



## Wisconsin Kirtland's Warbler Update June 1, 2012

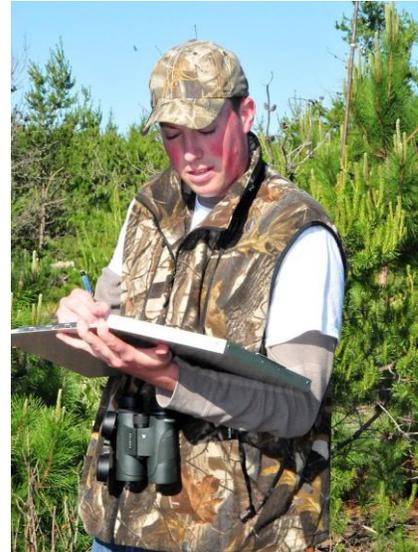


### The Season Begins

There has been a lot of project activity over the past two weeks. Since our last update, we have held our annual field trips, our primary monitor has begun field work, and we have captured and banded a total of seven unbanded males.

### Monitoring

On Monday May 21, our principal monitor for the 2012 nesting season, Shaun Hilgart, began work. Shaun recently graduated from UW-Madison with a major in Wildlife Ecology, and has already shown us that he was a great choice for the job. Joining Shaun in the field for one week was volunteer Alyssa DeRubeis. Alyssa had also applied for the monitor position this year, but decided to take another job this summer. We are hopeful that she will be available for next year. For the first week, Shaun and Alyssa concentrated on identifying all of the unbanded birds in preparation for our banding activities (see below), and this week, Shaun conducted a more thorough inventory of the entire site.



*Kirtland's warbler monitor Shaun Hilgart. Adams County, WI. May 29, 2012. Photo by Joel Trick.*

As of today Shaun has determined that at least 17 male Kirtland's warblers are now present at the Adams County breeding sites. This total does not include any birds that may yet be found at the satellite breeding site where several birds were found last year. It is possible more birds will be discovered when our second warbler monitor Emily Lind begins work next Monday. We plan to employ Emily to check other sites in Adams County that we have not yet had time to survey, as well as monitor any birds found in other counties.

### Field Trips

On Friday May 18 and Saturday May 19, we held field trips in conjunction with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (NRF) to provide NRF members an opportunity to see Kirtland's warblers. Over the course of two mornings, 56 people attended the field trips. The tour on Friday was comprised of 34 NRF members and guests, whereas Saturday's tour had 22 people who learned about the field trip from the NRF website and newsletter. Folks hailed from New Hampshire, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

Participants again visited three field stations at the Adams County breeding site, where they learned about cowbird trapping at one station, and habitat management and ecology of the Kirtland's warbler at a second station. At the third station, each participant had an opportunity to view a singing male Kirtland's warbler.

Joel A. Trick  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
2661 Scott Tower Drive  
New Franken, WI 54229  
920-866-1737  
[joel\\_trick@fws.gov](mailto:joel_trick@fws.gov)

Kim Grveles  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
101 S. Webster Street - ER/6  
Madison, WI 53703  
608-264-8594  
[kim.grveles@wisconsin.gov](mailto:kim.grveles@wisconsin.gov)

### **Color Banding**

We conducted our initial 2012 banding effort on Tuesday May 29, led by volunteer bander Ron Refsnider. Shaun was able to guide us to the territories of each of the 6 unbanded males that were identified over the past week. Despite rather windy conditions, we were able to successfully capture all unbanded birds known to be present. Having these birds marked with their own color bands will allow Shaun to more effectively map their individual territories and greatly facilitate monitoring. After finishing in Adams County, we then traveled to a location in Bayfield County where a bird was found last weekend, and were able to successfully capture and band another previously unbanded male.



*Color-banded Kirtland's warbler prior to release. Adams County, WI. May 29, 2012. Photo by Joel Trick, FWS.*

### **Nesting Season**

The past two weeks has seen the arrival of several female Kirtland's warblers, and based upon our observations in previous years, most are no doubt building nests and laying eggs. So far, Shaun has seen at least 4 females, but has not yet had time to find any nests. Now that our monitors can concentrate on nesting birds, we expect more females and nests to be found in the next week or so.



### **Summary**

To date, we have confirmed at least 17 different male Kirtland's warblers in Adams County. Volunteer surveyors Jack Swelstad, Jim Baughman, Dan Jackson and Steve LaValley have also documented four additional males, at sites in Marinette, Vilas, Bayfield and Douglas Counties, respectively. So far, 2012 is shaping up to be another banner year for Kirtland's warblers in Wisconsin.

*This color-banded male Kirtland's warbler, first banded in 2011, was among the first to arrive this year. Adams County, WI. May 17, 2012. Photo by Joel Trick, FWS.*

### **Cowbird Trapping**

USDA Wildlife Specialist Barry Benson reports that over the past two weeks, he removed an additional 29 cowbirds from the three cowbird traps. Through June 1, a total of 189 cowbirds have been captured and removed from the traps at the Adams County Kirtland's warbler site.

Joel A. Trick  
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2661 Scott Tower Drive  
New Franken, WI 54229  
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[joel\\_trick@fws.gov](mailto:joel_trick@fws.gov)

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608-264-8594  
[kim.grveles@wisconsin.gov](mailto:kim.grveles@wisconsin.gov)