



# The Newsletter of the Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team

Fall 2025 Issue

*This issue: 2025 Census Numbers; Hurricane in The Bahamas; Pale Agoseris; Summer Meeting Recap; Roscommon Goes "All-in" on Warblers*

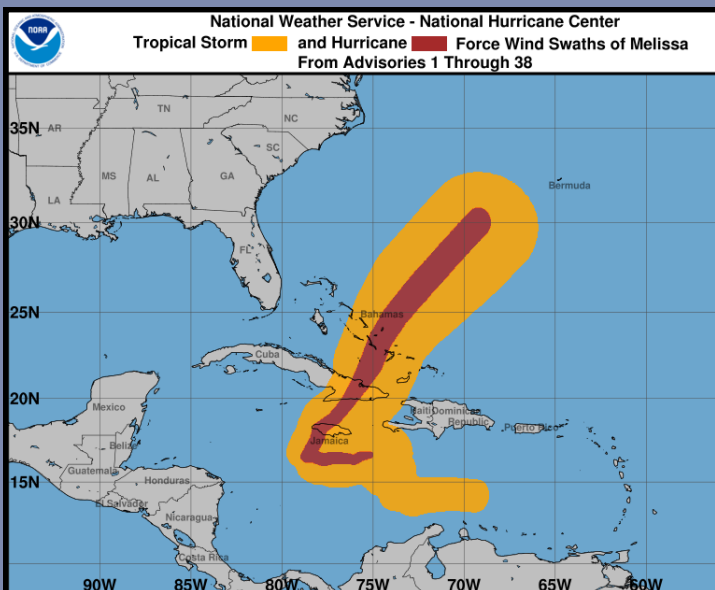
## 2025 Census Shows Decline in Kirtland's Warbler Numbers

With the final numbers tallied, the 2025 Kirtland's Warbler census, which counted singing males in June, recorded 1,522 birds. This number represents a significant decline from the last complete census in 2021, which logged 2,245 birds. Kirtland's Warbler experts largely anticipated the drop in numbers this year because of a corresponding decline in the availability of breeding habitat, which must be continuously created to replace forests that become too mature for the particular needs of the species.

Despite the drop, the species remains far more abundant than it was forty years ago, when the species hit an all-time low of 167 singing males. Recent innovations in habitat management, including the use of a forest masticator to perform "early restarts" in the jack pine management cycle, will enable public agencies to more consistently create habitat for Kirtland's Warbler and ensure more a stable population in the future.

"The real strength of the management of the Kirtland's warbler lies in the collective efforts of the conservation team," said Erin Victory, wildlife biologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, "The collaborations and partnerships that we've leveraged among our state, federal, and private partners will continue to be a driving force behind maintaining a sustainable population of the Kirtland's warbler and other species in the jack pine ecosystem."

For more information, read the Michigan Department of Natural Resources press release here: <https://bit.ly/KWcensus2025>.



## Hurricane Melissa Tracks Over Wintering Grounds

On October 29-30, Hurricane Melissa, one of the strongest hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic basin, passed through the southeastern Bahamas, primarily affecting Long Island, Rum Cay, and San Salvador. Each of these islands holds significant populations of wintering Kirtland's Warblers. Thankfully, the storm had weakened significantly before arriving to The Bahamas, passing through primarily as a Category 1 storm. Hurricanes can cause direct bird mortality, but may also benefit Kirtland's Warblers by creating the young coppice habitat favored by the species. The effects of Hurricane Melissa on Kirtland's Warbler will be difficult to assess, but the species is no stranger to storms over its winter home on the islands.

Visit us online! [KWconservation.org](https://www.kwconservation.org)

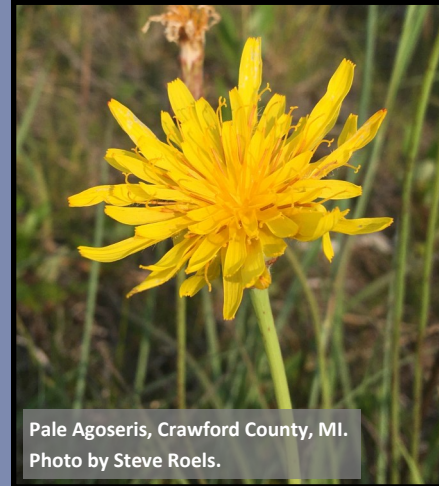
Join our mailing list by emailing [KWconservationteam@gmail.com](mailto:KWconservationteam@gmail.com)

**\*\*New Date\*\* 2026 KWCT Winter Meeting: February 3**

Contact [KWconservationteam@gmail.com](mailto:KWconservationteam@gmail.com) for more information

### Species Profile: Pale Agoseris (*Agoseris glauca*)

Pale Agoseris, also called False Dandelion, is a Michigan state threatened species only occurring in four counties, strongly overlapping with the core range for Kirtland's Warbler. Unlike the warbler, however, the species is widespread in the western United States, making the Michigan plants a disjunct population. Out west, this perennial plant grows in shortgrass prairies and mountain meadows. In Michigan, it grows in pine barrens and shrub-grasslands, habitats historically maintained by recurring fires. Pale Agoseris primarily blooms from early June through July, with occasional flowering plants as late as September.



Pale Agoseris, Crawford County, MI.  
Photo by Steve Roels.

### IN THE NEWS:

*Wild Turkey Federation joins KW festivities*

NWTF table gobbles up KW festival traffic

<https://bit.ly/KWandTurkey>

*Roscommon declared first Bird City in Michigan*

Village's emphasis on KW bolsters application

<https://bit.ly/BirdCityMI>

*Roscommon an award finalist*

MI Municipal League celebrates community's embrace of warbler

<https://bit.ly/KWplacemaking>



KWCT members know the best learning happens in the outdoor classroom! Photo by Steve Roels.

### Kirtland's Warbler Conservation Team Summer Meeting Recap

Sixty-three conservation professionals and bird enthusiasts met in Gaylord, MI and online from July 29-31 to discuss Kirtland's Warbler management, landscape-scale restoration, and environmental education and outreach. "We had 25 organizations represented at the meeting this year, which demonstrates the big tent approach of the KWCT and the enduring interest of many parties in the protection of Michigan's most iconic bird species," said Steve Roels, KWCT Coordinator. Key topics of discussion included strategies to respond to the recent population decline as well as management adjustments to provide more consideration for rare plants. Phil Huber, KWCT Steering Committee Chair, closed out the meeting with these remarks, "We are in challenging times, but also exciting times. This program is ever-changing, but in the long-term we are moving forward and that's what's critical about these meetings."



KWCT members visit a KW management area and adjacent pine barrens near Lovells, MI during the summer field trip.

The *Kirtland's Warbler Observer* is published by American Bird Conservancy on behalf of the KWCT: Michigan DNR, Wisconsin DNR, US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, USDA Wildlife Services, Bahamas National Trust, American Bird Conservancy, Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, Huron Pines, Audubon Great Lakes, PennWest University, Antioch University, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, GEI Canada, Birks NHC