

# News Release



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## **FWS Publishes Draft Recovery Plan for Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Seeks Public Review and Comment**

A draft recovery plan outlining habitat needs and future conservation efforts aimed at preventing the extinction of the Ivory-billed woodpecker was made available for public comment today.

Interested citizens, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies and others, will have 60 days to provide comments on the 185-page blueprint put together by one of the most talented recovery teams ever assembled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the first recovery plan crafted for this species and comments on the plan will be accepted by the Service until October 22, 2007.

Evidence supporting the Ivory-billed Woodpecker's rediscovery with the presence of at least one bird in the Bayou de View area of Cache River National Wildlife Refuge was announced in 2004 and 2005. The woodpecker's rediscovery led to the need to develop a recovery plan. While the woodpecker's existence has not been confirmed since, tantalizing evidence continues to be gathered in Arkansas, Florida's panhandle, South Carolina, and other locations across its historic range.

"The opportunity to recover this icon of the ornithological world cannot and should not be passed over," said Sam Hamilton, regional director for the Service's Southeast Region and leader of the recovery team. "Given the evidence pointing to its survival, we believe it would be irresponsible not to act. That's why we established this recovery team with some of the nation's best biologists to help us chart a reasonable, well founded path to save this species."

"It's the right thing to do," he added. "The Service works with its partners to prevent extinction of species like the Ivory-billed woodpecker and that is the opportunity before us now. We want to encourage interested citizens, agencies and conservation organizations to participate in the comment period. The diverse team developed a balanced, common sense approach and we look forward to receiving feedback that makes it even better."

Since 1967, the Ivory-billed woodpecker has been federally listed as an endangered species. The species appeared to be widely distributed throughout the southeast prior to European settlement. In this country, the bird ranged from the coastal plain of North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, large portions of Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, Louisiana, eastern Texas, west Tennessee, and small areas of Illinois, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Missouri. The range became smaller by the late 1800s and the woodpecker was no longer found in Oklahoma, Missouri, Illinois or Kentucky. Ivory-billed numbers continued to decline with the last confirmed sighting in 1944. Until 2004, there had been no confirmed sighting of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in more than 60 years. The woodpecker's disappearance is closely linked to logging and the disappearance of contiguous forest habitats that once covered much of the southeastern United States.

Preventing extinction and ensuring the recovery of imperiled wildlife is a top priority for the Service. Recovery plans describe actions that may be necessary for conservation of the species and establish criteria for reclassification from endangered to threatened status or removal from the list of threatened and endangered species.

For the Ivory-billed woodpecker, the recovery strategy will initially focus on learning more about the species' status and ecology, including documenting known locations and characterizing those habitats. Population goals are not identified though such goals are key to recovery. Current efforts include development of models and additional research that will generate these spatially explicit population goals.

Copies of the draft recovery plan are available by request from the Service's Lafayette Field Office at 646 Cajundome Boulevard, Suite 400, Lafayette, Louisiana, 70506, or by visiting the web at: <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html#plans>. The draft plan also can be found at [www.fws.gov/ivorybill/](http://www.fws.gov/ivorybill/).

Comments will be accepted by mail or hand-delivery at the above address or faxed to 337-291-3139. For further information contact Deborah Fuller at the above address, or by calling 337-291-3100. Comments also may be provided electronically by using the following email address: [ibwplan@fws.gov](mailto:ibwplan@fws.gov).

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