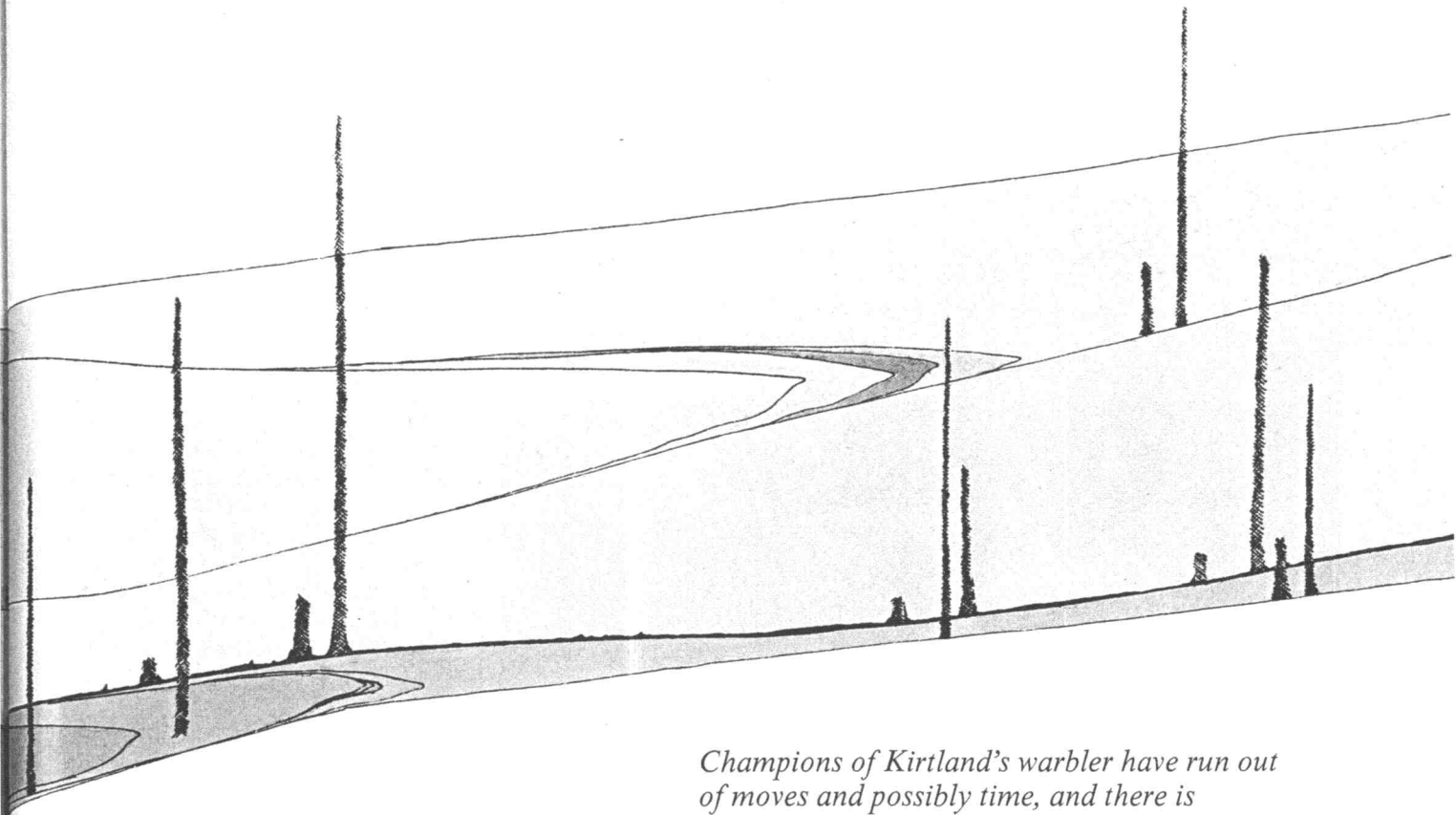


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painting by Peter Parnall



PARNALL



Champions of Kirtland's warbler have run out of moves and possibly time, and there is

Panic in the pines

FEW BIRDS HAVE ATTRACTED such passionately dedicated friends as Kirtland's warbler. This tiny, rare gem of a songbird has called forth the best efforts of an unusual band of skilled and distinguished champions. Today, however, they are grief-stricken and panicked. Despite their best efforts, they appear to be losing the battle for the bird's survival. Last June, in their annual census, they found only 167 singing adult males, indicating there remained only that many active breeding pairs of Kirtland's warblers. This was a 23 percent drop from the previous June; a 66 percent drop in just 13 years.

Only a year ago, before the 1974 count, the warbler's friends believed they had identified and corrected the major threat to its existence. They were hopeful that its numbers were rising. Now, with no clear notion where their energies and the not inconsiderable funds available might best be spent, they are trying to decide what to do next. They are hoping, perhaps praying, that they can luck onto something to forestall the bird's extinction. They are driven by the knowledge that there is not much time left.

Kirtland's warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) is a bird of entrancing beauty. Its colors—blue flecked with black above, pale lemon-yellow below—are of breathtaking purity when seen close-up on its breeding ground in the sharp light of the summer sun. It is a perky, jaunty bird, a persistent tail-jerker that is remarkably unconcerned by or unafraid of man.



