



Wisconsin Kirtland's Warbler 2009 Season Summary

The following is a brief summary of Kirtland's warbler activities in Wisconsin in 2009. Planning and coordination for these activities were conducted by Joel Trick of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Kim Grveles of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

MONITORING

Adams County

In 2009 Nick Anich served as our full time monitor at the Adams County sites where Kirtland's warblers nested in 2007 and 2008. Nick monitored these sites between May 11 and July 10, and also spent some time at a newly discovered site located approximately 6 miles away. The first Kirtland's warbler males were observed on May 12, with new arrivals increasing this total to at least 8 males by May 25, with a 9th male that was first seen on June 26.

The first female was observed on May 19, and a total of 9 females were eventually found during the season. While the late-arriving male never did pair with a female, one of the males attended two nests, hence 8 males and 9 females were present for most of the season. In addition to the birds at the main nesting area, a single male was discovered at the new site on June 10, and on June 12, it was determined that he was paired with a female.



Kirtland's warbler male at a new Adams County site, June 12 2009.

For the 2009 breeding season, we documented a total of 10 male and 10 female Kirtland's warblers in Adams County. Notably, five of the seven color-banded males that were present at the site last year returned in 2009. We recorded at least 10 Kirtland's warbler nesting attempts in



Adams County in 2009, including one nest at the new site. Two nests were lost to parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds, and one nest was apparently lost to predation. At least 6 Adams County nests were successful, fledging an estimated 23 young, with a seventh nest not yet fledged on Nick's last day of work. This nest had four young still in the nest 6 days before they were expected to fledge, but we were not able to confirm its final outcome. We estimate that 23 to 27 young Kirtland's warblers fledged from 6 to 7 nests in Adams County in 2009.

This Kirtland's warbler male that was originally banded in the Bahamas in 2008 has been present at the Adams County nesting site each of the past two years. June 7, 2008 photo.

Marinette County

Volunteer Jack Swelstad found Kirtland's warbler males at two separate sites in Marinette County, including one bird at the same site where a bird was found in 2008. Each of these birds was subsequently observed with a female, and nesting was documented at one of the sites. This nest ultimately fledged three young, marking the first confirmed breeding of the species in Marinette County.



Kirtland's warbler fledgling, approximately 17 days of age. Adams County WI, July 1 2009.

SUMMARY

In 2009, we documented a total of 12 male and 12 female Kirtland's warblers present in Wisconsin. Of a total of 11 recorded nesting attempts, 7 to 8 nests were successful, fledging an estimated 26 to 30 young.

COWBIRD TRAPPING

A total of three brown-headed cowbird traps were installed by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) -Wildlife Services at the Adams County nesting sites, and operated from April 22 through June 20. USDA Wildlife Specialist Barry Benson again operated the traps, capturing 221 males and 82 females, for a grand total of 303 cowbirds removed from the site in 2009.

BANDING

Adams County

Banding operations in Wisconsin were again led by retired FWS biologist Ron Refsnider, beginning with an initial effort on June 1 and 2.

Over the 2-day period, seven Kirtland's warblers were captured, including six males and one female. Two of the males and the female were previously unbanded, and four of the five previously banded males present at the site were recaptured. On June 15 and 16, two additional Adams County males were captured and banded, one at the main site and one at the new site about 6 miles away. On July 1 and 2, we again visited the main site for banding, to target fledglings. We banded three fledglings over the 2-day period, and also captured a recently arrived unbanded adult male.



Kirtland's warbler female, Adams County WI, July 1 2009.



Kirtland's warbler fledgling being measured prior to release. Adams County WI, July 1 2009.

Marinette County

On June 2, we captured a bird that had been banded in the Bahamas in April 2009. This was at the same site where a bird was banded in 2008. A second, unbanded bird was later found at another site approximately 5 miles away, and was captured and banded on June 19.

SUMMARY

A total of 12 male Kirtland's warblers were found in Wisconsin in 2009, and all were banded by the end of the field season. Six of these males were already banded prior to arrival in Wisconsin in 2009, and two of these had been originally banded in the Bahamas. A total of six unbanded males were captured and banded in 2009, five in Adams County and one in Marinette County. In 2009 we also banded the first Kirtland's warbler female and fledglings ever banded in Wisconsin. At the request of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team, we collected crown feathers and toenail clippings from all adult birds captured, to be used for isotope analysis to determine the potential linkage between habitat quality of the wintering grounds and the breeding grounds.

STATEWIDE SURVEYS

A statewide survey of potentially suitable Kirtland's warbler habitat was conducted between June 6 and 15 by 41 volunteers plus agency staff in 7 Counties (Douglas, Bayfield, Vilas, Marinette, Oconto, Adams, and Jackson). During the surveys, singing males were found at two sites in Marinette County and one new site in Adams County. Subsequent monitoring of these three sites revealed that each male had an associated female, and two of these three pairs successfully fledged young, including the first confirmed nesting of the species in Marinette County. A singing male was also reported at a site in Douglas County, but we were not able to confirm that report. Additional surveys conducted on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Bayfield County in an area where a Kirtland's warbler was observed in 2008 failed to result in any observations in 2009.

FIELD TRIPS

This year we organized our first agency field trip, which was held on May 29. Approximately 25 state, federal and county agency employees were invited to visit Kirtland's warbler habitat and view the bird. Individuals were selected to attend based upon their responsibilities that included management of areas or properties that contained potential Kirtland's warbler habitat.

On May 30, we conducted our second Kirtland's Warbler Field Trip for members of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO). This year we accommodated approximately 80 participants, all of whom had an opportunity to view a singing male Kirtland's warbler.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The great success we enjoyed in 2009 is a tribute to the many individuals and organizations involved in the project. It is no overstatement to say that we never could have accomplished all we did without the critical contributions of our numerous partners.

Plum Creek Timber Company again allowed us to use their lands to conduct monitoring, banding and cowbird trapping, and provided great support and information at our WSO Kirtland's Warbler Field Trip. The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (NRF) provided the bulk of project funding to support Kim Grveles involvement, which included her share of project coordination, public outreach and education, coordination with other DNR programs to promote management of jack pine barrens for Kirtland's warbler, and especially volunteer coordination and organization of statewide surveys. NRF funds also supported Adams County monitoring and banding. Charlie Luthin of NRF gave the project his personal attention and provided support and information at our WSO Kirtland's Warbler Field Trip.

We were fortunate to again have the services of an outstanding field biologist in the position of Kirtland's warbler monitor. Nick Anich routinely demonstrated his exceptional field skills and consistently went above and beyond the call of duty in performance of his duties.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services contributed time and resources to fund construction and operation of cowbird traps, with the dependable efforts of Wildlife Specialist Barry Benson again proving essential to the nesting success of Wisconsin Kirtland's warblers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contributed funding through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to help offset the costs of cowbird trap operation, and Endangered Species Act Section 6 funds and Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Grant funds to partially fund Kim's involvement in the project.

Nancy Livingston again graciously provided lodging for our Kirtland's warbler monitor, and Ron Refsnider contributed his time and expertise to make our color banding efforts a great success. Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Biologist Jon Robaidek again provided critical monitoring assistance to determine nest outcomes. WSO contributed funds generated by field trip participants, which was used to offset housing costs and conduct vegetation surveys of nesting habitat. A number of County Forest Administrators provided assistance in identifying potential suitable habitat to survey for Kirtland's warblers. The generous efforts of numerous enthusiastic volunteer birders allowed us to survey for Kirtland's warblers at many Wisconsin sites. In particular, volunteer Dr. Jack Swelstad has consistently provided us with exceptional monitoring of Kirtland's warblers in Marinette County.

In addition to those named above, numerous other individuals contributed to the project in 2009, including Lynn Akley, Ron Akley, Betsy Bartelt, Jeff Baughman, Ida Baumann, Ty Baumann, Kurt Brownell, Joan Campbell, Paul Charland, Tim Collins, Erik Collins, Donna DePape, Ray Forsgren, Ruth Forsgren, Sandy Gillum, Mike Gottfredsen, Ed Houston, Dan Jackson, Karen Karash, Nolan Kollath, Rick Koziel, Bill Krouse, Sarah Krouse, Steve LaValley, Chip Lovell, James B. McCrady, Ann Motquin, Jon Motquin, Bill O'Brion, John O'Donnell, Joe Palzkill, Tom Prestby, John Probst, Rachel Samerdyke, Tom Schultz, Glenna Schwalbe, Paul Schwalbe, Joe Schwantes, Karen Siebers, Chuck Sindelar, Bruce Steger, Ingrid Stephan, Jason Suckow, Patti Trick, David Troester, Tom Uttech, Troy Walters, Todd Watson, Brad Webb, Matt Welter, David J. Wiemiller, Darwin Wile, Michelle Windsor, and Augie Wirkus.