



NORMAN A. WOOD
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On September 7, 1943, death came to Norman A. Wood, dean of Michigan ornithologists. Born on August 19, 1857, he had just a short time before celebrated his 86th birthday at his Portage Lake summer home. Friends and members of the University Museum staff attended his annual party. However, he had returned to his Ann Arbor home a week before his death.

Norman A. Wood had lived all of his life in and near Ann Arbor with the exception of a short period when he was in China. His birthplace was in Lodi Township and his parents, Jesup Scott Wood and Lydia P. Ingraham Wood, were of Washtenaw County pioneer stock. His wife, the former Lillian D. Phelps, whom he married on August 24, 1885, died in 1934. Surviving them is one daughter Annetta, now Mrs. Peter Kivi.

Norman Wood graduated at Saline High School and came to the University of Michigan in 1895 to work under Dean C. Worcester as taxidermist and ornithologist. He was connected with the University for 48 years with the exception of two years which he spent on leave of absence at Ginling College in Nanking, China. While at Nanking, from 1923-25, he established a college museum. On his return to this country he brought back a beautiful collection of Chinese birds to the University of Michigan Museum.

All through his many years of service at the University Norman Wood was an ardent field worker and he kept voluminous records of his observations both around Ann Arbor and in the many parts of the state which he visited. Numerous pamphlets and scientific papers were published by him. These dealt with mammals and other natural history subjects as well as birds. At one time Norman Wood worked with the State Geological Survey and in this capacity visited many Michigan counties mapping the territories, studying the flora and fauna, recording nesting species of birds and studying their seasonal migrations. Once he spent some time at Amherst College where he worked on the original Audubon Collection.

For many years Norman Wood has been assembling his records and bird study notes hoping that a way would be found to publish a book containing these results of his life

work in that field. I can well recall some of my earlier conversations and correspondence with him and how he expressed the hope that this valuable material would finally be published. So it was with a considerable amount of satisfaction that I heard from him several years ago that at last his dreams were to come true—a friend had given a considerable sum of money towards publishing his bird book. Under Dr. Josselyn Van Tyne's direction several staff members have spent considerable time in going over all of Norman Wood's records and writings. There is probably much which will, of necessity, have to be left out. And, also, considerable will be added to make the publication up to date. Of this we may feel sure, it will be a splendid book and one which every Michigan bird student will want to have in his library just as soon as it is published. To many of his friends this will be a sort of a climax to Norman Wood's life work. Our one regret will be that he was not able to live to actually see the book come from the press.

I last saw Norman Wood in his office in the University Museums Building about a year and a half ago. He had retired from active service in 1932 and held the title of Emeritus Curator of Birds in the Bird Division of the Museum of Zoology. However, he frequently appeared at the museum and worked on various things in which he was interested. The University conferred upon him an honorary degree of Master of Science in 1937.

As we were talking that day in his office I told him of some experiences which Lawrence Walkinshaw and I had had studying and photographing the Jack Pine or Kirtland's Warbler near Grayling and Lovells. I showed him some pictures which I had taken near Lovells of the female Kirtland and the nest and eggs. That started Norman Wood to reminiscing of the days nearly forty years ago when he found the first nest of this species. As I think back to that morning in the Bird Division office, I have a very clear mental picture of the enthusiastic manner in which Norman Wood recalled the thrilling experience of his search of the north woods country which was finally rewarded with the finding of a nest and young of this rare warbler. I cannot well relate this story from my own memory but it seems entirely fitting that we publish at this time a few passages from Mr. Wood's report entitled, "Discovery of the Breeding Area of Kirtland's Warbler," a copy of which he gave to me that morning and which I shall always prize very highly as a part of my personal library. This report is from a Bulletin of the Michigan Ornithological Club Volume V and was published in 1904.

Early in June, 1903, the Museum assistant, Mr. E. H. Frothingham, with a friend, Mr. T. G. Gale, went to Oscoda County, Michigan, to fish the Au Sable River. On one of their short trips Mr. Frothingham, who is an expe-

rienced field ornithologist, heard a bird song which he did not recognize. Mr. Gale shot the bird. The skin was preserved and was found on their return to be a male *Dendroica kirtlandi*. It was labeled "4 mile plains north of the Au Sable. T. G. Gale, June 15th, 1903." On questioning Mr. Frothingham with regard to this bird, he said: "It was there in some numbers and in full song. The song and the bird were new to me and I thought best to secure a specimen by which to identify it." I asked him why he did not take more, and he said "I knew they had nests and hated to take breeding birds. I never thought of its being Kirtland's Warbler." This is not to be wondered at on account of its rarity.

In many discussions on this subject Mr. A. B. Covert and I had decided that this bird would be found breeding in north Michigan. I was of the opinion that it bred in the Upper Peninsula, north of Mackinac. He said, "If it were not for the Mackinac record I should also look for it in the Canadian zone of the Lower Peninsula." Time has shown his assertion to be correct, and I believe more time will also confirm my opinion. Mr. A. W. Butler (Birds of Indiana, p. 1072), says: "The summer home of this warbler would seem to be northern Michigan and Wisconsin." This is the only record I have found expressing this opinion.

When I saw this skin of Kirtland's Warbler, taken in northern Michigan, I concluded there was its summer home, and there it would be found breeding. I took the skin to the Curator, Mr. Chas. C. Adams, who also saw the importance of the discovery, and the necessity of sending a man to the spot at once. I was honored with this commission, and at 4:45 P.M. of June 29, I boarded the Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern R. R. train, bound for Roscommon, in the extreme north of that county. I arrived at this old lumber town at 4 A. M., June 30, after a tedious night's travel, due to two changes of cars. After some inquiry I found that my objective point was thirty-five miles to the northeast, and that the best way to reach this point was by the river. The South branch, one of the main feeders of the Au Sable, runs near the town. At 7 A.M. I was on board a row boat on a sixty mile run down the river.

On July 2, at 6 A.M., I started out and crossing the river bottom I came to a steep terrace which forms the edge of the "Norway" plains. This slope is very wet, and in places fine springs seep out. Here also is a dense growth of cedar with tamarack near the foot of the terrace. Fir, balsam of Gilead and birch make up the timber. Climbing this slope I found a rather level plain with scattering Norway and jack pines. In places these have been cut off, and in their stead there has sprung up a more or less thick growth of small jack pines, yellow oak and poplar (*Populus grandidentata* Michx.). The ground is covered with a mat of wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens* L.), sweetfern and trailing arbutus (*Epigaea repens* L.). I was walking slowly through this, watching the Junco (*Junco hyemalis* Linn.), Song Sparrow (*Melospiza fasciata* Gmel.), Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella socialis* Wils.) and the Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus* Gmel.)—the most common bird of these plains—when suddenly I heard a new song, loud, clear, joyous and full of sweet melody. This song may be described as follows: *weehc chee-chee-chee-r-r-r*. The "r" sound is quite prolonged and loud. The first two notes are low, then the notes gradually increase in volume to the end. I thought it a Kirtland, although I had never before heard its song. I heard this song repeated at intervals of about 30 seconds, and from different directions. I tried to catch a glimpse of the singer, but for a long time failed to do so, as he kept among the thick jack pines and scrub oaks. I repeatedly

tried to go where he sang last, and finally saw him fit from a bush to a yellow oak scrub and light about three feet above the ground. As I watched him he sat quite erect, threw forward his head and the wonderful song rang out. This song was remarkable because of its volume and rich melody. I was sure this was the bird for which I was in search; but in order to make certain the identity I shot it. A moment later I he'd in my hand a fine adult male of Kirtland's Warbler. I then looked over the ground very carefully, but failed to find either the female or the nest. Although I repeatedly searched this locality I never found them. On the morning of July 3 I made a second trip to the plains to search for the mate of the Kirtland which I shot on the 2d, but failed to find her. One-half mile farther west I heard a male singing, but the wind blew so strong and the bird was so shy I failed to even get a glimpse of him, although it was some encouragement to know there were more in the vicinity. I spent the day in working this locality, but my search was in vain.

July 6 I started out to explore the country to the west of the spot where I found the other birds, and after walking four miles I was rewarded by hearing the now familiar song of *D. kirtlandi*. In trying to locate the singer I flushed a female from the ground. I went to the spot and dropping on my hands and knees commenced to search for her nest. The female came and lit upon a small pile of brush not four feet away, fluttering her wings, chipping and by every action showing great excitement. Her call "chip-chip" brought the male, who came within five feet of me and scolded me with the same, only louder, "chip-chip." All these actions led me to think the nest was near by. I then carefully went over the ground about me, foot by foot, and later extended my search to include many square rods. The female was very anxious and kept near me, but she was not at all shy and went to glean-ing worms "like a warbler" and catching moths "like a fly-catcher." After a time the male came and chased her about low down through the pines. This pair of birds ate all the worms and moths I saw them catch, and these facts led me to think they did not have young. I spent the day looking for the nest and watching these birds. The male went to the top of an old burnt stub (about twenty feet high) near by, and sang: *wichy, chee-chee-cher-r-r*. The song of this male was not so loud and ringing, was not so full of melody as the first, but was very sweet and clear. It made me think of the song of the Maryland Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*, Linn.), only the notes were shorter. I was not able to locate the nest, although I looked high and low, in all the jack pines and on the ground where, from the actions of the birds, I thought they nested. I saw the female on the ground several times, and she seemed perfectly "at home" there. The next day (July 7), I returned to the same place, and hoped this time to surprise the female on the nest. I therefore very cautiously approached the spot, and while still a few rods away, flushed her from the ground. She flew a few feet and rested on a small jack pine. I examined the spot where I flushed her, but found no nest. She acted the same as the day before, fluttering her wings and tumbling to the ground, all the time uttering a faint *chip-chip*. I searched the ground carefully for several rods around this spot, but failed to find the nest. I did find a place at the base of a small jack pine which looked as if hollowed out for a nest. I have not been able to account for the peculiar actions of this female at the two places unless this hollow was the beginning of the nest. I visited this spot a few days later, but failed to find either bird. This pair of birds made five birds that I had seen and heard. The first colony contained two pair of birds, and this colony two pair more. I saw three birds here.

On the morning of July 8 I started in company with Mr. J. A. Parmalee to drive to the North Branch of the Au Sable, about seven miles distant. Mr. Parmalee was with Mr. Gale when he shot the Kirtland Warbler on June 15. The valley of the Au Sable is from three to five miles wide at this place, and is terraced. The first terrace is about fifteen feet above the river, the second about thirty feet above the first, and the third about twenty-five feet above the second. Beyond the valley extends the high uplands. We started from Mr. Parmalee's home at the foot of the second terrace and climbed to the level of the second, where we turned to the west and followed this terrace north of the river for one-half mile, passing through Norway and jack pine plains. After a drive of about five miles we came to a large tract of several hundred acres which had been burned over about six years ago as I learned from Mr. R. Fraser, a resident. Scattered burnt and dead stubs reach above the younger growth (mostly jack pine) which is from three to ten feet high. In some places this growth is dense, and in others more open. The ground is covered by a more or less luxuriant growth of sweetfern, three varieties of blueberry, trailing arbutus, and the wood lily. Here also grows the dwarf morning-glory, and the golden-rod just ready to bloom.

We had nearly reached the line of Crawford County when I heard a song and on stopping, soon saw a male *Kirtlandi* singing from his favorite tree. I slipped from the wagon and secured this male. Driving on one-half mile I saw a male fly to a dead tree near the road. This bird had a worm in his mouth, so I concluded that his nest was near by, and that he would go to it with the worm. I went to the side of a large stub, and while I was watching, saw this male assume the erect singing position, throw forward his head and try to sing, still holding the worm in his mouth. This song may be written thus: *ch-ch-che-che-che-a* (the "a" long drawn out). He sang a number of times at intervals of about sixty seconds—but still held the worm. He soon spied me and seemed rather uneasy, wagging his tail after the fashion of *D. palmarnum*. Now his song seemed to take an anxious or scolding tone and sounded like *cha, cha che-chee wich-a-a*. After watching me a few minutes he dropped from the tree (on a long glide) to the east about three rods. I suspected he was going to the nest, so I hurried to the spot, but when I reached it he was not there; so I stood still and waited. In a few minutes he was at his place on the old tree with another worm. Again he sang and wagged his tail and then dove down, but this time two rods to the west of the tree. I started to go there, when just south of the tree I flushed the female from the ground and after a close look, saw the nest. It may be imagined with what delight I beheld the first nest of this rare bird ever seen, and with what eagerness I dropped to my knees beside it to make a closer examination of its contents. There were two young birds, perhaps ten days old, and a perfect egg; this proved to be the only egg found.

This egg was a delicate pinkish-white (since the contents were removed it has faded to a dull white) thinly sprinkled with several shades of brown spots forming a sort of wreath at the larger end. This egg is .72 x .56 inches or 18 by 14 mm., and contained no embryo. The nest was built in a depression in the ground, at the foot of a jack pine about five feet tall, and was only five feet from the road. It was partly covered with low blueberries and sweetfern plants. The nest is two inches inside diameter and the same in depth, very neat and compact, and is composed of strips of soft bark and some vegetable fiber, thickly lined with fine dead grass and pine needles. A few hairs from horses' mane or tail complete the lining.

The young nestlings may be described as follows: above dark slate color, lighter on the head, each feather tipped with light sepia brown; those of the mantle broadly edged with whitish spots; those of the back, with buffy white; wings and tail dark, slightly edged with light brown; the lesser and middle coverts were like the back; the greater coverts broadly edged with buffy brown, making distinct bars; lores, sepia brown; sides of head otherwise similar in color to the upper parts, but rather paler, fading gradually into pale buffy brown on the chin and throat, this gradually changing to light brown on chest, sides and flank; each feather of the chest and sides with a dark center, widening at the tip, giving a distinct striped effect; abdomen, pale buffy, tinged with yellow.

As I sat near the nest the female came and alighted on the branch of the jack pine just back of the nest. She was not at all shy. Once she came with a worm in her mouth, but would not feed the young while I was so near. The male also came, but not so close. Both birds were very restless and uneasy—only a few seconds in a place—which made it very difficult to take photographs of them.

Yes, Norman Wood is gone from among us. But his work will live on for it was largely done in earlier years when there were far fewer competent observers than there are today. His has been a real contribution to Michigan ornithology.
