



Ontario

newsrelease

Ministry of
Natural
Resources

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RARE WARBLER ADDED
TO ENDANGERED LIST

One of the world's most critically endangered birds - Kirtland's warbler - is now the 13th species to be protected under Ontario's Endangered Species Act, Natural Resources Minister Frank S. Miller said today.

A recent census of the Central Michigan jack pine plains - the species' only known breeding range - indicates that approximately 450 birds survive.

"This extremely small world population points to the significance of Ontario sight records and to the need for our cooperation with the Michigan-based Kirtland's warbler survival project," Mr. Miller added.

Gerald McKeating, Ministry biologist responsible for the endangered species program, said that over a dozen sightings have been reported in Ontario since 1900. The most recent, in June and July of this year, occurred in jack pine stands near Pembroke, where a male Kirtland's warbler was photographed, mist-netted and banded. The bird was discovered and kept under observation by Dr. Paul Aird, Associate Professor, Faculty of Forestry and Landscape Architecture, University of Toronto.

more...

Kirtland's warbler...2

Unfortunately, the decline in the Kirtland's warbler population is directly related to the species' very specific habitat requirements because the birds will usually nest only in 8-20 year old, even-aged, jack pine stands.

In the past, forest fires opened up large tracts suitable for jack pine regeneration, but with the gradual improvement in forest fire control techniques, the scope of forest fires was restricted, resulting in decreased availability of warbler habitat.

This problem has been alleviated in Michigan through the use of management techniques including controlled burns. Plantings of jack pine also help ensure that stands at the required stage of growth will be available to the warblers when other stands become too old.

Ministry biologists are trying to determine whether a small breeding population survives in any of Ontario's jack pine regions. With the population critically reduced, the species will probably require permanent monitoring and management of its breeding range.

more...3

Kirtland's warbler...3

"If the Kirtland's warbler does indeed breed in Ontario," Mr. McKeating said, "this will only be determined through surveys of suitable jack pine habitat during the breeding season. Whatever the outcome, the presence of this seriously endangered species in Ontario is sufficient to warrant its protection."

-30-

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