



# NEWS

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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## Once-thought Extinct Ivory-Billed Woodpecker Rediscovered in Arkansas

*Federal Government and Partners Form Rapid Response Partnership to Support  
Recovery of Bird*

(WASHINGTON) – Responding to the dramatic rediscovery of the Ivory-billed woodpecker at the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today announced a multi-year, multi-million-dollar partnership effort to aid the rare bird’s survival. The bird has been thought to be extinct in the United States for more than 60 years.

“This is a rare second chance to preserve through cooperative conservation what was once thought lost forever,” Norton said. “Decisive conservation action and continued progress through partnerships are now required. I will appoint the best talent in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local citizens to develop a Corridor of Hope Cooperative Conservation Plan to save the Ivory-billed woodpecker.”

The “Corridor of Hope” refers to the Big Woods of Arkansas, an area about 120 miles long and up to 20 miles wide in eastern Arkansas where the Ivory-billed woodpecker has been sighted.

The Interior Department, along with the Department of Agriculture, has proposed that more than \$10 million in federal funds be committed to protect the bird. This amount would supplement \$10 million already committed to research and habitat protection efforts by private sector groups and citizens, an amount expected to grow once news of the rediscovery spreads. Federal funds will be used for research and monitoring, recovery planning and public education. In addition, the funds will be used to enhance law enforcement and conserve habitat through conservation easements, safe-harbor agreements and conservation reserves.

"Finding a species once thought extinct is a rare and exciting event, and USDA is pleased to be a partner in the effort to protect Ivory-billed woodpeckers," Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said. "At the same time, we understand that habitat conservation can impact landowners. That's why we're going to reach out to work cooperatively with stakeholders so we can all share in the joy of this discovery."

The action by Secretary Norton and Secretary Johanns came in response to news from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, The Nature Conservancy, and other members of the Big Woods Conservation Partnership that they had collected primary and secondary evidence of the bird's existence in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. The primary evidence consists of video footage, while the secondary evidence consists of seven eye-witness sightings and audio evidence of the Ivory-billed woodpecker. In addition, recordings of the distinctive double rap of the bird are still under analysis. After conducting its own peer reviews of the evidence, the journal *Science* is now publishing these findings.

Secretary Norton congratulated Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Scott Simon, Arkansas State Director of The Nature Conservancy, for the cooperative, diligent, year-long research of their teams. Following credible reports of sightings of the bird, a multi-partner team led by Fitzpatrick and Simon, assisted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission spent more than a year in the Big Woods of Arkansas searching for this rare bird. The evidence collected led scientists to conclude that the Ivory-billed woodpecker is now present in the Big Woods of Arkansas.

"Our next step to recover the bird must be as patient and thoughtful as the collection of evidence to confirm the existence of the bird," Norton said. "As we learn more, we will adjust our cooperative management effort."

The Ivory-billed woodpecker, the largest woodpecker in the United States, is the second largest in the world and had been one of six species of birds in North America thought to be extinct. Prior to this recent rediscovery, there had been no confirmed sightings of the bird in more than 60 years.

After consulting with Governor Mike Huckabee and other officials at the federal, state and local levels, the Interior Department will appoint members to a Corridor of Hope Cooperative Conservation team. Sam Hamilton, Regional Director for the Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will lead the team.

Secretary Norton also announced that the Department will appoint technical experts to assist the conservation team in writing a recovery plan. The team will include Dr. Jim Tate, Science Advisor to Secretary Norton and a noted ornithologist, and David Mehlman, Director of the Migratory Bird Program at The Nature Conservancy.

The Corridor of Hope and recovery teams have nine assignments. They will:

- Help develop and implement plans for local citizens to participate in writing a recovery plan that maintains historic public uses of land while protecting the bird's habitat.
- Provide information for the consultation process required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act to ensure that actions by federal agencies conserve endangered species.
- Provide information to private landowners on the voluntary conservation activities provided for in Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act.
- Help develop and implement plans to manage visitor access. Response to the rediscovery is expected to trigger increased interest from bird enthusiasts and researchers. The conservation team will carefully evaluate management actions for public access to ensure opportunities to see the areas where the bird has been sighted and to facilitate research without jeopardizing its survival.
- Recommend to Secretary Norton others from local, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, conservation groups hunting and fishing groups as well as private landowners who should be included in the recovery planning effort.
- Make recommendations for habitat that needs to be conserved through conservation easements, safe harbor agreements, purchase from willing sellers or other means.
- Help develop research and monitoring protocols. The recovery team will also reexamine previous credible reports of sightings in its historic range over the last few decades.
- Develop recommendations for the best use of federal funds being allocated to aid the bird's recovery, utilize the Cooperative Agreement with the State of Arkansas under section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and work with private partners to integrate federal funds with private funds as part of an overall recovery plan.
- Develop effective communications tools, including the Internet, to inform bird enthusiasts, hunters, anglers, and others about significant developments related to the presence of this bird and its ultimate recovery.

The conservation efforts to be established for the benefit of the Ivory-billed woodpecker will emphasize working with local citizens and private landowners. The Interior Department will invite them to help develop the multi-year recovery plan that maintains historic public uses of land while protecting the bird's habitat.

The recovery plan will adjust to emerging knowledge of these rare birds, their activities and habitat. Priority will be placed on developing a long-term plan that integrates federal, state, local and private resources. Recovery efforts will utilize partnerships, safe harbor agreements, easements and land purchases from willing sellers.

Through its cooperative conservation initiative, the Fish and Wildlife Service has a variety of grant and technical aid programs to support wildlife recovery.

“These programs are the heart and soul of the federal government’s commitment to cooperative conservation,” Norton said. “They are perfectly tailored to recover this magnificent bird. Just as innovation and partnership are recovering whooping cranes that were nearly extinct, I am hopeful that by working together, a secure future lies ahead for the Ivory-billed woodpecker.”

Cooperative conservation, a cornerstone of the Bush Administration’s environmental protection policies, exemplifies a new environmentalism focused on performance, partnerships, innovation and incentives to achieve the Nation’s environmental goals. The programs preserve millions of acres of habitat, improve riparian habitat along thousands of miles of streams and develop conservation plans for endangered species and their habitat across the country.

President Bush recently issued an executive order directing that federal agencies that oversee environmental and natural resource policies and programs promote cooperative conservation in full partnership with States, local governments, tribes and individuals. Local involvement is critical to ensuring successful, effective, and long lasting conservation results.

In addition to attracting the Ivory-billed woodpecker, the “Corridor of Hope,” including the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, is home to 7 endangered species and 265 species of birds—over a quarter of the U.S. total. Some 80 percent of the fish species in the lower Mississippi River Valley inhabit the waters in the area, which also boasts thousand-year-old Tupelo and Cypress trees.

The refuge remains open to visitors. However, while determining the appropriate level of use, refuge managers have, on an interim basis, established a 5,000-acre managed access area in the 65,000-acre refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service has established five access points for refuge visitors hoping to catch a glimpse of the woodpecker. The Service is working with refuge partners on the construction of viewing towers to make viewing easier. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service has increased its law enforcement presence in the refuge to ensure protection of the refuge’s resources, including the rediscovered bird.

The Ivory-billed woodpecker has been admired by birders and for many years. Phillip

Hoose, in his book titled *The Race to Save the Lord God Bird*, wrote that many who have observed the bird, from John James Audubon to President Theodore Roosevelt, have nicknamed it “Lord God bird” and “Good God bird.”

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[See attached fact sheet for details on Ivory-billed woodpecker federal funding package.]

**Fact Sheet**  
**Ivory Billed Woodpecker Federal Funding Package**

**Department of the Interior Funding: \$5.0 million, consisting of:**

**Habitat Partnership Grants: \$2.0 million.**

- The Department and the Service will work with the States of Arkansas and Louisiana, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, and the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to develop a package of grants to support protection and restoration of habitat for the Ivory Billed Woodpecker.
- Funding will be considered from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund, and the Private Stewardship grant programs.

**Recovery Planning: \$1.3 million in 2005**

- Development of species recovery plan and public education materials by the ESA program \$800,000 in 2005 for team formulation, planning, public outreach. 2006 full year cost: \$1.2 million.
- USGS research to support recovery planning and to guide other protection and restoration efforts. \$500,000 each in 2005 and 2006.

**Partnerships: \$1.2 million in 2005**

- Develop partnerships with landowners and waterfowl clubs to restore hydrology, protect habitat and support species-specific conservation practices. \$1 million from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program will support a 2-year effort.
- Expand partnerships for bottomland hardwood forest tree planting on refuge lands by private industry. Private companies receive credits for carbon sequestration. \$200,000 from challenge cost share funding will support the restoration of habitat.

**Enhanced Law Enforcement: \$300,000 in 2005**

- Enhance refuge law enforcement capability to work with visitors, birders, and hunters on public use/access issues. \$300,000 in 2005; \$600,000 full year cost in 2006.
- Assign a special agent to work on range-wide protection issues. \$200,000 in 2006.

**Public Education: \$200,000 in 2005**

- On-refuge kiosks and other public education efforts. \$200,000 in 2005.
- Also ESA outreach included in recovery package above.

**Department of Agriculture Funding: \$5.2 million, consisting of:**

- USDA's Conservation Reserve program will solicit sign-up of 18,000 acres of bottomland hardwood planting within the 100-year floodplain. USDA would cost-share the cost of tree planting, contributing \$2.7million for this purpose in the near term. In out years, USDA would pay the participating landowners \$13.5

million dollars in rental payments to maintain the trees (\$900,000 per year for 15-year, renewable contracts).

- To enhance existing habitat, USDA will contribute \$1 million of Wildlife Habitat Improvement program funds to support habitat improvement work in the affected area.
- To protect existing high quality habitat, USDA will contribute \$1.5 million of Wetlands Reserve program funds to purchase development easements on older age class forests in the affected area.