

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

Oscoda County is very fortunate to be the home to one of the rarest songbirds in the world. The Kirtland's Warbler is the largest of the Wood Warblers in Eastern North America, weighing in at half an ounce. It sings a beautiful song which can be heard over a quarter mile away. What also makes this endangered species so special is its required habitat, nesting only in the jack pine ecosystem, found in six to eight counties of the northeastern region of Michigan. The highest population of this rare bird once nested in Oscoda County, and because of this, Oscoda County is now officially named "The Kirtland's Warbler Capital of Michigan."

The name "Kirtland's Warbler" was given to the species by Spencer F. Baird of the Smithsonian Institute who in 1852 published his description and title of the new species. Originally the bird was named "Sylvicola Kirtlandii" in honor of Dr. Kirtland, a naturalist, researcher, and publisher of wildlife in Ohio and the Mississippi Valley. He was described, "a gentleman to whom, more than any one living, we are indebted to for important knowledge of the Natural History of the Mississippi Valley."

The discovery of the Kirtland's Warbler in Oscoda County took place on June 13, 1903, by E.H. Forthingham of the University of Michigan and T.G. Galer, on a fishing trip guided by James Parmalee of the Red Oak area. Shooting the Kirtland's Warbler to collect a specimen, they returned to Ann Arbor where Norman A. Wood identified the species as the rare Kirtland's Warbler.

By train, riverboat and on foot, Norman A. Wood quickly returned to Oscoda County to locate the bird. He spent six days searching in several areas before he located a bird near the Crawford/Oscoda County line (Section 31, T27N, R1E, Oscoda County) and recorded the first Kirtland's Warbler nest; two hatchlings and one egg inside. The experience is best described by Norman A. Wood in his journal.



*"No bird and no nest! I watched a few minutes longer and saw the female in the low jack pines. I watched her and she seemed very uneasy. I began looking carefully on the ground, as I made my mind up it would be found there. Suddenly I saw the nest!"*

Wood was quite accurate in his assumption that this warbler nests on the ground.

After the initial discovery of the nesting location, historians were unsure who actually would be credited with finding the first complete, unhatched egg set. Edward Arnold takes documented credit for his dates of June 29, 1904. Later, documentation shows Norman A. Wood who arranged to have James Parmalee collect a complete egg set on June 6, 1904. This particular egg set was credited to Norman A. Wood because James Parmalee did not have a collectors permit and Norman Wood did not want him caught. Later, due to a family illness, Norman Wood sold the complete set for \$25.00 to Frank Chapman at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

Since these initial dates, history was made here in Oscoda County several times. Two important events included the passage of the Federal Endangered Species Act in 1974 and the Michigan Endangered Species Act in 1975. These acts

allowed state and federal forest lands to be managed to preserve the habitat of the Kirtland's Warbler. Management of the Jack Pine forest is the key factor in the rare bird's survival.

The endangered warbler nests only in young Jack Pine forests. These young forest conditions once were created by wildfires that would burn several thousand acres at a time. As the early settlers came to the area, fires were put out more quickly and the amount of young Jack Pine forest decreased.

With the decrease in Jack Pine habitat, Kirtland's Warbler numbers dropped dramatically.

Timber harvest and replanting on harvested areas are the main tools to recreate the young Jack Pine habitat required for the Kirtland's Warbler. At the same time it provides for other species such as rabbits, fox, bluebirds, turkeys, deer, bear, blueberries and the native Alleghany Plum, which also exist within the jack pine ecosystem, leaving our area with opportunities in the forest industry and the tourist industry. Both complementing each other and leaving the Kirtland's Warbler the beneficiary of our success.

Surprisingly, man is not the Kirtland's Warbler enemy as with many other species. The parasitic cowbird, which lays its eggs in the Kirtland's Warbler's nest, is the biggest Warbler predator. The U.S.D.I. Fish & Wildlife Service controls the cowbird population by using large traps.

The Kirtland's Warbler is our most valuable wildlife species in Oscoda County. We would hope you enjoy studying and learning about this beautiful species while you visit our county.

The U.S.D.A. Forest Service office in Mio conducts tours in May and June each year. We urge you to go on a guided tour and to get acquainted with the Kirtland's Warbler.

# OSCODA LIST OF REGULAR BIRD SPECIES

<b>Anatidae</b>	summer resident	<b>Laridae</b>	summer resident	round	Black-throated Blue Warbler, Infrequent summer resident	summer resident
Mute Swan, Occasional year-round resident	Rough-legged Hawk, Common winter resident	Herring Gull, Occasional year-round	Willow Flycatcher, Infrequent summer resident	<b>Regulidae</b>	Blackburnian Warbler, Common migrant, occasional summer resident	Snow Bunting, Common winter resident
Tundra Swan, Infrequent migrant	Red-tailed Hawk, Common year-round	Ring-billed Gull, Common summer resident	Alder Flycatcher, Occasional summer resident	Golden-crowned Kinglet, Occasional year-round	Chestnut-sided Warbler, Common summer resident	Lapland Longspur, Occasional spring migrant
Trumpeter Swan, Common year-round	Broad-winged Hawk, Occasional summer resident	Black Tern, Infrequent summer resident	Least Flycatcher, Common summer resident	Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common migrant	Bay-breasted Warbler, Occasional migrant	<b>Icteridae</b>
Canada Goose, Abundant year-round	Red-shouldered Hawk, Occasional summer resident	Caspian Tern, Infrequent summer resident	Eastern Wood-Pewee, Abundant summer resident	<b>Sylviidae</b>	Blackpoll Warbler, Occasional migrant	Bobolink, Common summer resident
Mallard, Common year-round	Bald Eagle, Common year-round	<b>Columbidae</b>	Olive-sided Flycatcher, Infrequent summer resident	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Infrequent summer resident	Pine Warbler, Abundant summer resident	Eastern Meadowlark, Common summer resident
American Black Duck, Common migrant, infrequent winter resident	Osprey, Occasional summer resident	Rock Dove, Common year-round	<b>Laniidae</b>	<b>Turdidae</b>	Kirtland's Warbler, Common summer resident	Western Meadowlark, Rare summer resident
Northern Pintail, Occasional migrant	<b>Falconidae</b>	Mourning Dove, Abundant year-round	Northern Shrike, Occasional winter resident	American Robin, Abundant summer resident	Palm Warbler, Occasional migrant	Red-winged Blackbird, Abundant summer resident
Gadwall, Infrequent migrant	Peregrine Falcon, Infrequent migrant	<b>Cuculidae</b>	<b>Vireonidae</b>	Wood Thrush, Common summer resident	Ovenbird, Abundant summer resident	Rusty Blackbird, Occasional migrant
American Widgeon, Common migrant	Merlin, Occasional summer resident	Black-billed Cuckoo, Common summer resident	Yellow-throated Vireo, Occasional summer resident	Hermit Thrush, Common summer resident	Northern Waterthrush, Occasional summer resident	Brewer's Blackbird, Common migrant, occasional summer resident
Green-winged Teal, Occasional migrant	American Kestrel, Common summer, occasional winter resident	Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Infrequent summer resident	Red-eyed Vireo, Abundant summer resident	Swainson's Thrush, Common migrant	Common Yellowthroat, Abundant summer resident	Common Grackle, Abundant summer resident
Northern Shoveler, Infrequent migrant	<b>Phasianidae</b>	<b>Strigidae</b>	Philadelphia Vireo, Occasional migrant	Gray-cheeked Thrush, Occasional fall migrant	Mourning Warbler, Common summer resident	Brown-headed Cowbird, Abundant summer resident
Blue-winged Teal, Common migrant	Wild Turkey, Common year-round	Eastern Screech-Owl, Infrequent year-round	Warbling Vireo, Common summer resident	Veery, Common summer resident	Wilson's Warbler, Occasional migrant	Baltimore Oriole, Abundant summer resident
Wood Duck, Common migrant and summer resident	Ruffed Grouse, Common year-round	Great Horned Owl, Occasional year-round	Blue-headed Vireo, Occasional summer resident	<b>Mimidae</b>	Canada Warbler, Common summer resident	<b>Fringillidae</b>
Redhead, Occasional migrant	Spruce Grouse, Rare year-round	Snowy Owl, Infrequent winter resident	<b>Corvidae</b>	Northern Mockingbird, Rare summer resident	American Redstart, Abundant summer resident	Evening Grosbeak, Infrequent year-round
Canvasback, Occasional migrant	Ring-necked Pheasant, Infrequent year-round	Long-Eared Owl, Infrequent year-round	Blue Jay, Abundant year-round	Gray Catbird, Common summer resident	<b>Cardinalidae</b>	Purple Finch, Common year-round
Ring-Necked Duck, Abundant migrant	<b>Ardeidae</b>	Short-Eared Owl, Infrequent year-round	Common Raven, Common year-round	Brown Thrasher, Common summer resident	Scarlet Tanager, Common summer resident	House Finch, Occasional year-round
Lesser Scaup, Common migrant	Great Blue Heron, Common summer resident	Barred Owl, Common year-round	American Crow, Abundant year-round	<b>Sturnidae</b>	Northern Cardinal, Occasional year-round	Pine Grosbeak, Infrequent winter resident; eruptive
Greater Scaup, Common migrant	Green Heron, Occasional summer resident	Northern Saw-whet Owl, Occasional year-round	<b>Alaudidae</b>	European Starling, Abundant year-round	Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Abundant summer resident	Hoary Redpoll, Eruptive and rare winter resident
Common Goldeneye, Abundant migrant, common winter resident	American Bittern, Infrequent summer resident	<b>Caprimulgidae</b>	Horned Lark, Common summer, occasional winter resident	<b>Motacillidae</b>	Dickcissel, Infrequent summer resident; eruptive	Common Redpoll, Common winter resident; eruptive
Bufflehead, Common migrant, occasional winter resident	<b>Gruidae</b>	Common Nighthawk, Common summer resident	<b>Hirundinidae</b>	American Pipit, Occasional migrant	Indigo Bunting, Abundant summer resident	Pine Siskin, Occasional year-round; eruptive
Hooded Merganser, Common migrant, infrequent summer resident	Sandhill Crane, Common migrant and summer resident	<b>Apodiformes</b>	Barn Swallow, Abundant summer resident	<b>Bombycillidae</b>	<b>Emberizidae</b>	American Goldfinch, Abundant year-round
Ruffed Grouse, Common migrant, infrequent summer resident	<b>Rallidae</b>	Chimney Swift, Common summer resident	Cliff Swallow, Common summer resident	Bohemian Waxwing, Infrequent winter resident; eruptive	Eastern Towhee, Occasional summer resident	Red Crossbill, Rare year-round; eruptive
Red-breasted Merganser, Occasional migrant, infrequent summer resident	Yellow Rail, Rare summer resident	<b>Trochilidae</b>	Tree Swallow, Abundant summer resident	Cedar Waxwing, Common summer, occasional winter resident	Savannah Sparrow, Abundant summer resident	White-winged Crossbill, Infrequent winter resident; eruptive
Common Merganser, Abundant year-round	Sora, Infrequent summer resident	Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Common summer resident	Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Common summer resident	<b>Parulidae</b>	Grasshopper Sparrow, Infrequent summer resident	<b>Passeridae</b>
<b>Gaviidae</b>	Virginia Rail, Infrequent summer resident	<b>Alcedinidae</b>	Bank Swallow, Common summer resident	Black-and-White Warbler, Common summer resident	Vesper Sparrow, Common summer resident	House Sparrow, Common year-round
Common Loon, Common migrant, occasional summer resident	American Coot, Infrequent migrant	Belted Kingfisher, Common summer resident	Purple Martin, Occasional summer resident	Golden-winged Warbler, Occasional summer resident	Dark-eyed Junco, Common winter, occasional summer resident	<b>Frequency of Observations – The following scale, while qualitative and anecdotal, reflects with fair accuracy the percent likelihood of encountering the species indicated. The scale assumes, however, that the species is being sought in appropriate habitat and at the indicated season of the year.</b>
<b>Podicipedidae</b>	<b>Charadriidae</b>	<b>Picidae</b>	<b>Paridae</b>	Blue-winged Warbler, Occasional summer resident	American Tree Sparrow, Common winter resident	<b>Abundant</b> - Observed on 75-100% of all bird outings
Horned Grebe, Occasional migrant	Black-bellied Plover, Infrequent migrant	Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common year-round	Black-capped Chickadee, Abundant year-round resident	Orange-crowned Warbler, Infrequent migrant	Chipping Sparrow, Abundant summer resident	<b>Common</b> - Observed on 25-75% of all bird outings
Pied-billed Grebe, Common migrant, occasional summer resident	Killdeer, Abundant summer resident	Red-headed Woodpecker, Occasional summer resident	Tufted Titmouse, Common year-round resident	Tennessee Warbler, Common migrant	Clay-colored Sparrow, Occasional summer resident	<b>Occasional</b> - Observed on 10-25% of all bird outings
<b>Phalacrocoracidae</b>	<b>Scolopacidae</b>	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Common summer resident	<b>Sittidae</b>	Nashville Warbler, Abundant summer resident	Field Sparrow, Common summer resident	<b>Infrequent</b> - Observed on less than 10% of all bird outings
Double-crested Cormorant, Occasional summer resident	Greater Yellowlegs, Occasional migrant	Hairy Woodpecker, Abundant year-round	White-breasted Nuthatch, Abundant year-round	Northern Parula, Common migrant, infrequent summer resident	White-crowned Sparrow, Common migrant	<b>Rare</b> - Observed on less than 1% of all bird outings
<b>Cathartidae</b>	Lesser Yellowlegs, Occasional migrant	Downy Woodpecker, Abundant year-round	Red-Breasted Nuthatch, Common year-round	Yellow Warbler, Common summer resident	White-throated Sparrow, Common summer resident	
Turkey Vulture, Abundant summer resident	Solitary Sandpiper, Infrequent migrant	Black-backed Woodpecker, Rare year-round	<b>Certhiidae</b>	Magnolia Warbler, Common migrant, occasional summer resident	Fox Sparrow, Common migrant	
<b>Accipitridae</b>	Upland Sandpiper, Common summer resident	Common Flicker, Common summer resident	Brown Creeper, Common year-round	Prairie Warbler, Rare summer resident; eruptive	Lincoln's Sparrow, Occasional summer resident	
Northern Goshawk, Infrequent year-round resident	Spotted Sandpiper, Common summer resident	Pileated Woodpecker, Common year-round	<b>Troglodytidae</b>	Cape May Warbler, Occasional summer resident	Swamp Sparrow, Occasional summer resident	
Cooper's Hawk, Occasional summer resident	Dunlin, Rare fall migrant	Eastern Kingbird, Common summer resident	House Wren, Common summer resident	Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common summer resident	Song Sparrow, Abundant	
Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common year-round	American Woodcock, Common summer resident	Great Crested Flycatcher, Common summer resident	Winter Wren, Occasional summer resident	Black-throated Green Warbler, Common summer resident		
Northern Harrier, Common	Wilson's Snipe, Occasional summer resident	Eastern Phoebe, Common	Sedge Wren, Infrequent summer resident			
			Caroline Wren, Rare year-			