



# The Newsletter of the Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team

Summer 2023 Issue

*This issue: Kirtland's Warbler Festival; Remembering Jerry Weinrich; Wildfire in Kirtland's Habitat; Meet Brianne Boan, USFS Wildlife Biologist*

## Festival Celebrates Kirtland's Warbler

Visitors to the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in Roscommon on June 3rd enjoyed field tours, vendors, children's games, natural history presentations, competitive bidding on unique bird houses, live music, and more. This year's festival enjoyed a bump in attendance, with an estimated 300 attendees, 30% more than in 2022. Tom Dale, Festival treasurer, said, "Those were the best programs we have ever had; everyone loved the new Kirtland's Warbler information presented."

The *Observer* even ran into this year's 3rd place winner in the Kirtland's Warbler Young Artists Contest. Her mom pointed her out and said being a contest winner was a highlight of the spring. However, Kallie K., a fourth grader from Kaleva, MI, was too busy to talk to a reporter — she was happily getting a Kirtland's Warbler painted on her arm instead.



The festivities start right at the registration booth for visitors to the Kirtland's Warbler Festival!

Photo by Steve Roels

Photo by Agami Photo Agency



## Farewell, Mr. Kirtland's Warbler! Remembering Jerry Weinrich

Jerry Weinrich began working with Kirtland's Warblers from the start of his career as a Research/Wildlife Habitat Biologist with Michigan DNR, and he kept helping long after he retired. Despite being a quiet person, he was a staunch protector of Kirtland's Warblers and their habitat. He was responsible for creating habitat, conducting the census of singing males, posting occupancy, trapping cowbirds, overseeing research, and educating the public. All the while, he mentored technicians, biologists, and researchers to become better stewards of the jack pine ecosystem. He enjoyed taking groups on tours to see and hear the warbler and other flora and fauna of the area. He had an impressive memory of the history of every management area, and it seemed like he personally knew every warbler who sang from the perches he created. Jerry was a founding member of the Kirtland's Warbler Festival and served on planning committees for the event throughout the years. He was a voting member of the Recovery Team and also served on the board of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance. Jerry was known as "Mr. Kirtland's Warbler", and his vast institutional knowledge will be deeply missed. More importantly, his warm friendship will be forever cherished.



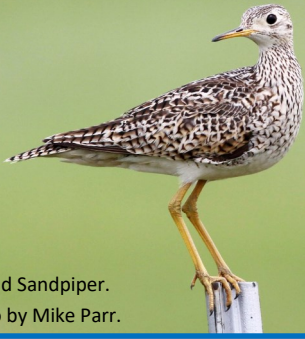
Photo by Carol Bocetti

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## Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team Summer Meeting

July 18–20, contact [KWconservation@gmail.com](mailto:KWconservation@gmail.com) for more information



Upland Sandpiper.  
Photo by Mike Parr.

### Species Profile: Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

Upland Sandpiper nests among the sedge and sweetfern in Kirtland's Warbler management areas that have been clear-cut in preparation for jack pine planting. Such habitat is atypical for the sandpiper, which usually nests in prairies and livestock pastures. It was listed as a threatened species by the Michigan DNR in 2023.

### Wilderness Trail Fire Burns Through Kirtland's Warbler Habitat

On June 3, a private campfire escaped and ignited a wildfire in Crawford County, eventually burning 2,400 acres before containment on June 6. KWCT Coordinator, Steve Roels, noticed smoke while leaving the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in Roscommon, "The morning started with hazy skies from the fires in Canada, but the low, thick smoke I saw in the afternoon was clearly something new, and nearby."

Unfortunately, the Wilderness Trail Fire, as it has been named, burned through about 500 acres of occupied Kirtland's Warbler habitat. Though the birds themselves were almost certainly able to fly out of harm's way, some nests and eggs may have been lost. The 2021 census recorded 18 singing males, so it is likely that around 40 adult birds were affected.

The loss of habitat is concerning, but the scale is relatively modest compared to the acreage annually planted for Kirtland's Warbler by state and federal agencies. The MI DNR intends to assess natural jack pine regeneration next year before determining if supplemental planting is needed to restore lost habitat. Although the fire is a short-term setback, Kirtland's Warbler is much more resilient to local events like this, thanks to 30 years of population recovery fueled by dedicated conservation work.



A jack pine cone opened by the heat of the fire.  
Photo by Dave Ewert.

### Get to Know a KWCT Member: Brianne Boan, USFS Wildlife Biologist

Brianne Boan first learned about Kirtland's Warbler during an undergraduate biology course and later read an article about the successful collaboration between public agencies, universities, and nonprofits that led to the historic delisting of the species. It seemed like the kind of thing she wanted to be part of. At the time, she was working for the US Forest Service managing rangeland in California. When she applied for an intriguing Wildlife Biologist opening with Ottawa National Forest, she had no idea Kirtland's Warbler was going to be a major part of the position!



Photo by Pamela Nankervis

Shortly after seeing her first ever Kirtland's Warbler during "Week One" on the new job, Brianne was thrilled when she was assigned the lead role on Baraga II, a forest management project to benefit Kirtland's Warbler and other jack pine ecosystem species. "Baraga Plains is my favorite part of the Ottawa National Forest," said Brianne. Although she is especially fond of Kirtland's Warbler, she also enjoys other forest residents such as Spruce Grouse, bears, wolves, and even the Northern Barrens Tiger Beetle. "The timber rotation we are planning will suit all these species as habitat ages into and out of Kirtland's habitat and will also provide benefits to the local forest product economy," Brianne explained.

### IN THE NEWS:

*New Kirtland's Site in Ontario Thrills Canadian Birders*

"If the habitat isn't there, we're going to have to make it."

<https://bit.ly/3NvjDhd>

*What Happens After a Fire?*

The MI DNR considers ecosystem recovery options after Wilderness Trail Fire.

<https://bit.ly/433KLtA>

*Study Reveals Inner Workings of Kirtland's Migration*

Birds act as "mini-meteorologists" to optimize long-distance flights

<https://s.si.edu/3NBjSYc>

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