

# ARMY

September 1976

## Army Olympians Win 5 Medals



48837BART30AAB 375-26-9564 03  
COL DUANE H BARTREM  
5985 AUSTIN HAY  
GRAND LEDGE MI 48837

Capt. Lanny Bassham  
And Margaret Harlick  
Best in Small Cal.

**P**it a spirited, tuneful half-ounce Kirtland's warbler against a ponderous, rumbling 49-ton M48A1 tank and the winner is—the Kirtland's warbler.

The battleground for this confrontation in the summer of 1975 was the tank range on the 137,000-acre Camp Grayling Military Reservation in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula. The outcome was impressive: some 150 Kirtland's warbler hatchlings from 44 nests and start of construction of a new corridor that will route the tanks more than a mile south of the nesting area in future National Guard encampments, so that the songbird-versus-tank problem should not arise again.

People who care about preserving endangered species such as Kirtland's warbler take action if they care enough. In the Camp Grayling situation

the people who cared were from Michigan's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the state Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

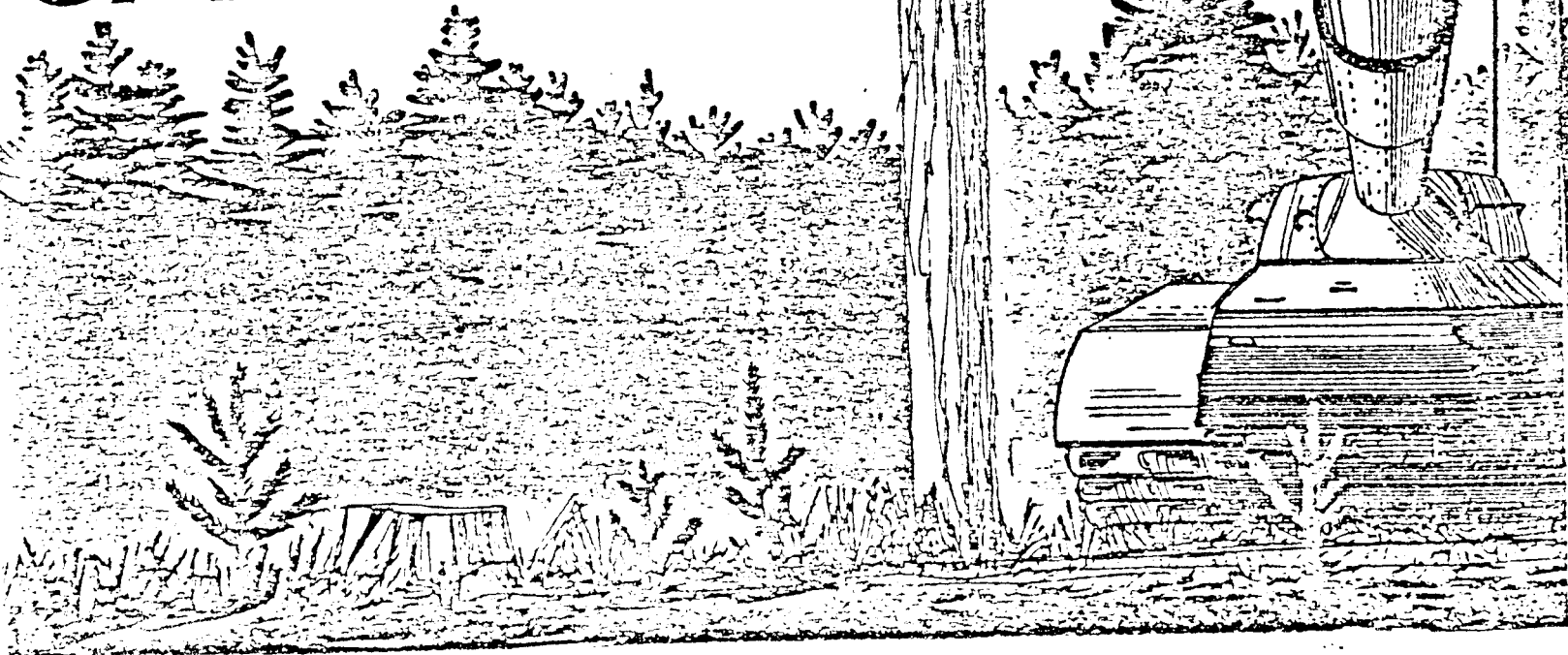
Reaching a satisfactory solution was not easy. National Guard commanders saw in the proposed solution a menace to the viability of the entire Camp Grayling complex. Some Grayling area businessmen, hearing of this apprehension, became alarmed about the possible loss of revenue from the nearly 25,000 National Guard troops from Michigan, Indiana and Ohio and their families.

That Kirtland's warblers were using an area of Camp Grayling's vast acreage as a nesting habitat had been known for several years before 1968, when the tiny songster was first placed on the threatened-species list. Lt. Michael H. Johnson, administrative assistant to the state adjutant general, said the Michigan Army National Guard had

The nesting habits of rare birds is not a topic with which military authorities ordinarily have to deal. But when the only place they will nest is smack-dab in the middle of a prime tank maneuver area, the situation calls for handling never covered in any field manual.

*Persuasive Trilling from the Jack Pines*

## **Of Warriors and Warblers**



worked diligently with the Department of Natural Resources to protect the warblers as well as their habitat.

"Our self-imposed restrictions in the Kirtland's warbler range included placing the area off limits to tank and track off-road maneuver, insuring wheel and track traffic remained roadbound, maintaining strict fire discipline to protect the warbler habitat and not using smoke, chemicals or pyrotechnics in the area," Lt. Johnson said.

Heading the Kirtland's warbler recovery team since February, 1975, when the songbird was placed on the national endangered-species list, is John Byelich, DNR biologist. He was appointed by the secretary of the interior, and his team includes people from the DNR, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of the Interior) and private parties. Lt.

Johnson and the Camp Grayling operations officer were detailed by the Michigan DMA to work with the team.

Mr. Byelich said all Kirtland's warbler nesting areas were posted off limits from 1 June through 31 July. There were some 40 such areas but only one was on the military reservation—smack-dab in the middle of the tank range. That was where the problem arose when Mr. Byelich extended the ban through 15 August.

The ban was extended an extra 15 days because every bird is important, Mr. Byelich said. He added that the warbler hatchling needs at least one week to learn how to fly after it is hatched and there would be a definite improvement in chances for successful raising of the young if they were undisturbed longer.

"There was no problem as far as the National Guard was concerned about staying out of the area in June and July. The problem arose when we extended the ban to 15 August," Mr. Byelich said.

Lt. Johnson agreed. He emphasized that the severity of the problem originated from a recovery-team order in April which included in the banned area all land in a strip one mile wide adjacent to the section with nests.

"Prior to this, the Kirtland's warbler range on the Camp Grayling Military Reservation was on approximately four sections of land located in the center of what is known as the tank range. To arbitrarily add 12 more sections, or 12 square miles, around the warbler area as a buffer zone would effectively put the tank range out of business," Lt. Johnson said.

Extension of the ban to 15 August alarmed the National Guard. Training schedules for troops from the three states—and especially tank maneuvers—were threatened.

"If the 15 August date is adhered to with the proposed extended boundaries, the viability of this range is reduced to two small discontinuous areas where little more than a single unit can effectively train," Brig. Gen. Floyd Radike, then chief of staff, told the DNR and the recovery team.

When reminded that the Camp Grayling complex encompasses 137,000 acres of which the Kirtland's warbler area is only a small part, Gen. Radike stressed that this particular area was the only one that could be used for tank maneuvers. He said the impact area of the artillery range was suitable in regard to terrain but it "is loaded with many undiscovered duds." He added that even if the area were cleared of the unexploded shells "at an astronomical cost," use of the range for tanks would eliminate all artillery firing and the air-ground facility of the Air National Guard.

Throughout the confrontation, Mr. Byelich relied on face-to-face meetings with the military officers rather than on written communications. After several discussions, the National Guard agreed to honor the 15 August deadline. Training



for Ohio's 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment and Michigan National Guard tank units was rescheduled for the last two weeks of August.

News of the controversy spread through the surrounding area. Some Grayling area businessmen reacted angrily. One told the *Detroit Free Press* in mid-June that his solution would be to shoot "every damned bird." He said, "If 44 pairs of warblers are worth the million dollars that we receive from the National Guard training every summer, then I'll buy the Kirtland's warblers."

A canoe renter said the "birds aren't worth a dime as far as money in the county goes" and worried about loss of revenue during what for him has always been a peak season.

There is little doubt about the impact of the military reservation on the Grayling area's economy.

Gen. Radike pointed out that the federal payroll for permanently stationed troops in the surrounding area amounts to more than \$1.5 million a year. Estimates are that every soldier sent to Camp Grayling for summer exercises spends \$100 in the area, a sizable sum when the average number of trainees is 25,000 a year. Many of the men bring their families along for vacations, and this adds to the economy.

Mr. Byelich said it is unfair to condemn the majority of the area's businessmen. "Many of them were in complete sympathy with what we were trying to do and with our goal of protecting the Kirtland's warbler," he said.

The concern about the loss of business evidently did not have a solid foundation.

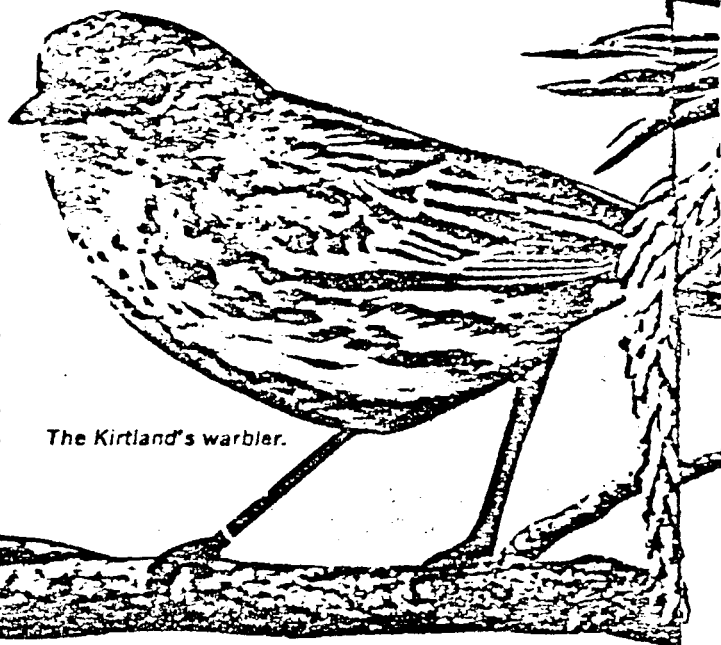
"The Department of Natural Resources directives did not adversely affect Grayling area business," said Michael C. Steele, current executive manager of the Grayling Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Steele added that he, for one, does not believe the DNR was overprotecting the warblers. He does believe that more investigation into the 1,800-mile warbler migration between Michigan and the Bahamas and into any problems at the wintering grounds in the Bahamas is essential, as "only one-third of the warbler peak summer population ever returns."

The new trail cut south of the nesting area during the winter has allowed National Guard armored vehicles and the warblers to coexist with ease this summer, and the armored units are

---

PAUL L. STEWART, a former Michigan newspaper editor and public relations writer, retired in 1975 as manager of the corporate news bureau of Chrysler Corp. He now lives in Tarpon Springs, Fla., where he pursues a flourishing third career as a free-lance writer.



The Kirtland's warbler.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Photo

following their normal training schedule. And the two-week extension of the ban on training in the nesting area last summer has had the desired result. "Some of the pairs nested twice," said Lt. Johnson, and the number of nesting pairs has increased to about 200 this summer, reversing the trend of earlier years.

Huge tanks may have been the latest threat to Kirtland's warbler but they are not the only threat to the tiny songbird which has had many staunch defenders since it was first identified back in 1851. Named after Dr. Jared P. Kirtland, Cleveland pioneer physician and naturalist, who collected one of the birds on its northern migration, not until 1903 were the birds' nesting grounds discovered by trout fishermen along the Au Sable River in northern Michigan.

In 1951, Harold Mayfield, one of the Kirtland's warbler's stoutest defenders, conducted the first census and reported 432 singing males. Kirtland's warbler is one of the few species which can be counted entirely, thanks to the male's powerful and tuneful burst which can be heard a quarter of a mile away on a windless day.

In 1961, the singing-male count was placed at 502. Then, in 1971, alarm hit the ranks of the bird's defenders when the count fell to 201. And in 1974 it had dropped to 167.

A major threat to the Kirtland's warbler has long been the parasitic cowbirds. The cowbird deposits her eggs in warblers' nests, as well as nests of other songbirds, and then the cowbird flies off into the wild yonder leaving the hatching of her eggs to the foster mother. The cowbird hatchling, usually one to a nest, usually breaks out two to three days ahead of the warbler. It grows so fast it crowds the tiny warbler out of the nest, steps on it and usually takes over its

foster home. The result is, at times, almost a total loss of warbler hatchlings.

Recognition of the cowbird threat brought efforts to control the parasitic bird. The first reported experimental effort was in 1965 when two naturalists teamed up with a portable tape recorder and guns. They played cowbird calls on the tape recorder to attract cowbirds and then shot the inquisitive birds when they flew in to answer.

Since that time, cowbird traps have been developed and have proved successful in controlling cowbird numbers around Kirtland's warbler nesting areas.

Mr. Byelich said that in 1974, for example, 16 traps accounted for more than 4,000 cowbirds. These traps collect other birds, too, but only cowbirds are shot.

Kirtland's warblers nesting near cowbird traps are almost totally successful in raising their young hatchlings, Mr. Byelich said.

The traps, scattered in and around the nesting area, were another source of conflict between the National Guard and the guardians of the warblers, but the problem was resolved for this summer's training when Interior Department authorities provided detailed maps for use by commanders in avoiding the trap locations.

Habitat maintenance is another goal of the Kirtland's warbler recovery team. It is not a new goal because the Michigan DNR and the

U.S. Forest Service began the program back in 1957 when they set aside 11,000 acres for warbler habitat preservation.

The tiny songbird is selective in its nesting area, building on the sandy soil next to the trunk of a jack pine which has long, ground-sweeping branches for cover when the bird goes to and fro. When the jack pines grow tall and the shaded lower limbs lose their needles, the site is unsuitable.

For many years natural fires produced new fresh stands of jack pines to give the Kirtland's warbler an abundance of habitat. However, with higher efficiency in fire-control and fire-suppression methods it has become necessary for foresters and biologists to resort to controlled burns to get the same result. For that purpose, last summer the Forest Service conducted controlled burns over 350 acres in northern Michigan.

By gradually moving the location of these annual controlled burns to the north, officials expect the warblers will follow, removing their nesting area from Grayling's tank range altogether. But this process is expected to take 12 to 15 years, Lt. Johnson said.

The two-fold drive to preserve the warbler continues: make certain a suitable habitat is available and protect the nests in that habitat. Can Kirtland's warblers reverse the decline in their numbers? That remains to be seen, but there is new hope as a result of the Battle of Camp Grayling.

*'The two-fold drive to preserve the warbler continues: make certain a suitable habitat is available and protect the nests in that habitat.'*

## Exercise in Futility

In the mid-1950s, my unit was brought to Germany for NATO maneuvers. In the exercise, my task as leading point platoon commander was to capture and hold a river crossing.

Charging over the bridge, we ran into an umpire who immediately sent us back with a shout that the bridge in theory had been destroyed. In true paratrooper tradition, the brigade commander was up front, near enough to see our return.

"Anderson," he shouted, "get over that blasted bridge!"

Attempts to communicate were ignored by the commander, and since I could see his imperious pointing finger and the umpire was no longer visible, I gathered my force again and dashed over the bridge—to run into another umpire.

"There's technically no bridge here and you should all be listed as drowned," he shouted, "but I'll let you go back since we haven't marked the bridge destroyed."

Back we galloped, to hear the frenzied bellow

of my general: "Anderson, blast you! Get back over that bridge or I'll —."

It didn't take me long to decide between a brigadier general whom I would see many times a year and a captain umpire I hoped never to see again.

"The bridge, men!" was the half-hearted cry. We crashed across at last to reach the far side and, of course, our second umpire surrounded by a group of curious German civilians who had seen the whole charade.

"You're all dead—that's it!" cried the umpire, scribbling on his note pad.

"On, Anderson, on!" came the faint cry from behind us.

I caught a strange, embarrassed expression in my sergeant's eyes and asked him what was wrong. "Well, sir," he replied, "I understand German, and I just heard one of those civilians say to his friend, 'Herr Finkel, one wonders how we lost the war!'"

ERIC G. ANDERSON, M.D.

ARMY will pay, on publication, from \$5 to \$25 for true first-person anecdotes.