

The Origin of the Kirtland's Warbler.

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Just as a non-essential character in an organic being often forms a better clue to its true affinities and lines of descent than more fundamental structures; so, the study of a rare and economically unimportant species may be more productive of results than that of wide spreading, dominant forms. In the latter case the very multiplicity of data may be confusing and render it difficult to separate the pertinent from the impertinent, the local phenomena from the general. In following out and determining exact migration routes this is particularly true, and when we attempt to reconstruct the past history of a race the more narrowly we confine our attention, the more promise we have of arriving at approximately correct conclusions. Dr. Conan Doyle has made his hero, Sherlock Holmes, say words to this effect, that the more outre and uncommon the conditions are surrounding a discovered crime, the more easily should the sleuth find out the committer of the deed. This, if the reasoning is sound, should apply as well to scientific as to criminal investigation. In this light it appears that Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandi*), affords peculiar opportunities for investigation and perhaps a little speculation along these lines may be of some value, even if the only result that comes therefrom is vigorous attack and final denial. A questionable, or even false, theory, honestly advanced, may be of benefit, for the subsequent discussion and final refutation it may bring forth, if for nothing more.

The records of Kirtland's Warbler are few and mostly far between. The first specimen was likely taken about 1840, though it was not finally described until 1852, from another bird taken by Mr. Chas. Pease, near Cleveland, Ohio, the year before. From time to time various specimens have been taken up and down the Mississippi Valley, and at isolated points in the East, including one record from Toronto, Ont. The winter habitat was found in the Bahama Islands, where it proves to be fairly common, but though Ohio and Michigan were the States accredited with the greatest number of records, it was not until