

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Evidence suggesting that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (*Campephilus principalis*) exist in Florida. Geoffrey E. Hill, Daniel J. Mennill, Brian W. Rolek, Tyler L. Hicks, Kyle A. Swiston. 2006. Avian Conservation and Ecology – Ecologie et conservation des oiseaux 1(3): 2 [online] URL: http://www.ace-eco.org/vol_1/iss3/art2/.

This paper presents exciting new evidence that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers may not be extinct and may be located along the Choctawhatchee River in the Florida panhandle. Since the early 1940's, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is thought to have been extirpated from the southeastern bottomland forests of the United States. Its disappearance was mainly due to the cutting of the swamp forests in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A Cuban mountain population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers was thought to have been present until the late 1980's, but is now considered to be gone. In 2005, a single woodpecker was briefly captured on video along the Cache River in Arkansas and some ornithologists suggest that the video indicates that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers are in that area. However, other ornithologists still wait for unquestionable evidence that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers occur in Arkansas.

In May 2005, Hill, Hicks, and Rolek identified an Ivory-billed Woodpecker while kayaking through a mature swamp forest north of the town of Bruce, Florida. From December 2005 to May 2006, extensive field work in a 500 ha (1236 acres) study plot surrounding the initial identification site led to 14 sightings of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers! In addition, seven automated listening stations captured 11,419 hours of audio recordings that yielded 99 supposed double knocks (a distinct bill tapping) and 210 "kent" calls. The double knock recordings were carefully analyzed and compared favorably with similar recordings from the closely related Pale-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus guatemalensis*). The putative kent calls were analyzed and resembled the historical recordings from Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. Large tree cavities were also discovered that were in the size range historically noted for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers and larger than those of the Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*). Finally, the researchers report the presence of unique markings on trees that could not be attributed to any other animal. Specifically, they found woodpecker foraging sign on trees in the study area that had more adherent bark than in areas where Ivory-billed Woodpeckers are not believed to occur. Ivory-billed Woodpeckers are known to use their relatively flat, chisel-like bill to remove tightly adhering bark, whereas the Pileated Woodpecker tends to scale more loosely adhering bark. Although absolute evidence was not presented in this study, the authors report that future research will focus on gathering definitive evidence.— TMH

[**editors note:** see <<http://web2.uwindsor.ca/courses/biology/dmennill/IBWO/IBWOTeam.php>> and <http://www.auburn.edu/academic/science_math/cosam/departments/biology/faculty/web-pages/hill/ivorybill/> for the latest news concerning the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Florida.]