

1980 KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

NATURALIST REPORT

Charles D. Kotz

The 1980 Kirtland's Warbler Tours were attended by over four-hundred and fifty people.* In addition to providing a means of supervising public entry into the nesting area, the tours also facilitated an attempt at educating those attending.

Prior to entering the field, a slide presentation was shown. This twenty-five minute production covered most common questions concerning the Kirtland's Warbler. Viewer reaction towards this years presentation was enthusiastically favorable. I chose to use the slide program exclusively, due to its up to date statistics, and overall completeness. My original intentions were to reserve showings of the film for younger groups, which may have been bored by the factual nature of the slide program. However, such an occasion failed to arise. After the slides, questions were answered, and the tour itinerary explained. Also, in the tour room, free literature was made available. All visitors were asked to sign a guest register, which provided information as to how many people attended, and from which geographic regions.

In the field, key habitat requirements of the warbler were pointed out, and their significance explained. At the cowbird trap, (number 45), an explanation was given as to how the trap works, the role cowbird trapping plays, and current efforts underway to increase warbler numbers. Most groups were taken to the AuSable area, which was used by about six pairs of Kirtland's Warblers. On most outings at least one warbler was observed. The 32 power eye-piece was a dramatic improvement over the 20 power used initially.

In order to improve the tour in the future, the naturalist should be made aware of sources for current data on the Kirtland's Warbler. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Forest Service

* See page 3.

both have comprehensive management plans which contain recent scientific papers and valuable statistics. Furthermore, these plans indicate long term strategy for dealing with problems facing the management team.

The naturalist should also be kept up to date on any recent developments, so this information may be relayed to the public. Knowledge of current status of the bird is important in accurately fielding questions from the public. I was first informed of this years census results by an article chanced upon in a Detroit newspaper.

Steps should be taken to provide enough literature to last for the entire duration of the tour. This year, supplies of the booklet, "The Bird of Fire" and the checklist, "Birds in the Kirtland's Warbler Area", were inadequate. Next year enough supplies of both should be provided so that each person attending will receive one of each.

Provided the Naturalist learns the respective cowbird trappers route, switching positions occasionally provides a desirable change of pace. In addition to benefitting from a broadened work experience, I found this helped in maintaining a fresh attitude towards the public.

Making arrangements to allow the naturalist to participate in the annual Kirtland's Warbler census should be considered. This year I participated on one day of both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service census and the U.S. Forest Service census. This direct involvement gave me a better understanding of the procedure, and aided in explaining it to others.

Suggestions to improve the cowbird trapping operation are as follows:

I) When building future traps, plan for wider and higher doorways.

Entering the traps with the catch cage is a cumbersome job with

the existing dimensions.

- II) Place "Another War For Survival" signs on traps frequented by cowbird "liberators" during this past year.
- III) Provide six rather than four water containers to each truck. This would make supplying clear water, rather than river water, easier.

Tour Report Update - July 15, 1980

Actual 1980 tour attendance was 491. Participants came from 27 states, Washington, D.C., England, Wales and Canada.