
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Kirtland's Warbler makes appearance during Simcoe County Forest 100th Anniversary

Midhurst/June 13, 2022 – During its spring migration, the Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*), made a stop in Simcoe County to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Simcoe County Forest.

This rare and endangered migratory bird with a global population of fewer than 5,500, was observed in the Packard Tract in the Township of Essa on May 31, as confirmed by the Project team members.

In 2017, the County of Simcoe, in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Service, GEI Consultants (then Savanta Inc.), American Forests, Forests Ontario and Mary Gartshore Consulting, began work on the first project to create suitable nesting habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler within the Simcoe County Museum Tract. The Packard Tract project began in 2019, with funding provided by Ganawenim Meshkiki - Henvy Inlet First Nations through The Eastern Georgian Bay Initiative. Cooperation from the Ontario Heritage Trust and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority also allowed for the expansion of the project footprint.

"We are very excited that our investment in the creation of a unique habitat and forest restoration project are paying off with the return of the Kirtland's Warbler to our region, just in time to celebrate the Simcoe County Forests centennial," said Warden George Cornell. "Creating habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler has been an international effort and this project further demonstrates the County's trailblazing commitment to forestry and habitat stewardship."

Residents and visitors are welcome to view these special guests to the Simcoe County Forest; however, all are reminded to please respect the birds and neighbouring landowners. Given that the Kirtland's Warbler and its habitat are protected by federal and provincial law, visitors are required to follow the posted guidelines to avoid disturbing the birds and their habitat so as they don't abandon the site. Volunteers from the Ontario Field Ornithologist's Rare Bird Ambassador program will be on location to assist visitors while ensuring viewing guidelines are respected.

About the Kirtland's Warbler

Kirtland's Warbler is a small migratory songbird. They rely on a specific habitat type that includes large tracts of young pine forests for nesting habitat. The bird builds its nest on the ground at the base of a tree underneath the low branches. As forests mature and these lower branches naturally prune themselves, the habitat is no longer suitable.

The Kirtland's Warbler was nearly extinct 50 years ago but has since begun to recover due to multiple habitat projects in the United States and their Bahamian wintering grounds. The restoration projects in Simcoe County are the first of their kind in Canada.

About the County of Simcoe

The County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at simcoe.ca.

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The Kirtland's Warbler at the Packard Tract in the Township of Essa. Photo credit to Willem Span.