

(419) 385-5365

October 15, 1991

Dr. Burton V. Barnes
School of Natural Resources
The University of Michigan
Dana Building, 430 E. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1115

Dear Dr. Barnes:

Dear Burt:

The American Ornithologists' Union has embarked on a project to publish "Birds". This is just a note to thank you for your letter of October 3 and the packet of materials pertaining to the habitat of the Kirtland's Warbler.

In my presentation at the Kirtland symposium in Lansing on February 9-11, 1989, I concluded by saying that we need ideas more than we need trees. Your approach is such an idea. Ideas have been scarce in this field, I am sorry to say. I am reluctant to give references to material that may not be accessible to an interested reader. Therefore, I wonder if your work (with Xiaoming Lou)

Do not be surprised that you were not asked to make a presentation at the Kirtland's Warbler Population Viability Analysis meeting in Minneapolis, Jan. 7-9, 1992. It is my impression that the presentations will be made only by the meeting leaders, who will be offering their own method of weighing all the known factors bearing on the survival of the warbler. They have sent me a long questionnaire seeking a large number of facts about the bird to put into the machine.

These modeling approaches leave me cool, because I feel if the user leaves out one significant item in his array of facts (and in biology some facts are always missing) the results inevitably go awry. I think I will attend the meeting, but I am lukewarm. I believe the meeting is also a trial of the method, which may be useful with other endangered species.

I hope your interest in this subject continues. Sincerely,
"If the warblers are there, the habitat is suitable. If the warblers are not there, the habitat is not suitable." Yet every field worker since the discovery of the first nest in 1903 has remarked that the Warblers obviously do not fill up the available habitat or they see something we do not see. Your notion of an unsuitable microclimate is an interesting new thought. It may help explain a circumstance that has intrigued us for a long time, namely, that the warbler utilizes only the shoothermost extensive stands of jack pine in the vast range of that tree. The microclimate may be the key.

Years ago I recall walking through miles and miles of burned-over land in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan among small jack pines, and I was struck with the stunted and sparse ground cover, almost a boreal quality to my eyes. Of course, there were no Kirtland's Warblers there. Yet it was dry, sandy soil.

I am worried that you have something in print on this subject that I have not seen.

Sincerely,

