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**Audubon Arkansas Board Takes First Step to Secure Global Status for the
Cache-Lower White Rivers Important Bird Area**

June 10, 2005. The Audubon Arkansas State Board today nominated the Cache-Lower White Rivers Important Bird Area for international recognition as a global IBA. The nomination will be sent to the National Audubon Society and to BirdLife International, Audubon's global conservation partner for action. Don Nelms, Chairman of the Audubon Arkansas Board, noted, "With the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the eyes of the world are focused on the Cache-Lower White Rivers region. We know now that this area is the lower 48-states' equivalent to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge."

The IBA nomination includes two national wildlife refuges (Cache and White Rivers) and three wildlife management areas (Rex Hancock/Black Swamp, Dagmar, and Trusten Holder) where the Ivory-billed woodpecker was discovered as announced in April. The IBA extends from the vicinity of DesArc to the confluence of the White, Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. The Cache-Lower White Rivers IBA encompasses the largest remaining expanse of bottomland hardwoods in Arkansas.

The Cache-White Rivers region has long supported many birds and species of special conservation concern. The area is hosting the first visit in over 100 years of the Swallow-tailed Kite to Arkansas; a pair has attempted nesting since 2002. The Cache-White Rivers region is the most important wintering area for Mallards in North America; and thousands of Mississippi Kites and hawks migrate through the area. Up to 100 Bald Eagles winter there. Wood Storks are also winter migrants in the vicinity. Migratory songbirds nesting in the IBA include: Prothonotary Warbler, Swainson's Warbler and Cerulean Warbler, each of these species is considered vulnerable to extirpation in North America.

"The recent rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker underlines the significance of the ecologically rich Cache-White Rivers region," said Ken Smith, State Director of Audubon Arkansas. At least one mature Ivory-billed Woodpecker and perhaps a second bird have been sighted. The last confirmed sighting of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the United States occurred in 1944.

The next step for the Cache-White Rivers global IBA nomination is for Audubon's National Technical Committee, a blue ribbon panel of the nation's foremost ornithologists, to review the Arkansas nomination. Additional information on the Important Bird Area program and the Cache-White River region can be found at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.htm>.

Audubon has named four of its top ornithologists and biologists to guide Audubon's research and protection efforts in the Cache-Lower White Rivers IBA. They are: John Cecil, PhD, National

IBA Coordinator; Greg Butcher, PhD, National Director of Bird Conservation; Dan Scheiman, PhD, Audubon Arkansas Bird Conservation Director; and Bruce Reid, Deputy Director of Audubon Mississippi.

Recognition of the Cache-Lower White Rivers IBA as a globally important bird area is the first step in Audubon's bird conservation agenda for the region. Additionally, coordinating with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team, Audubon will establish an IBA monitoring team comprised of highly experienced citizen scientists (modeled after citizen monitoring Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Bird Counts). Educational outreach to area residents about the IBA and its special bird species and habitats will be a second important component of Audubon's activities. Finally, Audubon will work closely with its conservation partners to protect the IBA through advocacy and the political process. The Cache-Lower White Rivers is one of 22 IBAs in the state. For more information about Audubon Arkansas' IBAs and programs, go to <http://www.ar.audubon.org/>.

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Birdlife International is a global conservation network present in 105 countries, with 65 autonomous partner organizations, including Audubon.

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