

Proposals come from schools

Forget the robin, Audubon society sees Kirtland's Warbler as state bird

By NICOLE JACQUES
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Len Stuttman knows everything about the Kirtland's Warbler.

He can tell you the year the bird was discovered and that it nests only under Michigan's jack pine trees.

He'll lay out the reasons it nearly went extinct and how the forestry industry now helps protect the bird's habitat.

But the Lansing bird expert wants everyone in Michigan to recognize the songbird's significance.

"What's so unique about a robin?" he said, referring to the current state bird. "Here we have a bird that earns millions of dollars and draws birders from all over the world."

Stuttman is leading the Michigan Audubon Society's initiative to make the Kirtland's Warbler — a species that nests only in Michigan — the official state bird.

In its centennial year, the conservation organization is pushing harder than ever to pass such legislation. It's gathering petitions and selling teachers' kits to

schools. Although less known than the robin, the Kirtland's Warbler has garnered attention for its growing numbers and annual after-winter journey from the Bahamas to Michigan's Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula.

"People need to know about the bird that's exclusive to our state," Stuttman said. "It speaks of Michigan."

For more information, visit www.michiganaudubon.org.

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