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USDA Forest Service

2001 Kirtland's Warbler Census Report

Huron-Manistee National Forests



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Contents

EVALUATION 2

 INTRODUCTION 2

 METHODS 3

 AREAS SURVEYED 3

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER CENSUS DATA 4

 DISCUSSION 5

CHARTS AND GRAPHS 6

 HURON NATIONAL FOREST KIRTLAND’S WARBLER CENSUS RESULTS 1999-2001 6

 MICHIGAN KIRTLAND’S WARBLER CENSUS RESULTS 1951-2001 6

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER CENSUS ON THE HURON NATIONAL FOREST/MICHIGAN 1986-2001 6

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER CENSUS RESULTS BY KWMA ON HURON NATIONAL FOREST 6

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER MANAGEMENT AREA 5-YEAR TRENDS ON THE HURON NATIONAL FOREST 6

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER OCCUPANCY BY HABITAT TYPES ON THE HURON NATIONAL FOREST 6

 KIRTLAND’S WARBLER HABITAT PLANTED ON THE HURON NATIONAL FOREST 1985-2001 6

SURVEY SUMMARY AND MAPS 7

 BIG CREEK 7

 ELDORADO 7

 LUZERNE BURN 7

 MACK LAKE 7

 MCKINLEY 7

 PINE RIVER 7

 OSCODA BURN 7

 TAWAS 7

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Evaluation

Introduction

The Kirtland's warbler census has been conducted annually since the 1971. The year 2001 was the 31st consecutive year that the census has been conducted. The 1971 census showed that the Kirtland's warbler population had declined 60% from the 1961 census to only 201 singing males. In the fall of 1971, a committee was formed and recommended the census be conducted annually to monitor the fate of this species. In 1974, the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team was appointed and immediately recommended that the annual census be continued. This recommendation was later documented in the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan. This document states that the purpose of conducting the census is to not only monitor the fate of the species, but also to provide baseline data for needed research, evaluate habitat development programs, and provide species and habitat protection from potential human impacts.

The annual census data provides valuable information to assist managers in protecting the species and its habitat, and leads to modification of management practices. Data is critical to research related to this species in both its summer and winter habitats. Many researchers develop their hypothesis and request census data to test these theories.

The responsibility for the Kirtland's warbler census has been vested with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Jerry Weinrich, MDNR biologist, has provided coordination for this effort. Those areas of Kirtland's warbler habitat within the Huron National Forest have been delegated to the Forest Service. Forest Service biologists Philip Huber, David Riegler and Kenneth Rex Ennis provided leadership in conducting the 2001 census on National Forest System land.

Methods

The 2001 census was conducted June 6 through June 15; the same period as is was conducted in the past. The Huron National Forest census was conducted as follows:

Day	Date	Area
Wednesday	June 6	Eldorado/Tawas/Oscoda Burn
Thursday	June 7	Big Creek
Friday	June 8	Big Creek/Luzerne Burn/Ogemaw (State)
Saturday	June 9	Pine River
Sunday	June 10	Pine River
Monday	June 11	Mack Lake
Tuesday	June 12	McKinley
Wednesday	June 13	Make-up day for rain and finish misc. areas
Thursday	June 14	Make-up day for rain and finish misc. areas
Friday	June 15	Make-up day for rain and finish misc. areas

The census was conducted in all areas believed to be occupiable Kirtland's warbler habitat. To cover the estimated 13,000 acres on the Huron National Forest, employees were needed from the Forest Service, MDNR, and Fish and Wildlife Service. Most importantly, 18 volunteers provided over 200 hours of time and expertise critical to accomplishing this task.

The methods and period for conducting the census were defined by the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team. Before the census, The Michigan Department of Natural Resources distributed "The Instructions for the 2001 Kirtland's Warbler Census". These instructions were used to conduct the 2001 census.

Pre-census planning involved reviewing past years monitoring efforts, census results, querying our vegetation databases (ArcInfo & CDS) to located young jack pine stands, and performing on-the-ground examinations to determine if additional areas needed to be censused. Areas that met the criteria for potential Kirtland's warbler habitat were identified from the data, and GIS maps were produced for all areas. A schedule for conducting the census for the different management areas was produced and census leaders were designated.

Areas Surveyed

Pre-census planning identified several new areas for the census and allowed us to delete several areas that had been censused in the past. Since the 1995 census, the Forest Service has focused on surveying younger plantings of jack pine to ensure the census was locating all the singing male

