

Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Recovery starts here...

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A N O C C A S I O N A L U P D A T E

Search for Ivory-billed Woodpecker Continues

With the arrival of volunteer searchers, the 2005-2006 Ivory-billed Woodpecker Research Project is now fully staffed and underway. The current field season will continue through April. The search is being led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Arkansas, with the support and cooperation of other members of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team.

Twenty-two search team leaders, coordinators, supervisors, and field technicians have been working in eastern Arkansas since November 1. More than 100 volunteers are joining the search, and will be deployed in groups of 14 for two-week periods through the remainder of the field season. The goal is to find an Ivory-billed Woodpecker active nesting cavity and get additional video documentation of the bird or birds—all to learn more about the species and bring it back from near-extinction. To highlight these efforts, Recovery Team partners hosted reporters and photographers from 25 media outlets including The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, Reuters, The Associated Press, WMC TV (NBC) Memphis and National Public Radio for tours in the Cache and White River basins December 12-14, 2005.

Arkansas to Pilot Healthy Forests Reserve Program

The Natural Resources Conservation Service reports that Arkansas has been chosen as one of three pilot states for the USDA's new Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP). HFRP is a voluntary program established for the purpose of restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems to:

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Martin Blaney, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, briefs reporters at Dagmar Wildlife Management Area birding trail during media tour December 13, 2005.

- 1) promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species;
- 2) improve biodiversity; and
- 3) enhance carbon sequestration.

The initial allocation for Arkansas is \$937,500 with a primary focus on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Rapid Forest Inventory to Direct Search and Improve Forest Management

In September and October, foresters from the Service and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission led a multi-agency team to conduct a rapid habitat inventory on Cache River and White River National Wildlife Refuges and nearby Dagmar State Wildlife Management Area. Much broader than a standard "timber cruise," this comprehensive inventory was conducted in only two months by forest ecologists from six southeast refuges, the Arkansas Forestry Commission, the Game and Fish Commission, the U.S. Geological

Survey, and the Service's Migratory Birds program.

Scientifically designed by the multi-agency Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture, foresters and other ecologists spent more than 1,200 hours in the field to inventory more than 89,000 acres of potential Ivory-billed Woodpecker habitat. Lands included in the inventory were within a 12 mile radius of locations where there is evidence of the presence of Ivory-bills.

The information gathered in the field was then analyzed by the Joint Venture office. The end products included mapping of the amount of dead wood, species diversity, stand age, canopy and understory cover, tree mortality and habitat condition.

This extremely valuable data set is being used by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to prioritize search areas for the Ivory-

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Caryn Rousseau, Associated Press talks with Cornell field biologist Nathan Nanfield during a media tour for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.



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Brad Alexander, Autonomous Recording Unit Crew Leader, Cornell Ornithological Lab, describes "kent" calls and "double knocks" to media at Hickson Lake, Dagmar Wildlife Management Area, Arkansas.

billed Woodpecker. It also gives managers a more comprehensive picture of the condition of the forest. This will guide many of the Service's forest

management decisions ultimately leading to improved habitat for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Consultation Begins on Hwy 79 Bridge Replacement

Discussions are underway with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department regarding the implementation of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker search that will be conducted in the next two months in connection with the Highway 79 bridge replacement.

Service Launches Trails Website for Birders

A web site providing information for potential day trips for birders searching for the woodpecker is now available at <http://www.fws.gov/arkansas-es/>.

Trails have been established on White River NWR as well as two Arkansas wildlife management areas: Dagmar WMA and Rex Hancock/Black Stamp WMA. Trails on Cache River NWR will be established in early 2006.

Congressional Briefing

Briefings were held this fall for staff members of the Senate and House Interior Appropriations Subcommittees. Additional briefings for staff members from the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Resources Committee took place in mid-January.