

The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker Returns



George M. Sutton/Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

For more than 50 years, scientists thought the ivory-billed woodpecker was extinct in the United States. Now bird lovers are flying high. Scientists recently announced that they have evidence that the bird still exists in eastern Arkansas.

The scientists caught the black-and-white birds in flight on a blurry videotape. The sighting was made by University of Arkansas researcher David Luneau. Luneau was paddling on the Cache River when he accidentally left a video camera running as his canoe drifted through a **bayou**¹. The camera recorded an ivory-billed woodpecker.

"We were nearing the end of a long day," Luneau says. "As we came around the bend in the channel, I cut the motor off, raised it to its locked position, and reached for my paddle. When I looked up, I saw the tail end of a black-and-white bird flying away."

¹**bayou:** a marshy or slowly flowing body of water (as a stream or inlet)

Reading Passage

It wasn't until 11 months later that scientists looked at the video frame by frame. What they saw **astounded**² them. They had found the ivory-billed woodpecker.

A Majestic Bird

The rare woodpecker began to disappear as loggers cut down the forests where the birds lived between 1880 and the 1940s. The last time anyone saw the bird was in 1944.

The ivory-bill is the largest woodpecker in the United States. The spectacular red-crested bird has white patches on its huge wings. Its wingspan extends almost 3 feet. The bird's call sounds like the toot of a tin horn. Ivory-bills are also known for their one-of-a-kind sound made when their long bills strike wood. They produce a double knock when their beaks strike trees as they look for insects.

Convincing Evidence

Some **skeptical**³ scientists were not convinced that the woodpecker Luneau had accidentally photographed was an ivory-billed woodpecker. Some critics said the bird was instead a pileated woodpecker, which looks much like the ivory-bill.

For people who doubted the videotape, scientists collected more proof. They recorded the ivory-billed woodpecker's double knock. The recording made believers out of the doubters.

"Hearing [the recording] was very exciting!" Richard Prum, a scientist from Yale University, told *Senior Edition*. "[It is] convincing evidence the ivory-billed woodpecker is not extinct."

Now that the ivory-bill is soaring again, a number of things are being done to make sure the bird doesn't really become extinct. Nature lovers are cutting down some trees in a select area of Arkansas.

Why? The woodpeckers feed on young beetles that thrive under the bark of fallen trees. With more food for the woodpeckers, bird lovers hope, the ivorybill's double knock will become a common sound again.

²**astounded:** filled with puzzled wonder

³**skeptical:** relating to or marked by doubt

Question Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

"The Ivory-Billed Woodpecker Returns" Questions

- ___ 1. The author's purpose is to make the rediscovery of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker seem exciting. This is achieved by
- telling about the discovery as though it were a mystery story.
 - describing the bird as unusual in both size and sound.
 - proving that the people who doubted the rediscovery were wrong.
 - all the above.
- ___ 2. The author includes the story of how the bird was rediscovered
- because he does not believe David Luneau.
 - to draw the reader into the article.
 - to let the reader know that not everyone agrees with David Lunueau.
 - because the article is mostly about David Luneau.
- ___ 3. If "pileated" means having a crested head, then to be easily confused with the ivory-billed woodpecker, the pileated woodpecker must
- have a crest similar to the red one of the ivory-billed bird.
 - have a different crest from that of the ivory-billed woodpecker.
 - use its crested head to camouflage itself against predators.
 - none of the above.
- ___ 4. The author uses two direct quotations from scientists in order to demonstrate that
- the scientists disagreed with each other.
 - the discovery was questioned but later accepted as true.
 - scientists don't all have the same personality types.
 - the scientists quoted had talked with each other. scientists
- ___ 5. What kind of extinct animal do *you* wish you could see alive? Why?
