

# Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team

Care of: Huron-Manistee National Forests, 1755 S. Mitchell,  
Cadillac, MI 49601

EAST LANSING FIELD OFFICE  
RECEIVED

MAR 10 1997

EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN  
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

March 5, 1997

- Wadby
- Cooper
- Best
- Brewer
- DeCapita
- Finisar
- Fisher
- Hodgkins
- Keshken
- Kowalsky
- Lebits
- Mergold
- Miller/bah
- Richter
- Sappala
- Shubs
- Williams
- Wilara
- KW Temp

Mr. William F. Hartwig, Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Bldg.  
1 Federal Drive  
Fort Snelling MN 55111

Dear Mr. Hartwig:

The Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team (team) was advised at our recent February 5-6 1997 meeting that Fish and Wildlife Service funding may not be available this year for your East Lansing Field Office to conduct cowbird control program and adequate public tours. These actions are vital to the continued survival and recovery of the Kirtland's warbler. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has accepted the responsibility for these programs and carried them out very successfully since 1972

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The team has little doubt that Kirtland's warbler will not long survive without cowbird control. In the 7 years prior to initiation of cowbird control in 1972, about 70% of warbler nests were parasitized, and warbler production was less than 1 young per pair per year. That production rate results in a negative rate of increase for the warbler population. USGS-BRD scientists estimate that without cowbird control, a 25% annual loss of production would result in about 100 warbler pairs in 7 years from the current level of about 700 pairs.

Cowbird control is only one part of the Kirtland's warbler recovery effort which involves the public and several other agencies besides the Fish and Wildlife Service. The U. S. Forest Service and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have spent and continue to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to manage Kirtland's warbler habitat in Michigan and to provide protection and public tours. The Michigan Department of Military Affairs, USDA Forest Service and the USGS-BRD have made substantial contributions to research activities. These agencies have struggled to maintain their efforts in spite of funding cutbacks.

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Your agency spent between \$4,000,000 and \$5,000,000 to acquire about 6,500 acres of warbler habitat now administered by Seney NWR. Furthermore, FWS granted \$1,950,000 in ESA Section 6 funds to the DNR between 1985-1996 for warbler recovery work. In short, millions of tax payer dollars and countless hours of tax payer supported work have been expended in the effort to keep the Kirtland's warbler in existence.

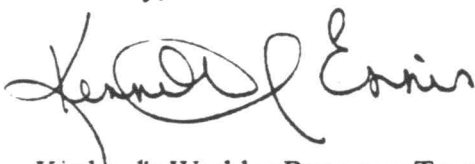
The other agencies and the public have supported Kirtland's warbler recovery because of FWS leadership. All of the money and hours spent on this species behalf would have been useless without cowbird control, and all of it will have been wasted if cowbird control is not continued at the required level. It is disappointing to this team to hear that FWS no longer places a high priority on this effort.

Kirtland's warbler is a well known species and its progress is monitored across the nation and in other parts of the world. For example, a color photo of the Kirtland's is on the cover of the latest issue of The Nature Conservancy magazine, and a FWS biologist and team member co-authored a 1996 paper on Kirtland's management in Bird Conservation International. Over 1000 people from every state and several foreign countries come each year to see the warbler on tours provided by FWS and Forest Service. The Secretary of the Interior published an article entitled "The Mio Model" in Defenders magazine praising the cooperative Kirtland's warbler recovery program. A FWS failure to maintain its involvement with and meet its responsibilities to warbler recovery likely will send a wide reaching message about its support for its own endangered species program. It also may raise questions about FWS involvement in other difficult and long term efforts such as Great Lakes lake trout restoration, sea lamprey control and natural resource damage assessment.

This team of Kirtland's warbler experts, appointed by you to advise FWS, urges you to reconsider any plans to reduce funding and diminish FWS leadership in the recovery and protection of this highly visible species. We believe such action would not only jeopardize the continued existence of the warbler, but do immeasurable harm to the FWS reputation and ability to lead the nation in the conservation of endangered species.

The team is ready to assist you to the extent possible, and would appreciate word from you about the FWS role in Kirtland's warbler recovery this year and for the future.

Sincerely,



Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team  
Kenneth R. Ennis, Team Leader

cc:Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team