

2 January 1976

Mr. Paul L. Stewart  
PO Box 4461  
Clearwater, FL 33514

Dear Mr. Stewart:

We are pleased to offer the following information regarding the Michigan Army National Guard's position in the Birdland's Warbler situation in Michigan. We too, are concerned with wildlife, especially endangered species, and welcome this opportunity to present our actions on behalf of the Birdland's Warbler.

The Michigan Army National Guard has been aware of the existence of the Birdland's Warbler on the Camp Grayling Military Reservation for several years prior to the time the bird was first placed on the threatened species list in 1968 and has worked diligently with Michigan's Department of Natural Resources in protecting the Birdland's Warbler as well as their habitat. Our self-imposed restrictions in the Birdland's Warbler range included placing the area off limits to tank and track off road maneuver, insuring wheel and track traffic remained road bound, maintaining strict fire discipline to protect the warbler habitat and not using smoke, chemicals or pyrotechnics in the area.

This was an amicable arrangement until several years ago when the Warbler population began an alarming decline. The reason was ascertained to be an enormous influx of the parasitic cowbirds because of the proximity to prime Crawford County Agriculture lands. The Department of Natural Resources instituted the cowbird trapping program designed by Dr. Lawrence Walkingshaw and the population stabilized but at a figure much lower than that desired for species survival. In February of 1975 the Birdland's Warbler was placed on the National Endangered species list and at the same time a Birdland's Warbler Recovery Team was formed to institute a plan to enable the warbler to recoup its former strength with 1,000 nesting pairs seen

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as optimum. The Recovery Team was composed of personnel from the Department of Natural Resources, the United States Forest Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior. While the Department of Natural Resources is the hosting governmental agency, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service is senior because of the precedence of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (160.S.C. 1531-41).

In April of 1975 the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team published Michigan's Program for Endangered and Threatened Species. In it the following statements were made ...

The long range habitat management program is designed to provide enough nesting habitat to support a nonendangered population level of the Kirtland's Warbler. To date this program involved only those special areas set aside for the Warbler by the DNR and USFS. The 1974 census of 334 birds (number of males, times 2) was the lowest ever recorded. This dangerously low level points up the urgency of a crash management program. Time is running out. Every effort is being pushed to provide what the species needs. Habitat improvement plans extend to the entire known range of the Warbler.

The program will be expanded to include all sections of land that have warblers now, and all of the land in a strip one mile wide adjacent to the sections with birds.

And this is where our problems began. Prior to this the Kirtland's Warbler area on the Camp Grayling Military Reservation was on approximately 4 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. When the Michigan Army National Guard inquired as to the rationale, we were reminded that we had 137,000 acres of military land and asked why this particular piece of real estate was so important to us. To answer this, our then Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Floyd Kadike, wrote a position paper and presented it to the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team. To aid in backgrounding this situation, I will quote liberally from it:

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Some might ask--with 137,000 acres why is such a fuss being made about the restricted area?

Most of Camp Grayling is very hilly and forest covered. We have not engaged in wholesale cutting of timber both because of ecological considerations and because hilly wooded lands are useful for most troops.

However, tracked vehicles (tanks and APCs) require generally flat, open country with occasional forested patches for gunnery ranges, maneuver areas, and testing areas.

The only, repeat only, area of useful "tank country" where a battalion of multi-unit exercise can be conducted by the tank battalion, the mech battalion, or the Armored Cavalry Regiment is the tank range. And only specific portions of the total tank range are "tank country", approximately 40%.

Problem: The KW area is in the exact center of this single useful area for tracked vehicles, maneuver and testing. 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.

Isn't there any other flat open area in the Grayling complex that could be used? Yes, there is. The impact area of the Artillery Range fits the description. But the range is loaded with many undiscovered duds, and even if it were cleared at an astronomical cost and over a period of years, using this range for tanks would eliminate all artillery firing, and the Air-Ground facility of the Air National Guard. Obviously, this is no solution.

With the foregoing as a history of the situation, I can now answer your specific questions.

1. The Department of Military Affairs, (which encompasses the Michigan Army and Air National Guard) and the Department of Natural Resources agreed on a modified closure order, in which each identified nesting pair of Kirtland's Warbler, was signed and

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avoided by using troops. All vehicles would remain road bound and the only people allowed in the area were guided in by Department of Natural Resources personnel.

2. Lieutenant Colonel Norman Johnson, the Camp Grayling Operations Officer, and First Lieutenant Michael Johnson, Administrative Assistant to the Adjutant General of Michigan, were detailed to work with the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team.

3. The Recovery Team and the aforementioned officers are currently working out a habitat management plan that would cultivate new desirable habitat, moving the Kirtland's Warbler, year by year, out of the tank maneuver range. There are presently 39 such areas outside of the Military Reservation.

4. The tank involved was the M48A1 which weigh 49 tons combat loaded.

I would like to add several more items for your information. "Tank Range" as used here refers to a tank maneuver range, not one on which live ordnance is expended.

The reason the tank range is important to us is also an economic one. I realize it is difficult to quantify a sunset and who can put a price on a Kirtland's Warbler but the Grayling, Michigan area is one that traditionally depends on Camp Grayling to bolster its economy. I will again quote from General Kadike's position paper on the economics of the Grayling area.

With the increase in equipment, the permanent party at Grayling was expanded to maintain buildings and ranges, and to maintain the vast equipment pool. The federal government pays over 1.5 million dollars a year in salary to personnel who reside in the area.

The troops coming to camp also have an economic impact on the surrounding community. It has been estimated that every soldier at Grayling spends \$100 during the camp period. Last year almost 25,000 troops came to Grayling. Many of these men brought families and vacationed in the Grayling area. The

