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Common Name: IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER

Scientific Name: *Campephilus principalis* Linnaeus

Other Commonly Used Names: Ivory-bill, woodcock, logcock, woodchuck

Previously Used Names: *Picus principalis*

Family: Picidae

Rarity Ranks: G1/SX

State Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Legal Status: Endangered

Federal Wetland Status: N/A

Description: Known historically as North America's largest woodpecker, the ivory-billed woodpecker measures up to 50 cm (20 in) in length and has a black body with a white stripe running down each side of the neck from the cheek to the middle of the back. The top of the wing has a wide white stripe on the trailing edge while the underside of the wing has two wide white stripes, one on the leading edge and one on the trailing edge. When the bird is perched and the wings are folded against the body, a large white patch can be seen on the

wing near the tip. Both sexes have a pale yellow or ivory-colored bill. The male has a red crest on the head, and the female has a black crest. In flight, this species is reported to fly smoothly and rapidly and does not exhibit the undulating flight pattern seen in the other woodpeckers.

Similar Species: The pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) is often mistaken for the ivory-bill since it is a very large woodpecker with similar color patterns. The pileated has a black body with a white stripe running from the base of the bill to the back of the head and then down the neck to the shoulder and then to the flank of the breast. It also has a white throat patch and white stripe above the eye. Both sexes have red crests, and the male has a red malar (mustache) stripe. The top of the wing is black with some white at the base of the primary and secondary feathers. The underside of the wing has a very broad white stripe on the leading edge.

Habitat: Ivory-billed woodpeckers were once found in the old-growth hardwood and cypress swamps of the southeastern U.S. They preferred areas near sizeable numbers of dead or dying trees that provided an abundant source of large wood-boring insects. These trees were often upland pines adjacent to the swamps. It is thought that each pair of woodpeckers may have needed up to 800 ha (2,000 acres) of habitat.

Diet: Wood boring insects, especially the larvae of larger species of beetles; also seeds, berries, and nuts.

Life History: The nesting season probably starts in January with cavity construction. By early February a clutch of 2-4 eggs (range 1-6) is laid in a cavity that is approximately 4.5-22 m (15-70 ft.) above the ground in a large tree. Both adults incubate the eggs for about 20 days before they hatch and young birds fledge about 35 days later. Young can remain with their parents for up to 8 months.

Survey Recommendations: Probably the best method to use is searching bottomland habitat with large stands of large trees using both sight and aural survey methods. Automated sound recorders placed within appropriate habitat may also be an effective survey tool. Spring is probably the best survey time due to increased and concentrated activity near nests with young. Vocalizations by the male may also increase at this time.

Range: Historically this species occurred in the Southeastern U.S. from southeastern North Carolina to eastern Texas including much of the Atlantic and Gulf coastal plains and the Mississippi Alluvial Valley as far north as southern Illinois. In Georgia, it appears to have been limited to the eastern and southern portions of the Coastal Plain.

Threats: Loss of mature bottomland forest in the late 1800s and early 1900s to intensive logging was probably responsible for the final decline of the ivory-billed woodpecker in the U.S. Shooting of this species as a forest pest and by collectors likely also contributed to its demise. Most experts consider the ivory-billed extinct in the U.S. and probably extinct in Cuba, its last known stronghold.

Georgia Conservation Status: There are no recent substantiated records of this species in the state. In the early 1800s this bird was apparently fairly common along the Savannah River from Savannah to Augusta, eggs from a nest were apparently collected along the Altamaha River in the mid-1800s, and in the Okefenokee Swamp.

Conservation and Management Recommendations: By the late 1930s only about two dozen ivory-billed woodpeckers were thought to remain in the U.S. The last undisputed evidence that this species still existed in this country was a photograph of the bird taken in the Singer Tract in Louisiana in 1938, although reliable reports from this area continued until the mid-1940s. Some evidence suggests that the ivory-bill may have existed along the Altamaha River and in southwest Georgia into the 1950s. No estimates on historic abundance of this species are available, but according to some early accounts it apparently was fairly common and considered a forest pest by many landowners. The last widely accepted sighting of this species anywhere in the world was from eastern Cuba in 1986, where a male and female were seen. In 2004, video footage of a possible ivory-billed woodpecker in the Cache River basin in Arkansas renewed interest in this bird and a large-scale search effort was undertaken. Many experts reviewed the video footage, with several concluding it was

probably a pileated woodpecker and others labeling this evidence inconclusive. A number of additional reports came from the Choctawhatchee River in the Florida panhandle in 2005. Sound recordings of drumming and calls collected over several years at both sites were reviewed by experts and deemed inconclusive as well. Despite recent searches at many sites across this bird's former range no indisputable evidence that the ivory-bill still exists has been found. If individuals of this species still occur in the U.S. or Cuba, it may be possible to recover populations through reintroduction or captive rearing efforts if suitable habitat can be found.

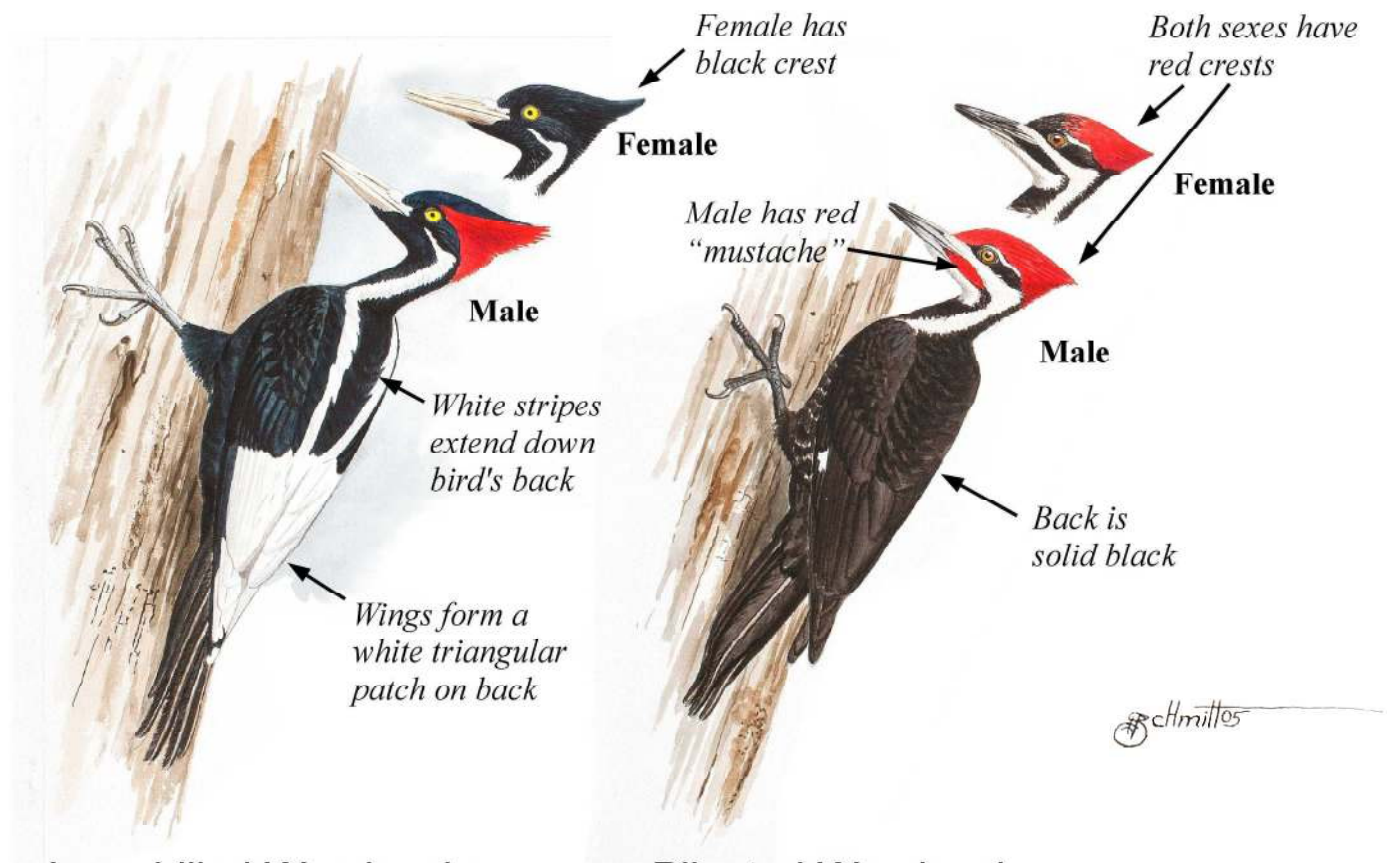
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- T. Schneider-Original Account: 1999
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Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker

Ivory-billed Woodpecker in flight



Underside

*White on
trailing edge of
wings*



Top

Pileated Woodpecker in flight



Underside

*Black on
trailing edge of
wings*



Top