

# Old Growth Bottomland Forest Research & Education Center – Research Project Summary

Summer 2006



## The Ivory-billed Woodpecker

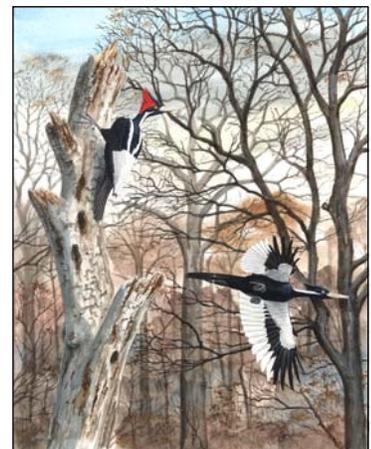
The Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) is the largest woodpecker in North America, and the second largest in the world. It originally lived in the extensive bottomland forests of the coastal plain within the southeastern United States and in Cuba. It was thought to be extinct, with the last confirmed sighting in 1944. However, in April 2005 it was announced that the woodpecker had been rediscovered in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas. As a result, reassessments of the historic range of the Ivory-bill have begun throughout the Southeast. Historic records prior to 1940, coupled with potential sighting reports from recent years have brought resources and expertise together in an effort to evaluate the possible presence of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in South Carolina.

## Teamwork Creates Possibilities

In order to investigate the potential existence of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in South Carolina, The South Carolina Ivory-billed Woodpecker Working Group was formed in August 2005. This joint partnership between Federal and State agencies, non-governmental organizations and private entities has helped compile and share historic and more recent data related to the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. The specific objectives of the Working Group are to 1) share resources for the investigation and evaluation of possible existence of IBWO in South Carolina, 2) provide a framework and strategy for conservation of IBWO habitat in South Carolina, 3) provide a working organization for coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's IBWO Recovery Team, and 4) provide a consistent platform to address public information and outreach. In January 2006, funding was provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct surveys for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers within South Carolina. Beginning in February 2006, a large scale field survey protocol for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers was implemented at Congaree National Park. This adaptive survey design and the data generated through this effort tie directly into recovery objectives for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker which include determining the status and number of birds, describing local ecology and behavior, and quantifying percentages of dead and dying trees.

## Searching For the Ivory-billed Woodpecker

The Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center at Congaree National Park hosted and coordinated all field activities associated with this 2006 survey effort. The park Research Coordinator and GIS Technician provided logistical and technical support throughout the entire survey process, and played a lead role in managing and training volunteers regarding woodpecker identification, survey methods and equipment use. The Southeast Coast Inventory and Monitoring Network provided essential data management support, including the development of an observational database. This research effort provided an opportunity for volunteer citizen scientists to experience Congaree National Park in a unique way and participate in survey efforts for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. At least 44 citizen scientists contributed over 1500 volunteer hours and surveyed significant wilderness acreage across the Park. Volunteers completed systematic transect searches noting the presence of migratory birds and documenting the abundance of seven woodpecker species, including the Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*). Areas of suspected high quality habitat and locations of dead and dying trees were also recorded. Volunteers searching for the Ivory-bill concentrated on listening for the Ivory-bill "ken" calls and distinctive double knocks. Survey data are currently being analyzed and will be summarized in the near future.



For more information, please contact:

Jennifer Koches  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Charleston Environmental Services Field Office  
843-727-4707 x214 • [jennifer\\_koches@fws.gov](mailto:jennifer_koches@fws.gov)

Theresa Thom  
Congaree National Park  
803-695-0214 • [theresa\\_thom@nps.gov](mailto:theresa_thom@nps.gov)

*The Old-Growth Bottomland Forest Research and Education Center is dedicated to understanding the systems and functions of floodplain environments and to monitoring environmental change*