School of Environment and Natural Resources

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Smithsonian
Migratory Bird Center

Ph.D. position on multispecies use of habitat managed for Kirtland's Warbler

The Tonra Lab of Avian Ecology and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center are searching for a qualified student to lead a Ph.D. research project of regional conservation importance in the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University. The position will preferably begin in January of 2026, but alternative start dates may be possible.

Project Description:

The project will study patterns of occupancy and abundance of Kirtland's Warbler, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Spruce Grouse, and Ruffed Grouse on sites managed for the warbler. To determine how occupancy and abundance vary with site- and landscape-level factors, we will integrate acoustic data collected via autonomous recording units and vegetation surveys from across the Kirtland's Warbler breeding range with remote sensing data to build models that predict habitat characteristics that optimize abundance across species. Our research will produce recommendations on how best to manage and create habitat within Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas and will also highlight where to prioritize restoration projects - all with the goal of creating optimal Kirtland's Warbler habitat while maximizing avian species richness and recreation (i.e., hunting) opportunity.

The Ph.D. student will be supported on a combination of Graduate Research Assistantships and Graduate Teaching Assistantships for the duration of the degree (5 years). The position includes a tuition waiver and monthly stipend (currently $2,848/month). Travel during fieldwork and other associated research costs will also be funded.

Required Qualifications:

Candidates for this position must possess a minimum of a Bachelor of Science degree (Master of Science strongly preferred) in Wildlife, Biology, Zoology, or a related field. Furthermore, they must have an academic transcript commensurate with acceptance to the graduate program in Fisheries and Wildlife in the School of Environment and Natural Resources (https://senr.osu.edu/graduate/admissions).

This project will generate a large amount of data for analysis, thus in addition to prior field work experience, we are seeking a student with excellent quantitative skills and experience with GIS. Therefore, the successful candidate will have experience working with Program R, ArcGIS or other GIS software, multiple years of experience in field ecology, the ability and willingness to work long hours independently in the field, and a valid drivers license.

Preferred Qualifications:

Additional desirable qualifications include experience in programming languages in addition to R , experience working with autonomous recording units (ARUs) and associated data, experience conducting vegetation surveys, and bird identification skills.

To apply:

Email a 1-page cover letter outlining your interest in and qualifications for the position, C.V., unofficial academic transcript, and contact information for 3 references to Chris Tonra (tonra.1@osu.edu). Applications will be considered as they are received until the position is filled.