" is that any stand with an aggregate basal area of less than 20 square feet of hardwoods is suitable and stands with up to 30 square feet may be used.

The other two primary criteria are stand size and site index. Optimum stand size is 200 acres or larger. Stands of jack pine that can be combined to form a contiguous block of this size are also suitable. In special cases blocks down to 100 acres in size will be considered. Most warbler stands will have a site index below 55. Stands with higher sites will usually have more hardwoods and a denser under story than desirable.

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