

covered the bird. I informed several interested or totally skeptical." He experienced bird bander, who bands ly, says that there is no question." I y best.

orne with his group from the Greater ormed Bill of my Kirtland's Warbler talked with was in disbelief. Bill ey don't know who you are, let's go e down to the other end of the rprise, there they were, all the y waiting for another glimpse of the unbelievable bird, no, believable; just an "unbelievable" cycling outfit.

ation Area



ee Marsh WA, May 21, 1995.
Mary Jo Kohn.

Jaws drop and eyebrows raise at the mere mention of the words. "You say you have a what? A Kirtland's Warbler?" This little playlet is reenacted every spring somewhere in Ohio, seemingly most often along the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area Bird Trail. Unfortunately, however, in most instances the "Kirtland's" mysteriously transforms into a drably-plumaged Magnolia Warbler, or simply melts into the vegetation, never to be seen again. But sometimes, on very special occasions, everything falls into place and the "Kirtland's" remains long enough to actually be confirmed as a Kirtland's Warbler.

Due to the great rarity of the species, the life history of the Kirtland's Warbler has long been intensively studied. This extremely localized species nests only in Michigan, and is further limited on the nesting grounds to jack pine forests fitting certain height and density requirements. Since the species winters in the Bahamas, it follows that Kirtland's Warblers must cross through (or over) Ohio twice a year, in both spring and fall migration (Mayfield, 1960).

The Ohio history of the Kirtland's Warbler is an interesting one. In fact, the first specimen ever examined by science was collected by Charles Pease, son-in-law of Dr. Jared P. Kirtland, near Kirtland's farm at Rockport (now Lakewood, Cuyahoga Co.), Ohio on May 13, 1851. Kirtland, who was an extremely important figure in the natural sciences in his day, recognized the specimen, a male, as something unusual. When Prof. Spencer F. Baird, of the U.S. National Museum in Washington, D.C., fortuitously stopped by at the Kirtland farm to visit his friend a few days later, Kirtland presented the specimen to Baird. After further examination, Baird declared that the specimen represented a species unknown to science, and named it after his friend, "a gentleman to whom, more than anyone living, we are indebted for a knowledge of the natural history of the Mississippi Valley." (Williams, 1950; Mayfield, 1960).

The next Ohio specimen was not secured until 1860, also in the Cleveland area. Since then, the trickle of records has continued, with usually 1, but sometimes 2, birds being reported. While unquestionably an extremely rare species, the Kirtland's Warbler does occur in Ohio on a fairly regular basis. After making a thorough literature search, I find that at least 77 Kirtland's Warblers have been reported in Ohio prior to the Spring 1995 season. As expected, however, these 77 reports vary in the quality of details provided, and hence in apparent reliability. Although no Ohio bird records committee has ever examined all Ohio Kirtland's Warbler records in detail, I personally feel that 38 records, totalling 43 individual birds, are reliable enough to form the basis of the following review.

Of the 43 acceptable Kirtland's Warblers recorded in Ohio, 24 (or 55.8%) were found during the years 1851-1910. During the years 1901-1910 alone, 13 individuals (or 30.2% of all individuals recorded to date) were discovered. From the years 1911-1994, 19 Kirtland's Warblers (or 44.2% of the 43 Ohio records) were discovered. These data indicate that during the 60-year period of 1851-1910, an average of 0.400 individuals were found per year in Ohio, even though very few active observers were present to look for the species, and the quality of optics was poor. During the 84-year period of 1911-1994, however, the

average dropped to 0.226 individuals found per year. Given the exponential increase in field observers in recent decades, it seems fairly obvious that Kirtland's Warblers must have been considerably more numerous prior to 1910. However, substantial warbler population growth on the Michigan breeding grounds during the 1980's and 1990's may help to reverse this occurrence pattern, and an upswing in Ohio sightings (some too recent to have been examined by the Ohio Bird Records Committee, and therefore not included in this review) may be a indication of an increasing number of observations in the near future.

The timing of Kirtland's Warbler migrations through Ohio reveals the following patterns. During spring migration, 36 individuals have been reported. Spring migration dates range from April 30 (1975) to May 24 (1954), with 20 of the 36 individuals (55.6%) being discovered during the May 11-20 period. Eleven individuals (30.6% of 36) have been discovered during the April 30-May 10 period, while only 3 individuals (8.3%) have been discovered after May 20 (two more individuals have also been discovered in the spring, but without exact dates listed). If a birder had to choose a date to search for a Kirtland's Warbler in Ohio, both May 11 and May 15 have seen the most individuals present on those dates over the years, with 5 individuals being present on both dates. Fall migration presents a different picture. Only 7 individuals have been acceptably recorded during these months, ranging from August 28 (2 individuals in 1902) to October 14 (1886). The other 4 individuals were recorded between September 11-27. Covering both migrations, males are far more likely to be observed. Of 30 individuals reported by sex, 22 were listed as males. At least in the spring, males are more likely to be found in early- to mid-migration, and females in mid- to late-migration. Only 3 of 43 individuals have been reported to remain more than a single day during either migration.

At least 12 Ohio counties have hosted this species, with counties bordering Lake Erie garnering 67.4% (29 individuals) of all reports, although not all individuals found in these counties were located immediately adjacent to the Lake. Inland counties have hosted 14 individuals (32.6%). Cuyahoga County, site of the discovery of the type specimen, leads the way with 10 individuals being found over the years. Other county totals are as follows: Lucas--7; Ottawa--6; Lorain--4; Hamilton--4; Seneca--3; Franklin--2; Lawrence--2; Lake--2; Auglaize--1; Champaign--1; & Washington--1. In the most recent 25 year period (1970-94), however, 6 of 11 records have come from Lucas County, including 4 individuals at the heavily birded Magee Marsh WA Bird Trail.

Two of our more interesting observations follow. On September 27, 1975, 7-year old S. Doerger found a banded window casualty in Cincinnati. The specimen eventually made its way to the U.S. National Museum. Banding data revealed that the bird, an adult male, was initially banded as a nestling near Mio, Michigan, on July 2, 1971. It was retrapped and color banded two years later, some 20 miles north of its hatching site, after having successfully mated (American Birds 30(1):78, 1975; Birdwatching 1(6):25, 1975). But perhaps the most amazing Ohio sighting took place on South Bass Island on May 24, 1954. Milton B. Trautman, who had by then accumulated an extensive birding tenure on South Bass, consequently knew enough about the site to be "at the right place at the right time". During periods of heavy weather, the powerful lights atop the Perry Monument routinely attracted migratory birds like moths attracted to a flame. At about 9:00 p.m. on May 24, a strong wind kicked up in the midst of a large passerine movement. Soon, about 100 hapless birds would hit the Monument.

falling to the ground below. As Trautman was busily collecting, these unfortunate at the base of the Monument, one particular bird fell from the sky and hit Trautman on the head-- a dead female Kirtland's Warbler! (Audubon Field Notes 8(4):316, 1954).

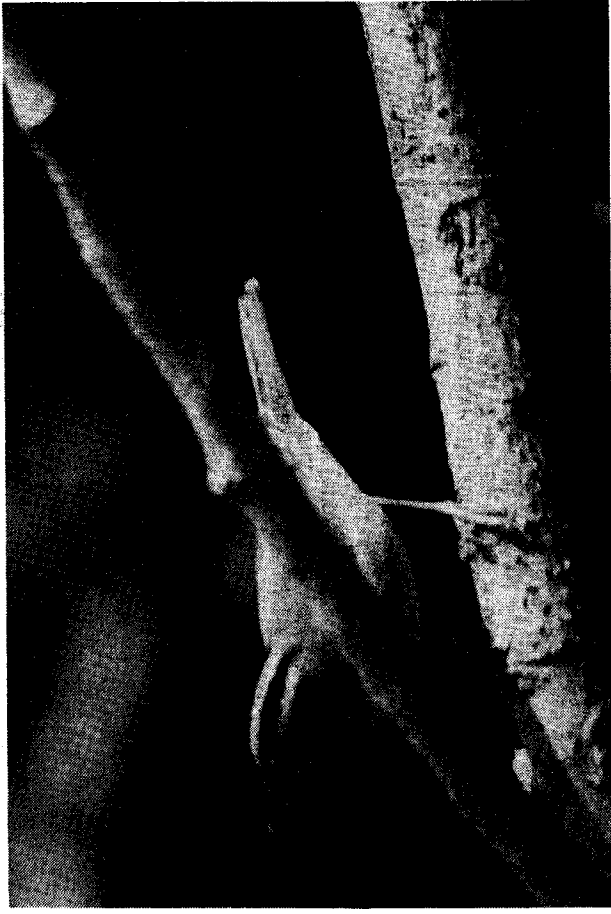
While the chances of observing a Kirtland's Warbler in Ohio during any given year remain slim at best, the above review of Ohio records seems to suggest that the following *modus operandi* may increase one's likelihood of finding this species: join the throng at Magee Marsh WA Bird Trail in mid-May! Although this solution should be fairly obvious, a familiarity with the species' song and tail-bobbing behavior are also of significant value. Moreover, the next time you happen to be at a location and the words "Kirtland's Warbler!?" are mentioned, don't just raise an eyebrow. Go look for the bird-- you might like what you find!

Acknowledgements

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LITERATURE CITED

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Worm-eating Warbler. Magee Marsh Bird Trail (Lucas Co.), May 21, 1995. Photo by Melinda Greenland.