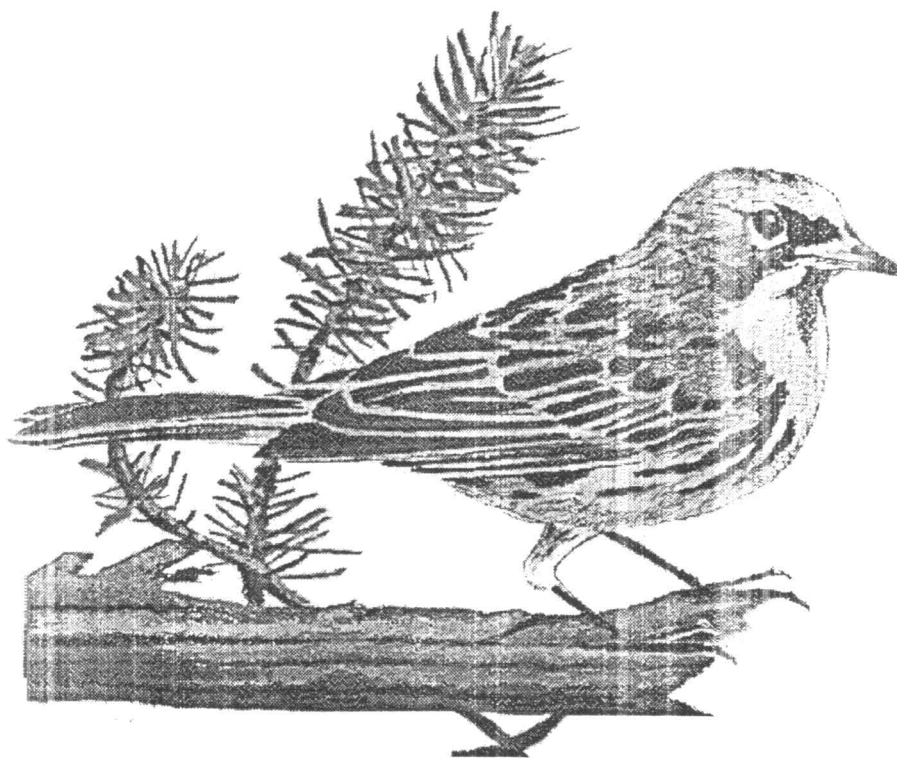


**KIRTLAND'S WARBLER
SUMMARY of RECOVERY EFFORTS**

FY1995



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The Kirtland's warbler, one of our nation's rarest songbirds was one of the first species to be placed on the endangered species list in 1973. This highly specialized blue and yellow sparrow sized bird nests no where in the world but northern Michigan. The warbler prefers stands of jack pine trees 6 to 20 years old, which are the natural result of forest fires. Modern forest fire suppression, necessary to protect human life and property, prevents natural regeneration. Intensive management of the forest lands in Michigan is necessary to provide sufficient breeding habitat for this bird. Since 1971, a cooperative effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the Michigan Audubon Society has existed to ensure the future of the Kirtland's warbler. Department of Interior recovery efforts include cowbird control, research monitoring, habitat management and an education and outreach program for the local communities that are situated in and around the Kirtland's warbler nesting area. This report will summarize the recovery efforts the four cooperative agencies carried out during fiscal year 1995 (FY95). The East Lansing Field Office received \$100,000 in FY95 to carry out activities relating to the recovery of the Kirtland's warbler. The approximate cost of project efforts are given when they could be obtained.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

There are approximately 134,000 acres of jack pine stands designated for Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat on 24 management areas within state and federal lands. The management areas consist of 53,488 acres in the Huron-Manistee National Forest, 74,143 acres within the AuSable, Mackinac, and Pere Marquette State Forests, and 6,500 acres of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service land interspersed throughout the state forest areas. These areas are considered essential habitat and are being managed to provide a sustained, even flow of suitable nesting habitat. Management of warbler habitat consists of logging, burning, and planting designated tracts of land on a rotational basis to provide 36,000 to 40,000 acres of productive nesting habitat at all times.

The MDNR received \$117,000 in Section 6 funds in FY95 from the Service. This money was used to help cover the cost of creating habitat for the Kirtland's warbler such as purchasing jack pine seedlings, maintaining tree planting equipment, and hiring short-term workers to work on tree planting crews. The MDNR's Division of Wildlife planted 1,814,000 trees on 1,420 acres of state forestlands designated as Kirtland's warbler management areas (KWMA). Contractors hand planted an additional 31,000 fill-in trees in management areas as well. In FY95, the USFS will have planted 1,475,339 jack pine trees on 2,187 acres. On Service lands, managed by Seney National Wildlife Refuge, a total of 90 acres were planted in FY95. Seney



National Wildlife Refuge received \$4,000 in FY95 through Region 3's endangered species discretionary funds to be used for habitat management.

COWBIRD CONTROL

Brown-headed cowbirds, obligate nest parasites were reducing warbler annual production to less than one young per pair in 1971. Cowbirds return each year in diminished numbers to warbler nesting areas where they are trapped and removed by East Lansing Field Office biologists. Survival of the Kirtland's warbler is unlikely without cowbird control. Sixty-six cowbird traps, including 11 new ones, were activated during the week of April 17. Of these, one trap had to be completely rebuilt during the trapping season after a tornado destroyed it. The Service contracted with a private individual for the construction of trap panels (\$1,352) that can be assembled on-site by Service personnel. A total of 457 cowbirds (start-up decoys for the cowbird traps) were trapped during March and early April in Sandusky, Ohio at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal Damage Control research facility. The Service provided food for the birds during this time and throughout the trapping season white millet was placed in each trap to attract cowbirds and to feed decoys (\$1,034). Miscellaneous supplies purchased (\$315) included wood and screening to build 17 seed trays, buckets, tools, staples, and tape.

Four temporary employees, three cowbird trappers and one supervisor, were hired during the trapping season of April 17 - June 30. Two employees were brought on early to assist permanent staff with pre-season activities (\$42,661). Travel expenses during the trapping season were \$4,520. Another \$13,171 was used to cover partial salaries of other permanent staff.

Six vehicles were used to carry out cowbird control activities in FY95. A total of 64,643 miles were accumulated on the six project vehicles throughout FY95. Of these, 56,643 miles were accumulated during the trapping season. To keep these vehicles in operating condition, funds were used for gas (\$2,985) and vehicle maintenance (\$1,747). A new mid-size Dodge Dakota pick-up 4X4 was purchased (\$19,000) to replace an older vehicle with 100,000+ miles. The Service also contracted with a private individual to have three wooden storage trunks constructed for the three trucks that run the cowbird trap lines (\$643). These trunks are used to hold millet, tools, nets and any other necessary equipment required to perform duties while on trap lines. Six cellular phones were in operation throughout the 11 week season (\$1,193) by each temporary employee for safety and security reasons.

A total of 5,855 cowbirds were captured in 1995 compared to 3011 in 1994. The average annual cowbird catch for 24 years is 4101. Since 1972, 98,427 cowbirds have been removed. Approximately 2,500 frozen cowbirds were shipped to a USDA research station in Denver, Colorado to assist researchers in a blackbird migration study.

