

## **Looking Again for Ivory-billed Woodpecker**

The search for the illusive Ivory-billed Woodpecker continues. State coordinators and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives will meet in Atlanta in September to review the 2007-2008 search, which covered flooded bottomland in parts of seven Southern states, and discuss plans for 2008-2009.

Participants will discuss the just-concluded search season, when helicopters loaded with high-tech photographic and sensing gear were used for the first time, flying over nearly 250,000 acres of public land in Arkansas and Louisiana. The matter of where to focus future searches will be another topic. In addition to Arkansas and Louisiana, the 2007-2008 search also covered likely woodpecker habitat in Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Tennessee and North Carolina.

Organized searches were sparked by the dramatic rediscovery of the highly distinctive bird in February 2004 by a kayaker in eastern Arkansas' Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. Before that sighting, the woodpecker – which once ranged from Texas through the southeast and then on to Cuba – had not been seen in the United States for more than 60 years.

“The conservation that is taking place as a result of this rediscovery is helping us reconnect and restore some of this region's most diverse wild places,” says Laurie Fenwood, the Service's Ivory-billed Woodpecker coordinator.

The Service helps fund the states' search teams, but the teams are usually organized by state fish and wildlife agencies working with non-governmental groups and universities. As it has from the start, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology continues to play a major role. The Lab, which has coordinated large-scale surveys in Arkansas, is also maintaining a database of possible sightings.