



The Wake-Robin

Newsletter of the Sault Naturalists of Ontario and Michigan
Volume 51, Number 3. December 2005

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The Sault Naturalists
Northern Postal Outlet

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Publication Deadlines for the Wake-Robin and Annual Report

Publication Target

September meeting
December meeting
February AGM
May meeting

Last date for submissions

August 15
November 15
January 15
April 15

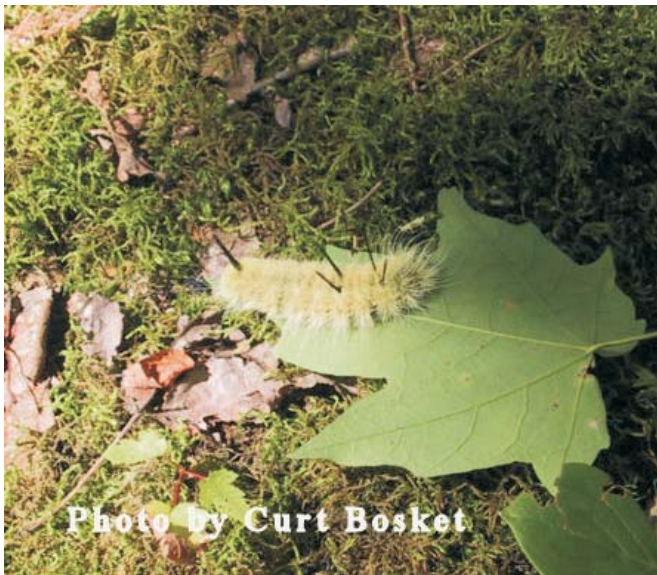
Please keep outing reports to about a half page. Accompanying illustrations are welcome.

Editors: Betty and Gerry Bennett. E-mail bengerbet@shaw.ca

December 2005 to June 2006 Program

December 13, 2005, Central United Methodist Church. Annual Holiday Get-Together. Last year's December meeting included photos and reminiscences related to some of the favored outing sites visited by the Sault Naturalists in past years. This December we would like to hear from some of you—particularly the newer members—about your experiences on more recent outings (within the last 5-10 years). A slide projector will be available, so you can illustrate your remarks with pictures (preferably no more than ten slides). As indicated in the last newsletter, you were asked to call John Lehman at (906) 635-5095 or Donna Ryckman-Rooney at (705) 945-9281 (home) or (705) 941-6210 (work) at least 2 weeks before the meeting to volunteer. Some of you may be asked to “volunteer” if you haven't replied by then!

January 10, 2006, Central United Methodist Church. Marie Greenwood, Assistant Professor of Biology, Lake Superior State University. *Living in a*



Bug's World. Dr. Greenwood will bring along insect specimens (including live “bugs”) and tell us some interesting and bizarre stories about insects and the ways in which they interact with humans. Insects exhibit some of the most diverse and complex animal

behaviors known, and they play an integral role in every aspect of life on Earth today. See how insects and related arthropods have adapted to become the planet's most successful animals. This presentation should be of interest to “kids” of all ages, so bring your children or grandchildren along, or invite some young people to join us.

February 14, 2006, Annual Dinner Meeting. Lake Superior State University Cisler Center. Peter Denley, outdoor columnist for the Sault Star, will be the featured speaker for our annual dinner meeting. His presentation, *Experiencing Nature from the Viewpoint of an Ethical Hunter and Angler*, will touch on how his perspective on outdoor activities has changed over the years.

Peter's writing and photography have been published in various monthly and weekly publications and along with his columns in the Sault Star, evoke comments and compliments from an amazingly wide demographic of readers. Although he's an avid hunter and angler, his columns rarely focus on the “hook and bullet” aspect of the outdoors and more often on local flora and fauna, unusual events, sightings and occurrences in nature, and the simple joy of being “out there.” **See page 3 for more information on the Annual Dinner.**

March 14, 2006, Central United Methodist Church. Dieter Ropke, a long-time member and supporter of the Naturalists, will speak on *Traveling the Haunted Shore by Canoe and Kayak*. Dieter worked for many years as a forest research technician, during which he travelled throughout the remote parts of Northern Ontario. These travels stimulated his interest in exploring pristine wilderness, especially by canoeing and kayaking along the coast of Lake Superior over a period of 25 years.

April 11, 2006, Central United Methodist Church. Doug Munson, a retired U.S. Forest Service biotechnician, will present a program and slide show

about *Dragonflies: Endangered and Otherwise*.

Beginning in 2003 Doug carried out population and habitat surveys of endangered dragonflies, particularly the Hines emerald dragonfly, for the Forest Service. In addition to reporting on his experiences and the survey results, he will describe and illustrate the habitats and life cycles of a variety of more common dragonflies.

May 2, 2006, Great Lakes Forestry Centre. Marjorie Hall, who has worked as a field technician for Parks Canada and the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake Recovery Team, will speak about *The Biology and Ecology of the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (Sistrurus catenatus)*, which is eastern Canada's only venomous snake. Marjorie carried out a ground evaluation of a landscape scale habitat suitability model for the rattlesnake, was involved in mark-recapture studies at Georgian Bay Islands National Park, and worked as a heritage educator for the park to inform the public about the various

“reptiles-at-risk” in their region. She will describe current research efforts intended to ensure the protection of this shy and timid creature, and will tell us about its distribution, status and the threats to its long-term survival.

June 13, 2006, Great Lakes Forestry Centre. A speaker from Clergue Forest Management will present a talk on *The Algoma Forest Before European Settlement*. The talk will focus on the nature of the Algoma Forest prior to settlement and the industrial use of wood. The forest has never been static; it has been changed by successional processes and various disturbances in the short term, and by climatic changes in the longer term. Information about the pre-settlement forest provides a basis for planning the desired future forest condition by means of the forest Management Planning Process in Ontario. ***

Annual Dinner Meeting

When: Tuesday, February 14, 2006. Dinner at 6:00 p.m.; program should begin at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Where: West Superior Room, Cisler Center, Lake Superior State University, 650 W Easterday Ave., Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

Menu: Buffet dinner should include oven-baked chicken, lasagna (with a vegetarian option), green beans almondine, redskin potatoes, fresh vegetable tray, fresh fruit salad, and German chocolate cake.

Cost: \$15 U.S. or \$18 Canadian

Directions: The LSSU campus is just east of I-75 on W Easterday Avenue.

From Canada, turn right after leaving the U.S. toll booth, left onto W Portage, and left again at the Easterday Avenue 4-way stop. After crossing the viaduct over I-75, turn left at the first traffic light into the LSSU campus, then turn left at the stop sign and

follow the road around the Cisler Center to the parking area in back. Enter the rear (north) entrance to the Cisler Center, then go up the stairs and straight down the hall to the West Ballroom, which will be on your right. Handicapped access is available at the south entrances to the building.

Speaker: Peter Denley, outdoor columnist for the Sault Star, will speak on “Experiencing Nature from the Viewpoint of an Ethical Hunter and Angler.” See the program list for more information.

Important: The deadline for ticket sales is Thursday, February 9. All tickets must be prepaid; none will be available at the door. For tickets, please contact:

Jean Cowen (705) 254-3643

Dieter Ropke (705) 942-9636 (will deliver)

Mary Ryckman (705) 253-6352

Carl Linhart (906) 635-9891

Outing Reports

Hunting Mushrooms with John Lehman - September 10th

By Gerry Bennett

As we crossed the International Bridge raindrops were being scattered on the windshield, leading Betty and me to agree glumly, "this looks like a wipe-out". But a "wipe-out" was never even considered by the crowd waiting at the MWC. After car-pooling was arranged we followed our leader's car to the beautiful Dunbar Forest in the Barbeau area of Michigan. After lunch we went to the Kinross Heritage Park Nature Trail.



Photo by Curt Bosket

Luckily the rain was never a serious threat, and there were mushrooms in abundance. In fact it was difficult to avoid stepping on them. However we need not have felt concern for such destruction as John pointed out that mushrooms are only "fruiting bodies - like apples" of an organism within the soil. Mushrooms are not plants but belong to the kingdom of fungi; a kingdom they share with yeast, athlete's foot and countless other organisms.

We were soon gathering samples for John to identify. We saw many "honey mushrooms", "brittle caps" (*Russula*), milky caps, waxy caps, parasol mushroom (*Lepiota procera*), Japanese parasol (*Coprinus plicatilis*), delicious oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus*

ostreatus), chanterelles and coral mushrooms. I did not take notes; the Latin names were found on an internet site, so any errors are mine.

The potentially fatal toxicity of mushrooms such as that of the "destroying angel", *Amanita virosa*, sends a chill, especially when John points out "there is no antidote"; followed by "There are bold mushroom

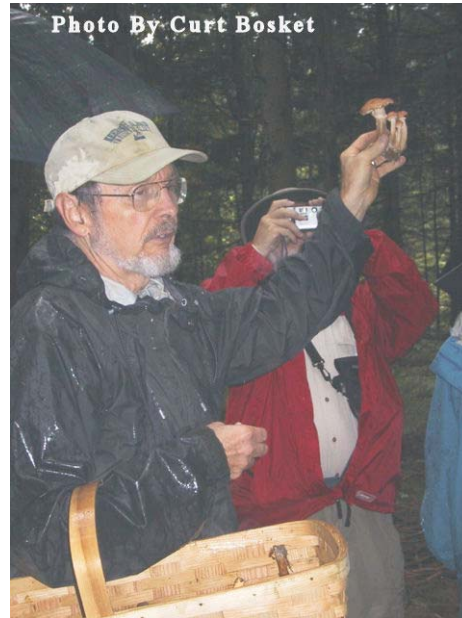


Photo By Curt Bosket

hunters and old mushroomhunters but there are no bold, old mushroom hunters". Unless you are an experienced hunter you should have an experienced (and preferably old) mushroom hunter check your fungi before you consider throwing them on the frying pan.

However, most of us do not associate mushrooms with unpleasantness. Their delicate taste (along with a high concentration of glutamates) has enhanced the flavor of European and oriental cuisine for ages. We did collect some beautiful yellow-orange chanterelles and white oyster mushrooms, carefully checked by John, to accompany our after-outing meal. We should have collected more.

The following website offers much info on fungi:

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/fungi/fungi.html>

The site below is an attempt to illustrate the organization of all living organisms. It is easy to get lost here but is fun.

<http://tolweb.org/tree/phylogeny.html>***

Continued on page 7

Winter and Spring Outings - 2005-2006

Sat., Dec. 17. Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. The survey area is within a 7 mile radius of the International Bridge, in Ontario and Michigan. Take part in observing birds in an assigned area or sign up for "feeder-watch" at your own bird feeders. For further information call Ken McIlwrick at (705) 541-5643.



Mon., Dec. 26. Wear off the Christmas turkey. Hike, ski or whatever the weather dictates for a fun outing. Call for activity, location, meeting place and time. Leaders: Chuck (906) 248-3287 or Ev. (705) 949-8206.

Sat., Jan. 14. Wellington Sq. Mall. 12:30 pm. *Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter.* Start with a twig ID session in the Halls' home, then go outdoors for a snowshoe or slow-pace ski jaunt through the Halls' woodlot and Lake George wetlands. This outing will be followed by a potluck supper around a fire. Please bring a dish to share. Leaders: Don and Viv. Hall (705) 248-1834.

Sat., Jan. 21. MWC. 10:00 am. Snowshoe around Round Island Point Conservation Area at Birch Point. Leaders: Curt and Katie Bosket (906) 635-8367.

Sat., Jan 28. Market Mall. 10:00 am. A ski adventure with Ron. Call for details. Leader: Ron Prickett (705) 254-1533.

Sat., Feb. 4. Zellers Plaza North. 10:00 am. Use your favorite winter travel mode (ski, snowshoe), to explore the Bellevue area near Searchmont. Leader: Jim Miller (705) 254-7494.

Sat., Feb. 11. MWC. 9:00 am. Ski trip to McNearney Ski Trail north of Strongs, Mi. Groomed to semi-groomed trails. A nice, little used natural area. Of moderate difficulty, but no major exertion required. Leader Carl Linhart (906) 635-9891.

Sun., Feb 19. MWC. 10:00 am. Explore the Betchler Swamp. (Ski, or snowshoe.) Cook lunch over an open bonfire. Leaders: Chuck (906) 248-3287 or Ev (705) 949-8206.

Sat., Feb. 25. MWC. 7:00 am. Check out the winter owl population in the Rudyard area. Leader: Tony Walker (705) 759-6151.

Sat., Mar. 4. Market Mall. 10:00 am. Put on your skis and play in the snow in one of Val's favorite local areas. Leader: Val Walker (705) 253-7044.

Sat., Mar. 18. MWC. 9:00 am. Ski the Clark Lake ungroomed trail (approx. 7 miles in length) near Paradise. Leaders: Chuck (906) 248-3287 or Ev (705) 949-8206.

Sat., April 1. Market Mall. 10:00 am. Ski or snowshoe the Lake Superior shoreline at Red Rock. Leader: Jim Miller (705) 254-7494.

Fri., April 21. MWC. 6:30 pm. Look to the skies for birds with Doug and to the ground for frogs with Ken. An evening of looking and listening. Leaders: Doug Munson (906) 248- 5201 and Ken McIlwrick (705) 541-5643.

Winter and Spring outings, cont'd

Sat., April 22. Wellington Sq. Mall. 6:00 am. A fairly easy two mile walk along the Lake George wetlands near the Halls' home in search of birds and other early spring arrivals. Afterwards enjoy a breakfast at the Halls'. Tall waterproof boots are essential. Call beforehand for possible weather cancellation. Leaders: Don and Viv. Hall (705) 248-1834.

Sat., April 29. Join in the Whitefish Point *Annual Spring Fling*, to observe the peak of the hawk migration. Meet at the Whitefish Point Visitor Centre

at noon for lunch on the dunes with other members of the Sault Naturalists. Leader: Tony Walker (705) 759-6151.

Sat., May 6. MWC. 10:00 am. Check the early spring flora and fauna arrivals along the Naomikong shoreline on Whitefish Bay. Leader: Chuck (906) 248-3287 or Ev. (705) 949-8206.

Early May. Birding at Point Pelee. Annual 4-day birding/camping trip to Point Pelee. Limited number of spaces available. Dates will be finalized in early January. If you are interested please contact Don or Vivian - *before Christmas*. Leaders. Don & Viv Hall (705) 248-1834. ***

Outing Guidelines

- **Please register for all outings** by calling the trip leader or an outing committee member. Non-registrants are welcome but risk being uninformed of last minute outing changes.
- Dress for the weather and terrain with appropriate clothing and footwear. Bring snacks, water, binoculars, loupes, field guides, etc. For daylong excursions, bring a lunch, and extra water.
- Refer all questions and requests for transportation to the trip leader or a member of the outing committee.
- If carpooling, consider assisting the driver with gas costs. Suggested amounts are \$U.S. 2.00 and \$Can. 3.00 and up depending on the length of the trip.

Where We Meet

General Meetings

Time: 7:30 pm; second Tuesday of each month, except May (first Tuesday)

Place: Sault Ontario -Great Lakes Forestry Center, 1219 Queens St. E.

Sault Michigan - Central Methodist United Church, Corner of Spruce and Court St.

Michigan Outings

- **Michigan Welcome Center (MWC)**-Follow the blue directional signs immediately south of the bridge toll booths.

Ontario Outings

- **Wellington Sq. Mall** - Follow Hwy17 E to the new McDonalds Restaurant just east of the mall. Park on the west side of the restaurant parking lot, facing the mall.
- **Zellers Plaza North** - Enter A&P/Zellers Mall (formerly K-Mart Plaza) from Grt. Northern Rd. or Northern Ave. Park west of Pennington's store.
- **Market Mall** - Located on Second Line (Hwy 550) at Korah Rd. Meet at the N.W. area by the video store.
- **Churchill Plaza**- Parking lot, under the entrance sign, off Trunk Rd. (Hwy. 17E)

Outing Reports continued from page 4.

Rose Lake Dune Peatland Complex Conservation Reserve

By Jim Miller

The Rose Lake Dune Peatland Complex Conservation Reserve is located 14 kilometres north of Bruce Mines in Rose Township. The dune peatland complex is located on the southern portion of the Kirkwood delta and contains a dune complex interspersed with wetlands. The Kirkwood delta is an outwash plain formed by the receding glacier. The dunes were created by wind action on the freshly deposited sandy outwash plain. The dunes probably formed on the exposed surface of the delta during the recession of post glacial lakes. The peatland has been identified as an historic deer wintering area and a nesting site for sandhill cranes.

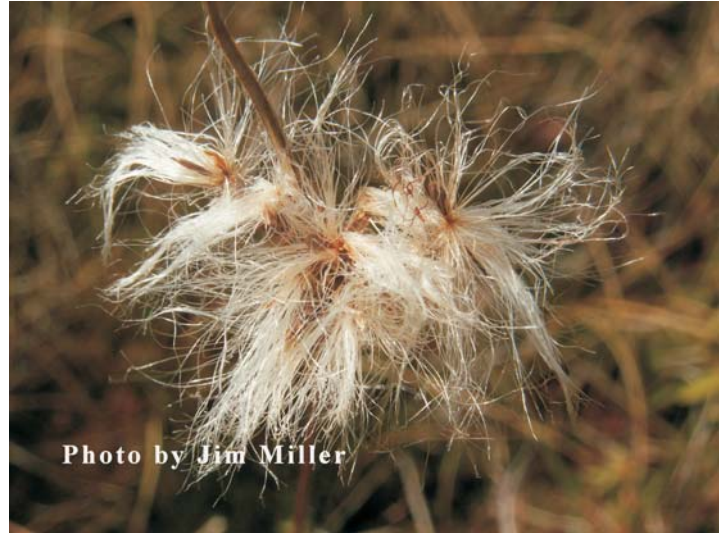
Peatlands are ecosystems where organic matter is produced faster than it is decomposed. In some



peatlands, peat never accumulates to the point where plants lose contact with water moving through mineral soil. This type, dominated by sedges, is called a fen. In other situations, peat becomes so thick that the surface vegetation is insulated from mineral soil. These are dominated by acid-forming sphagnum moss and are called bogs.

Fens receive nutrients from sources other than precipitation: usually from upslope sources through drainage from surrounding mineral soils and from

groundwater movement. Fens differ from bogs because they are less acidic and have higher nutrient levels. They are therefore able to support a much more diverse plant and animal community. These systems



are often covered by grasses, sedges, rushes, and wildflowers.

Bogs are characterized by spongy peat deposits, acidic waters, and a floor covered by a thick carpet of sphagnum moss. Bogs receive all or most of their water from precipitation rather than from runoff, groundwater or streams. As a result, bogs are low in the nutrients exacerbated by acid forming peat mosses. The sphagnum causes highly acidic waters. The result is a wetland ecosystem with a very specialized and unique flora that can grow in these conditions. Other plants which grow in bogs include ericaceous dwarf-shrubs, cotton grass, cranberry, Labrador tea and tamarack. The northern pitcher plant overcomes nutrient deficiencies by capturing insects.

The Rose Lake Conservation Reserve has a plentiful supply of interesting and uncommon plants that are often difficult to identify. Our group discussed one such plant that Sue Meades, our resident botanist, felt might be the few-seeded sedge (*Carex oligosperma* Michx). To identify this plant, there is a need to closely inspect the perigynium. I had to look up this term; you may wish to do this as well. An ideal web site for plant identification is:

www.northernontarioflora.ca. Sue is to be congratulated on the excellent work she has done in leading the development of this web site. ***

A Managed Forest

By Jean Mannesto

To cut or not to cut; manage or not to manage;

Conserve or not to conserve your woodlands...

Those are decisions to discuss with Dave Euler. He participated in all three of these options within his forest acres east of the Sault. Ray, the logger who cut, thinned and built the roads, joined the naturalists on this walk. He explained and figured in dollar amounts of board feet per large tree, expounding on the large amounts of money to be made from cutting. This is an escalating spiral all along the lumbering business to the final consumer product. The



naturalists who walked the clear-cut, the managed harvest and the pristine deciduous forest for three hours commented on the beauty of the huge pudding stone boulders pushed up during logging road construction (great for flower gardens). They enjoyed the early spring beauties and Dutchmen's breeches and viewed a porcupine high on a maple branch. They found Dave's hidden camera that snaps deer and coyote that wander by. At the trail's end, the group arrived at Euler's hand built cottage. Dave rang the bell to announce to Gail that the hungry crew was coming, The refreshments and vegetarian chili were enjoyed by all on the sunny porch overlooking the lovely lake.***

Mosses and Liverworts Workshop

By Betty Bennett

On October 23, Sue Meades conducted an interesting and informative workshop on liverworts and mosses at the Ecology Trail near the Sault Airport. With handouts illustrating the characteristics of the major groups, Sue explained in detail how to differentiate leafy liverworts from thalloid liverworts, and what the distinguishing features are of broom mosses, feathermosses and sphagnum peatmoss.

Equipped with our newly-acquired knowledge, we wandered along the trail seeking samples of the different mosses and testing our powers of observation. Questions flew. "Is this a liverwort (of the mat clinging to a log)? " ... "Is this a feather



moss?" "Here's a pincushion moss!"..... "Is this the stair-step moss?" " Sue answered all questions with characteristic aplomb from her seemingly limitless store of botanical knowledge. "Yes, it's *Hylocomium splendens*, a feathermoss. Here's *Sphagnum wolfianum*, a moss of wet organic conifer swamps and recognized by its distinctive clover-like headsand *Sphagnum magellanicum*, another peatmoss, green to pinkish-red". And then there was *Sphagnum girgensohnii*, one of the most common sphagnums and recognized by its star-shaped tips. What great fun- and what great fortune to have such expertise in our club! Thanks Sue and Bill.

For more information on plants of Northern Ontario, check out www.northernontarioflora.ca. ***

Potpourri

Ontario Bird Banding Association Cooperative Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Project.

Tony Walker, Ontario Nature Rep. for our club, joined three members of the group "Friends of Algoma East" last October to install saw-whet owl nesting boxes at two sites east of the Sault (ON). The nesting box project is part of a larger initiative by the Ontario Bird Banding Association (OBBA) (which started with banding fall migrating saw-whets to determine their movement in North America) and is a priority for the association in terms of filling in gaps in understanding saw-whet owl biology.

The preferred habitat for saw-whet owl nesting is mixed conifer-deciduous forest of mid- age class, with fairly open understory and trees generally 8" or more



in diameter. The box openings are normally oriented facing the southern quadrant and over 10' above the ground with an open flyway to the entrance. Boxes

must be about 600 yards apart. Some more open areas nearby are also beneficial.

Bearing these criteria in mind, Tony and his group installed two boxes in Stribling Park on St. Joseph Island and another two in the vicinity of the Pumpkin Point viewing platform. Photographs, notes describing the site and surrounding area, and a GPS reading, were taken for each site. Tony has three more boxes to set up.

Participating clubs are responsible for monitoring, reporting any owl nesting on common data sheets and cleaning out the boxes at the end of each season. A licensed bird bander will visit all nesting locations and send any banding records to the Ontario Bird Banding Association President Audrey Heagy. The boxes were built by Elliot Lake High School Students from materials provided by Domtar .



For more information on the Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Project visit the web site Project Owl Net at [http:// www.projectowl.net.org/listserv.htm](http://www.projectowl.net.org/listserv.htm)***

Membership Report

Happy New Year!

It's almost time to usher in 2006 and that means a fantastic new year of membership in the Sault Naturalists! Just a friendly reminder that membership fees are due in January of each year and 2006 will be no exception. To keep up with the times we have increased the individual and family memberships by \$5.00 each. We have also reintroduced a single price

for each membership category, to be paid in either Canadian or U.S. funds, whichever is most convenient.

Thanks to those of you who have already paid their membership fees through until the end of December 2006. If you are not sure if this applies to you, just check your membership card or contact me at meetings, by telephone at (705) 942-0715 or via email at : cginou@ekit.com.

Carrie Ginou

Membership Chairperson***

Don't Forget

Spring Birding at Point Pelee – Register with Don and Viv Hall at (705) 248 -1834 before Christmas.

Christmas Bird Count December 17, 2005. Coordinator: Ken McIlwrick (705) 541-5643

New Address for Sault Naturalists Website: <http://www3.sympatico.ca/donandvivhall/index.html>

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER IN JEOPARDY

URGENT ACTION NEEDED (from the Detroit Office of the Michigan Audubon Society, abridged)

The Recovery Effort for the endangered Kirtland's Warbler has been a phenomenal success, thanks to creation of more habitat, and a US Fish and Wildlife Service program to control the brown-headed cowbird, which lays eggs in the warbler's nest at the expense of the warbler nestlings.

In late April 2004, the US Fish and Wildlife Service made substantial cuts to the cowbird control program. This means that Kirtland's parasitism has gone up, fewer young survived, and the population's upward trend will surely be halted. A steady decline threatens to be around the corner.

We have since learned that the cowbird control program funding has been kept at the same reduced level for 2006. By the way, it is our understanding that full funding of this program would only be about \$45,000! If this is allowed to stand, the Kirtland's Warbler will be driven to brink of extinction again.

Please write those listed below and ask them to make sure that the Kirtland's Warbler Protection Program is fully funded for 2006 and in perpetuity! Ask them to explain what they have done to ensure that these cuts have been rescinded. Be sure to include information about the huge number of out-of-state visitors that visit the KW area generating a huge number of eco-tourism dollars for Michigan and the surrounding communities.

IMPORTANT - Please send copies of any replies you receive to the Detroit Audubon Office,

1320 N. Campbell Road, Royal Oak, MI 48067 - and/or: detas@bignet.net. For more info visit www.detroitaudubon.org - .

Ms. Gail Norton, Secretary of Interior
1849 C Street
NW Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-3100

Ms. Robyn Thorsen, Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1 Federal Drive
Fort Snelling, MN 55111

Sen. Carl Levin
US Senate
269 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Senator@levin.senate.gov, 202-224-6221

Sen. Debbie Stabenow
US Senate
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Senator@stabenow.senate.gov
202- 224-4822

AND PLEASE DON'T FORGET YOUR

LOCAL US Representative...

(Camp, Dingell, Ehlers, Hoekstra,
Kildee, Kilpatrick, Rogers, Schwartz,
Stupak, Upton, etc.)

Find your specific information here:

<http://www.house.gov>***