

# WILD *Bird* NEWS<sup>®</sup>

Wild Bird Crossing™ • For people who feed and care about backyard birds • October/December 2005

## Rediscovering the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus Principalis*) was historically found in vast bottom land hardwood forests of the southeastern United States, where the bird fed primarily on longhorn beetle larvae and occasionally on fruits and nuts such as persimmon and acorns. To get to the beetle larvae, the bird used its large, powerful bill to strip bark from recently dead trees. Because of its specialized beetle diet, the ivory-bill required extensive habitats of mature forests with many recently dead, but still standing, trees inhabited by the beetle larvae. The bird was often described as a “disaster species,” meaning that it sought out areas of previous, small disasters, such as storms or flooding, that may have left behind dead trees that harbored grubs.



1950s reduced these grand forests to less than one-fifth of their original extent. This nearly complete loss of habitat dealt the ivory-bill an almost fatal blow. By the 1920s, the bird was considered to be extinct. Then in the mid 1930s, a small breeding population was discovered in northeast Louisiana on an 82,000-acre tract of timber owned by the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Unfortunately, timber harvesting necessitated by the demands of World War II eventually destroyed the bird's habitat in this area. The last individual ivory-bill, a female, was seen in 1944.

Today what remains of the vast bottom land forest of the Mississippi Delta exists only along the rivers of Arkansas, Mississippi,



the bird confirming Gene's original sighting and beginning the largest search in history for the ivory-bill.

### ***Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology scientists continue to find ways to confirm current sighting data by:***

- *Analyzing the recent sighting video in-depth and frame-by-frame*
  - *Analyzing recent audio recordings by comparing them to recordings made 60-years ago*
  - *Seeking physical samples of feathers, nest material, or droppings for DNA testing*

**Findings will be reported when these studies conclude.**

In the late 1930's, Cornell University researcher James T. Tanner estimated that each pair of ivory-bills required a home range of 6 to 17 square miles. To put that in perspective, a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers typically occupy a home range of 0.2 square miles. Thus theoretically, at least 30 pileated pairs could fit inside the home range of one ivory-bill pair.

Before European settlement, approximately 24 million acres of the Southeast were a wilderness of swampy forests. Rampant timber harvesting from the 1850s to the

and Louisiana. It was in this fragmented habitat, along a small bayou in Arkansas, that the ivory-bill was rediscovered after more than 60 years.

On Feb. 11, 2004, Gene Sparling, a kayaker from Hot Springs, sighted what he believed was an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. News of sighting made it to Tim Gallagher, at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and to his friend Bobby Harrison, from Alabama. When Tim and Bobby visited the site a couple of weeks later on Feb. 27, they saw

At first, the search for the ivory-bill was very low key, involving only a handful of people. But eventually, the search grew to include more than 20 full-time and 35 part-time ivory-bill seekers and encompassed a search area of 550,000 acres.

The massive search yielded seven solid sightings and four seconds of video, which was used as the primary documentation in the article in *Science* magazine that heralded that bird's rediscovery.

The persistence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker speaks volumes about the resiliency of our world's wildlife and ecosystem. This rediscovery gives new hope and inspiration to efforts to restore critically endangered animals and imperiled ecosystem. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, along with the Big Wood Conservation Partnership, will continue to search for and to study the elusive ivory-bill in the swamps of Arkansas.

**Article by Ron Rohrbaugh**

# Nature's Elevators

"Thermals" are not just another name for long underwear. They're what make landing at some airports a bumpy affair, but birds often count on them for their departures.

Even small differences in the landscape create various heating patterns. A plowed field absorbs heat more quickly and releases it more slowly than a planted field or forest. Bodies of water, large and small, respond differently to the sun's work. Small towns and housing developments have a very different heat index than concrete jungles. And over some parts of the landscape, a kind of inverted funnel of fast-rising air bubbles up to elevations ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 feet, creating a natural elevator.

Many birds - especially large, soaring, daylight migrants - take advantage of thermals. Through experience, instinct or dumb luck, a bird will find one of these updrafts and take it upward to its peak. From there, the bird soars, losing altitude slowly as gravity takes over, until it finds another thermal and again rises through the turbulent air. This very energy-efficient way to travel makes it possible for some birds to migrate long distances without a large fat reserve.

At any time of year, you may see a single hawk, or even a pair, lazily floating on thermals as they travel about looking for food. But during migration, you can see dozens - sometimes even hundreds - of birds using the same thermals in their efforts to head ever southward. This can be particularly impressive when Broad-winged Hawks are migrating. Groups of migrating birds climbing the same invisible ladder are called kettles, and kettles are one of the most visible signs of migration in progress.



## How High Do They Fly?



*When we look at the sky, it's like a roof-flat, solid- just sort of there, unless the light is exceptional, even clouds and constellations look painted on.*

*For the birds, though, the sky isn't flat; it's multidimensional - a stairway leading to places for hunting, for traveling, for observation. Just as different bird species hunt at different levels within the same tree, different birds tend to fly at different levels in the sky. And for them, the clouds aren't just pretty puffs in the sky. They are a dynamic part of their daily landscape.*

Flying high exposes birds to dangers, such as higher winds or hungry hawks. So, when not migrating most birds fly under 500 feet. But during migration birds often climb to remarkable heights, probably to conserve energy. They burn fewer calories in the cooler air and become dehydrated less quickly. Also, the winds that can hinder day-to-day activities become a welcome aid to quick travel. Like pilots, birds seem to know that their optimum cruise altitude increases as their "fuel" is consumed and their weight declines. Long distance migrants seem to start out at about 5,000 feet then progressively climb to about 20,000 feet. In the Caribbean basin, where considerable radar work has been done, migrating birds are most often observed at about 10,000 feet.



## Nancy's Notes

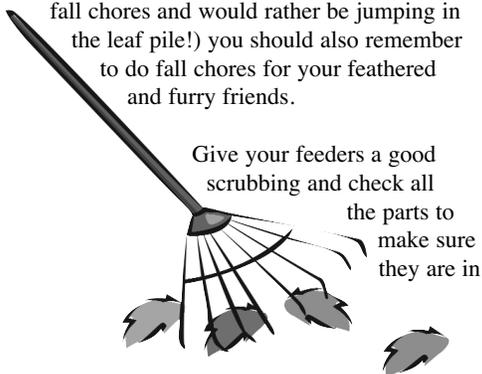
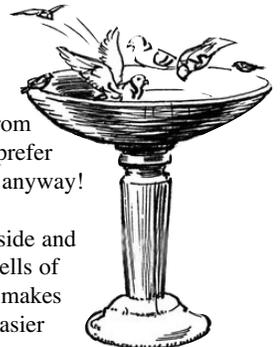
**Autumn reminders:** When your doing your fall chores, you know the ones like raking leaves so you can jump in the pile or stuff a scarecrow for Halloween, Apple picking, Pumpkin carving (ok, so I really hate the real fall chores and would rather be jumping in the leaf pile!) you should also remember to do fall chores for your feathered and furry friends.

good condition for the winter. You don't want to be trying to fix the chain on your feeder while your hands are freezing in the winter! Clean your bird houses out and put a little dry grass in the bottom to help insulate the box for winter roosting.

If you have a concrete or ceramic bird bath take it in or turn it over so water can not freeze in the bottom and crack the bath. Replace your summer bath with a durable winter bath and heater. If your birdbath heater is dirty and covered with calcium deposits it can easily be cleaned by soaking it overnight in white vinegar and then scrub it clean with a small brush...a toothbrush works well for this as long as you don't

borrow the nearest toothbrush in the bathroom. Your family may not approve! Take in your hummingbird feeder! Clean it and put it away for next year. Leaving your hummingbird feeder out to freeze will only crack the feeder, and I have it on good word from Santa that the reindeer prefer carrots to frozen nectar anyway!

And most of all get outside and enjoy the sights and smells of the autumn season ...it makes all those chores much easier to handle!



Kim's Corner 



This month I felt I would dedicate my column to the general bird questions that are asked most often. So no fun, no kidding, just the basics.

**Q:** I don't see as many birds as I used to, what's happening?

**A:** Three factors may be at work. First, the bird population naturally fluctuates over time. Second, local bird populations change with changing land uses. A meadow converted to house lots, driveways and new lawns will not support meadowlarks and bobolinks anymore. Third, the human activity is homogenizing our bird life. Blue Jays, Robins, and Grackles (all birds that thrive in suburban landscapes) are doing fine. Thrushes, vireos, warblers and other birds that require a woodland habitat are struggling and searching for new habitat.

**Q:** How do you get rid of moths in the seed?

**A:** Try not to buy more food than you'll use in that season. If you do buy seed in quantity don't worry too much, as you know all birds eat bugs just as

much as seed, so it won't harm your birds. You can also stick a few handfuls of Bay Leaves in your seed container. Bay Leaves have a natural insect-repelling property. If the moths have infested your garage, or basement try one of our special moth traps that will attract and kill the moths.

**Q:** How do I keep bees out of my birdhouses?

**A:** Try taking a bar of soap or petroleum jelly and rub it on the inside roof of the house. This should prevent the bees from attaching a nest to the ceiling or corners of the house.

**Q:** Should I clean out my birdhouses?

**A:** Yes! You don't have to go overboard, just take out the old nest and brush out the box. If you want to give the birds a special treat put a little dried grass in the bottom of the box after you clean it to give your winter roosting birds a little extra insulation during the cold winter months.

**Q:** Do birds mate for life?

**A:** No. Some species such as Eagles, Cranes, Swans, Geese, and Ravens have unusually strong pair bonds between mated birds that may last for life. Most North American bird species pair up primarily to reproduce and then go their separate ways soon after nesting. The Hummingbirds bonds are very brief, only lasting as long as courtship and copulation. The male hummingbird has nothing to do with the incubation or raising their young.

**Q:** How can I stop birds from hitting my windows?

**A:** It's easy! Put up hawk silhouettes. These do work but they work best on the Outside of your windows. Try hanging some wind chimes or potted plants in the window.

**Q:** I have a woodpecker drilling holes in my house. How do I get them to stop?

**A:** Well, the woodpecker is either looking for food or shelter. If the drill holes are small the woodpecker is looking for food. Perhaps you have a wind up clock on that wall that sounds like a termite (tick tick tick). If you do have a clock along the same wall you should move it or shut it off. If the drill holes are big the woodpecker is looking for a winter roosting home. Try hanging a woodpecker house close to the area where they are drilling. Make sure to put wood chips in the bottom of the house. Hanging rubber snakes also seems to help.

**Q:** Is it true if I leave my hummingbird feeder out too long the hummingbirds won't migrate?

**A:** No, this is just another bird myth. Birds are programmed through their internal clocks. They will depart when the time is right whether your feeders are up or not. However leaving your feeders up in the fall and putting them up in the early spring will help late or early migrants that are passing through.

*That's it for now! If you have any other questions please feel free to call us anytime! No question is silly here! Have a great fall season.*

Peace Kim

 Birds & Cloud Formations 

**Cirrostratus clouds**

Jet planes typically cruise at about 35,000 feet, in what are commonly known as "ice clouds."

**Alto cumulus clouds**

Migrating swans and geese are known to sometimes fly more than 25,000 feet above sea level, that's over four miles high!



**Cumulus clouds**

Vultures sometimes rise over 10,000 feet, scanning the area for food and watching the behavior of distant birds for clues to the location of a feast.

**Stratocumulus clouds**

Broad-winged Hawks routinely soar at around 3,200 feet, aided by thermals created by differing ground temperatures.

**Nimbostratus clouds**

In their daily activities in and around our backyards, many of our favorite songbirds stay in the 30 to 50 foot range above the ground. Robins, bluebirds, jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches are all relatively low flyers.





## Eyes on Nature Walks and Workshops



For details e-mail [wildbird@charterinternet.com](mailto:wildbird@charterinternet.com) or call for details

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 15, 2005**  
**Quabbin hike, Gate 45 to look for ducks.**  
**Meet at WBC at 6:30 am.**

This is an easy walk with no hills. We will bushwhack a little into the swamps to look for ducks. This can be a beautiful walk in the fall, although we will not be walking out to the open water of the Quabbin. Limit 12 people.

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 23, 2005**  
**Quabbin hike Gate 12**  
**Meet at WBC at 6:30 am.**

This is a hard walk down steep hills and jumping from rock to rock along glacial cuts between rock faces. We plan to walk all the way to the open water of the Quabbin. This will not be a bird walk but a hike to some areas most people don't get to see. We will stop along the way to look at everything from plants to tracks and

old foundations. If you are not sure footed this is not a hike I would recommend. Limit 12 people.

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 29, 2005**  
**12:00—4:00pm**  
**Blanchard Means Foundation at Elm Hill Farm in Brookfield Celebrate Fall Festival from**

**3:00pm Bill will be speaking on What to Feed the Birds talk presented by Wild Bird Crossing**

The celebration will also include horse-drawn hayrides, painting pumpkins, planting daffodils, food, music, watercolor demonstration and a wreath



**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 12, 2005**  
**Quabbin hike Gate 37**  
**Meet at WBC at 6:30 am.**

This gate usually produces loons in the late fall along with scoter, and grebe. This hike is a few miles along dirt roads and passes rattlesnake hill. Bring a snack as we will sit and scan for ducks for a while once we get out to the open water. Make sure to dress warm, it can be cold at this gate. Limit 12 people.

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 3, 2005**  
**12:00—4:00 pm**  
**Larry Keating from Rulers of the Wind will be joining us with a collection of live Hawks and Owls.**

Ring in the holiday season with a natural flair. Join us for this exciting and educational event.



*Happy Birding  
Bill*



## Reminders

**Halloween October 31, 2005**

**Veterans Day November 11, 2005**

We salute and admire our armed forces!

**Thanksgiving November 24, 2005**

Take time for your family and friends and give thanks!

(Wild Bird Crossing is closed today)

**Christmas December 25, 2005**

Happy Holidays to all!

(Wild Bird Crossing is closed today)

**New Years Day**

January 1, 2006

Happy New Year how many birds are starting the new year at your feeder today?

(Wild Bird Crossing is closed today)

HO!

The official holiday season begins

HO!

November 25, 2005

HO!

Wild Bird Crossing has a collection of wonderful wild gifts for even the most hard to please. Life is too fast paced. Take some time to visit us here at Wild Bird Crossing, enjoy a mug of steaming cider and browse the store. We have some great new items this year!

Check out our TV Celeb-Birdies Birdhouse Spy Cam. Reality TV comes to the backyard! Now you can see what goes on in your nest box with this infrared miniature nest cam.

Purchase a nest box and a camera and we can install the camera for you.

Need a little harmony in your garden? Take a look at our Pagoda fly thru feeders, custom made right here at Wild Bird Crossing, we can also custom make any type of house or feeder Order custom work early!

How about a natural nest? We have gourds for your birds, either plain burgundy gourds or custom painted by a local artist.

We also have some great new stocking stuffers for the kids, you know snakes and bugs and things! We also have some great stocking stuffers for adults too.

# The Bat Report

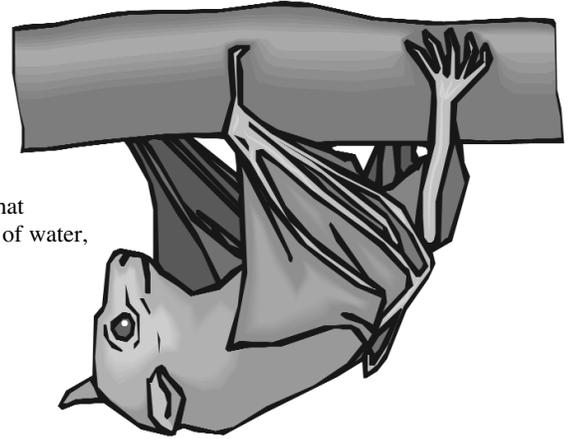
Whether it's because bats are getting better PR lately, or because of their nearly legendary ability to eat mosquitoes and other night-flying insects, attracting bats to your yard is becoming as common as putting out bird feeders to a growing number of people.

Information collected by Bat Conservation International is being used to help figure out where bats are willing to live and under what circumstances. Statistics indicate that bats prefer their houses up higher (10 to 12 foot minimum height); larger is better than smaller in house size. Houses that can support nursery colonies are the ones most occupied. Pole mounted houses were used more than building-mounted houses and trees are the worst mounting place for a bat house.

There is evidence that bat house locations that receive a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight are more readily occupied, and that dark colors on the bat houses help make

them attractive as the dark color causes more heat to be absorbed. The houses that work best are ones that were within a quarter mile of a body of water, which ensures a good supply of insects for the bats.

Lastly, most newly installed bat houses will still have a lag time between mounting the house and getting the first tenant. Only about 31% of new bat houses were occupied in the first year. Occupancy rates do seem to favor a large, rough-wood or screened landing area.



*Hang In There . . .  
because once your bat house is occupied you will  
enjoy natural pest control and impressive  
nightly flight shows.*

**FREE DELIVERY** within 10 miles!



**Bird Crossing Hours:**  
10:00-6:00 Monday - Saturday  
11:00-5:00 Sunday

Your ultimate backyard nature store™  
**Wild Bird Crossing**  
4 Cedar Street, (Route 20, Cedar Street Intersection)  
Sturbridge, MA 01566  
www.wildbirdcrossing.com  
Phone: (508)-347-BIRD  
FAX: (508)-347-5601  
Mailing Address  
P.O. Box 736  
Fiskdale, MA 01518



PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
NORTHBORO MA  
PERMIT NO. 50