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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



North Central Region



NEWS RELEASE

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SEARCH FOR ENDANGERED SONGBIRD SUCCESSFUL IN WISCONSIN, POPULATIONS UP IN MICHIGAN

Wisconsin residents hope to see a spread of the endangered Kirtland's warbler in their state, as a search for the songbird in that state has led to locating one male bird. The Kirtland's warbler is rarely seen outside its Michigan nesting grounds, however, their populations are on the increase there, a strong sign of recovery and the chance for its return to Wisconsin.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources jointly funded the search this year, as they have the past five years. Results from the recent Wisconsin search for the warbler were termed a success as, one male was found for the second consecutive year. No female birds, nor any evidence of nesting were located.

"The Wisconsin survey is a tremendous task that would be impossible without a great deal of volunteer assistance," Wes Jones, Wisconsin DNR biologist said. "More than 70 people participated in the surveys and searched more than 24,000 acres of suitable nesting grounds within the state."

Sam Marler, the Service's North Central Region director, said, "Finding a single Kirtland's warbler in Wisconsin is a good sign and we hope to see that number grow in the years to come. The number of Kirtland's warblers has increased dramatically on their Michigan nesting grounds, and we hope this will lead them to nest in new areas as well."

This year, 397 singing male Kirtland's warblers were found on the Michigan nesting ground

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surveys, up from a 1987 low of 167 males. The 1992 population of Kirtland's warblers worldwide was about 800, as of the beginning of the 1992 nesting season.

Kirtland's warbler researchers speculate that, because there are large areas of high quality habitat developing in Michigan, young warblers might not be venturing far to establish their own nesting territories. They believe that it is possible for more of the birds to venture into nearby states and Canada to find good nesting areas in future years, however, searches in Ontario and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan failed to locate any Kirtland's warblers this year.

This is the largest number of Kirtland's warblers known to exist in Michigan since a 1961 survey located 502 singing males. Annual counts have been made in Michigan since the 1971 discovery that species populations had plummeted to 201 males between 1961 and 1971.

Kirtland's warbler populations are monitored by counting singing males. The females do not sing and their behavior patterns make them more difficult to notice than males. The birds are known to nest almost exclusively in large blocks of young jack pine, so only similar sites are surveyed.

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