

Hunt for rare woodpecker continues

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Bird experts and volunteers are searching the swampy forests of eastern Arkansas, looking for the chance to photograph the rare ivory-billed woodpecker.

Scientists announced six months ago the bird, believed extinct, had been re-discovered. Conservation supporters say if they can obtain conclusive proof of the bird's existence, it would also be proof that preserving and restoring habitat can sustain some of the nation's most prized species, The Washington Post reported Tuesday.

A group of 22 scientists and more than 100 volunteers is searching for the woodpecker, which was last seen conclusively in 1944, across the Big Woods -- an area containing more than 500,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest located about an hour's drive from Little Rock, the newspaper reported.

"Nobody seems to be able to whip out a camera fast enough," Sam Hamilton, southeastern director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service told the Post, adding many Americans may soon lose their appetite for funding the bird's recovery without more conclusive proof. "We live in a fast-moving society, with short memories."

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