

## Wisconsin Kirtland's Warbler Update June 10, 2013

### Adams County

We are pleased to welcome nest monitors Valarie Michel and Daryl Christensen. Valarie, who comes to us with a wealth of experience in songbird nest monitoring, began work on May 13. Daryl, who documented arriving males for us last year, started as second nest monitor on June 3.

On May 13, Valarie found two singing males at the Adams County main breeding site. This was the first day we checked the site, so we cannot know with certainty how long these birds had been present. Males continued to arrive at the site sporadically over the next few weeks with the latest arrival recorded on June 3 when Daryl joined Valarie to scout the site. The first two females were observed on May 20 and 21. Subsequent females were not found until May 29 or later. The delay in their arrival was probably due to cold, rainy weather that persisted throughout the spring.



As of June 7, a total of 15 males and 7 females have been reported at the site. All 7 females have been associated with males and two nests have been found so far. Of the 15 males, 13 were previously banded and 2 were banded on May 29 (see banding report below). Interestingly, a male banded in 2011 but not seen in 2012 came back to the site this year. Another remarkable event was the return of a male that was captured and banded as a fledgling last August. We have suspected that at least some of the second-year males captured and banded at the main breeding site were birds that hatched there the previous year. This is the first time we were able to document that occurrence.

### Statewide Surveys

The annual survey for Kirtland's Warblers began on May 18 with 23 volunteers searching for Kirtland's Warblers in jack pine stands of 6 Wisconsin counties. On May 25, a birder who is not part of the survey reported finding a bird in Douglas County on May 25. We have been unable to confirm the report.

Steve LaValley, DNR Wildlife Biologist, reported possibly hearing a singing male in appropriate habitat in Bayfield County on 5/28 but was unable to confirm the observation.

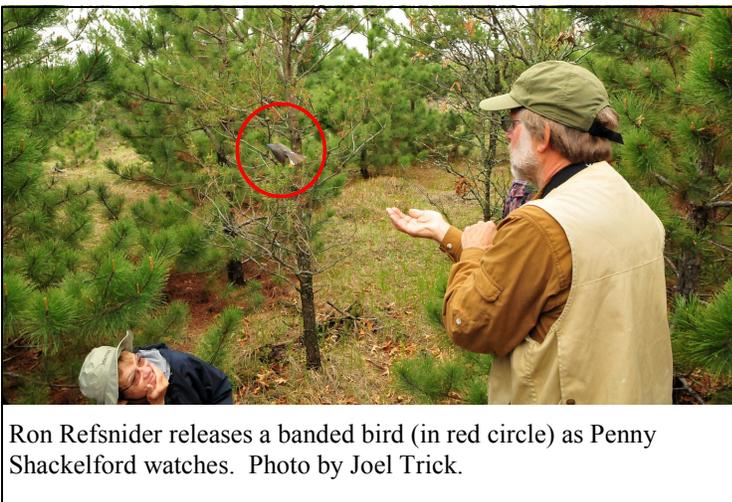
In Marinette County, two singing males, each at a different location, have been confirmed. One male was banded and occupying the same territory that he held in 2011 and 2012. The other male was not banded and sang from a relatively young stand near where a pair nested in 2009. Volunteer Jack Swelstadt, who found the two males, reported on 6/10 that a female is now associated with the banded male. We will be keeping a watch on this pair to try to determine if nesting occurs. We will also attempt to capture and band the unbanded male.

Another Marinette County observation occurred on May 29 when volunteer Joan Campbell saw a male Kirtland's Warbler among a mixed flock of migrating warblers. The bird never sang and was foraging in habitat that was not appropriate for breeding. This bird was most likely en route to its breeding grounds.

No other reports of Kirtland's Warblers have come in so far. The survey period ends on June 15.

## Banding

Ron Refsnider, retired US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologist, was our lead bander again this year. He was assisted by Joel Trick, also retired from USFWS and Valarie Michel. This year the banding crew was joined by Gary and Penny Shackelford, winners of a silent auction held by the Natural Resources Foundation at a fundraiser last fall.



Ron Refsnider releases a banded bird (in red circle) as Penny Shackelford watches. Photo by Joel Trick.

The crew successfully captured and banded two males. Age of the first bird captured was determined to be a second-year male. The other bird was an after-second-year bird, meaning the age was at least two years or older. The next target was a male banded in 2008 that has since lost two of its four bands. We tried capturing at several locations, and came close to netting him, but he was too wary and did not get caught.

An attempt was made to capture another male located near where an unbanded

male had been reported earlier. Although the male that responded avoided the net, the female he was chasing flew into the net and was banded. A photograph taken of the male by Gary Shackelford showed that he already had a set of bands.

The final target was a bird banded as a second-year male in 2012. By capturing this bird, the crew hoped to learn more about wearing of feathers, a characteristic used to indicate a bird's age. Unfortunately, this male was also wary and avoided the net.

## Cowbird Trapping

April 23 began trapping season for Brown-headed Cowbirds at the main site in Adams County. Initially, three traps were placed at the site. A fourth trap was added in mid-May in order to adequately cover the larger area now being occupied by Kirtland's Warblers.

After seven weeks of trapping, a total of 188 cowbirds – 126 males, 62 females -- were captured. For comparison, 143 cowbirds were captured after the 7th week in 2011, while 202 were captured after a similar period in 2012.