

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

## Saving a majestic bird from extinction

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### **John Fitzpatrick**

is executive director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

### **Scott Simon**

is Arkansas state director of the Nature Conservancy

### **John Bridgeland**

is CEO of Civic Enterprises

Maybe hope does spring eternal.

So endangered that most bird guides list *Campyphilus principalis* as extinct, the ivory-billed woodpecker has now been found. For centuries, it has inspired its finders, and for six decades it has been silent.

More than 100 years ago, a naturalist who saw the ivory-billed woodpecker for the first time wrote about the "majestic and wild personality of this bird, its vigor, its almost frantic aliveness." That frantic aliveness may have helped the ivory-bill survive through the periods of greatest destruction of its habitat.

Now that humankind has been given a second chance with the ivory-billed woodpecker, an aggressive and smart effort is underway to save this largest U.S. woodpecker so that future generations may enjoy it.

With leadership from Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, and Sen. Blanche Lincoln and Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, the administration has developed a strong plan called "Corridor of Hope Cooperative Conservation." Instead of pitting private landowners, local groups and government agencies against one another, this plan demonstrates how all parties can work in sensible partnership early in the process to achieve the best results for this species.

The plan builds on more than 20 years of conservation efforts among the Nature Conservancy, other conservation groups, governmental agencies, and private landowners in the Big Woods of Arkansas - 550,000 acres of swamps and bottomland hardwoods in which

seven endangered species, 265 species of birds, and 1,000-year-old cypress trees live.

Under the plan, more than \$10 million in federal funds is available in 2005 to protect the bird, with further federal support in future years. Government funding is matched by private contributions, and a citizens' fund, found at [www.ivorybill.org](http://www.ivorybill.org), is supporting the project.

Priority tracts of private land essential to the bird's recovery will be acquired from willing sellers and conserved. Other private landowners will receive cash payments, not threats, for conservation easements or other efforts to conserve and restore forested habitat.

Every effort will be made to maintain historic, public use of the land, while vigorously protecting roost holes and corridors where the ivory-bill lives. Local conservation groups, birding organizations, duck hunting clubs, fish and game organizations, landowners, and residents of local communities will work cooperatively with federal and state agencies from the outset to protect the bird and be sensitive to local economies and needs. Efforts will be made to educate visitors from around the world to heighten appreciation of this vast ecological jewel and its magical woodpecker. Recovery plans will be adjusted as we learn more about the bird's activities and habitat.

The rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker in the United States is a hopeful moment in the life of the country. Conservation efforts over the last few decades are paying off for this majestic bird. Congress should support, and the public should embrace, this new pathway to successful conservation so this dramatic species can grace our country once again.

*John Fitzpatrick (jwf7@cornell.edu), Scott Simon (ssimon@tnc.org) and John Bridgeland (bridge@civicenterprises.net) all are members of the newly appointed recovery team.*