

Field notes of sight records from Florida

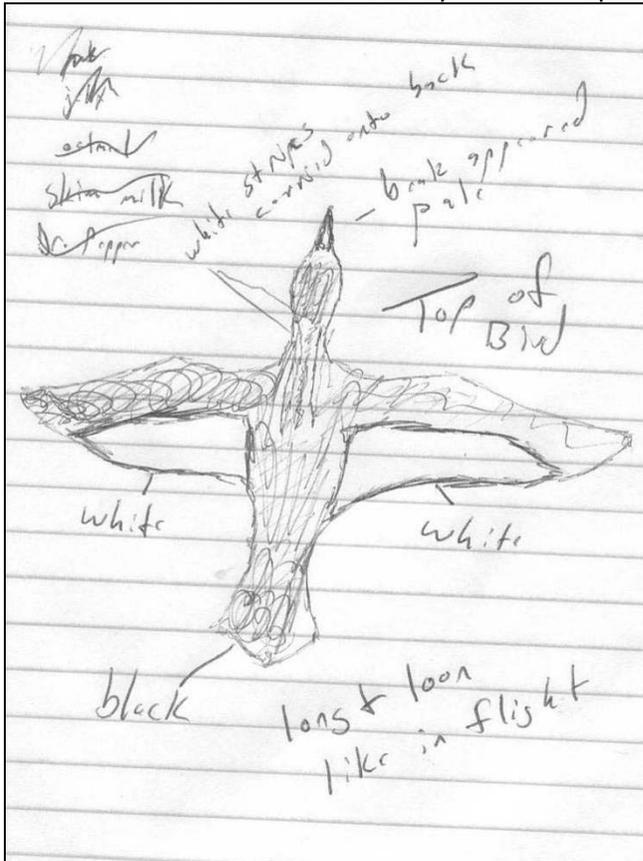
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SIGHTINGS BY TYLER HICKS

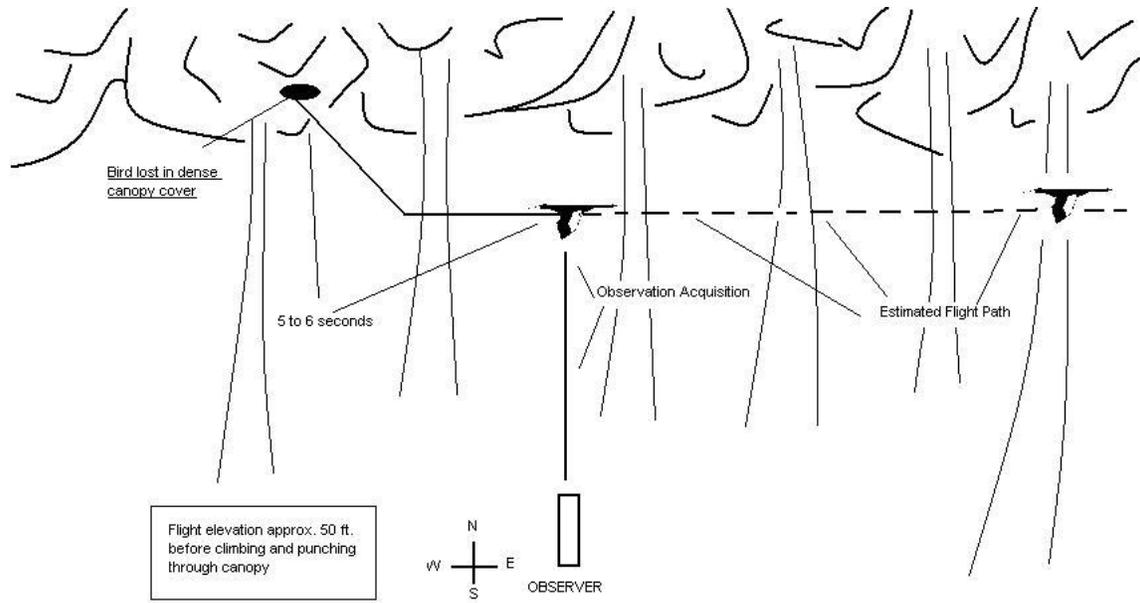
Sighting: 27 May 2005 by Tyler Hicks

At approximately 9:47 AM while sitting to north of [LOCATION WITHHELD] I was observing a Red-eyed Vireo feeding in the sub-canopy to the east of my position. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a large bird flying to my right. I turned and observed a large black and white woodpecker flying quickly in loon-like fashion with stiff wing beats and a direct flight to the north of me (Fig. S5). The bird banked to the northwest and climbed through the canopy cover affording binocular views before disappearing through the canopy vegetation (Fig. S6). In flight observed from behind the bird was largely black with large white wing patches on the trailing edge of the wing. The wing beat was deep and more direct than smaller woodpecker species. In flight the wings flashed white on both the upstroke and down stroke.

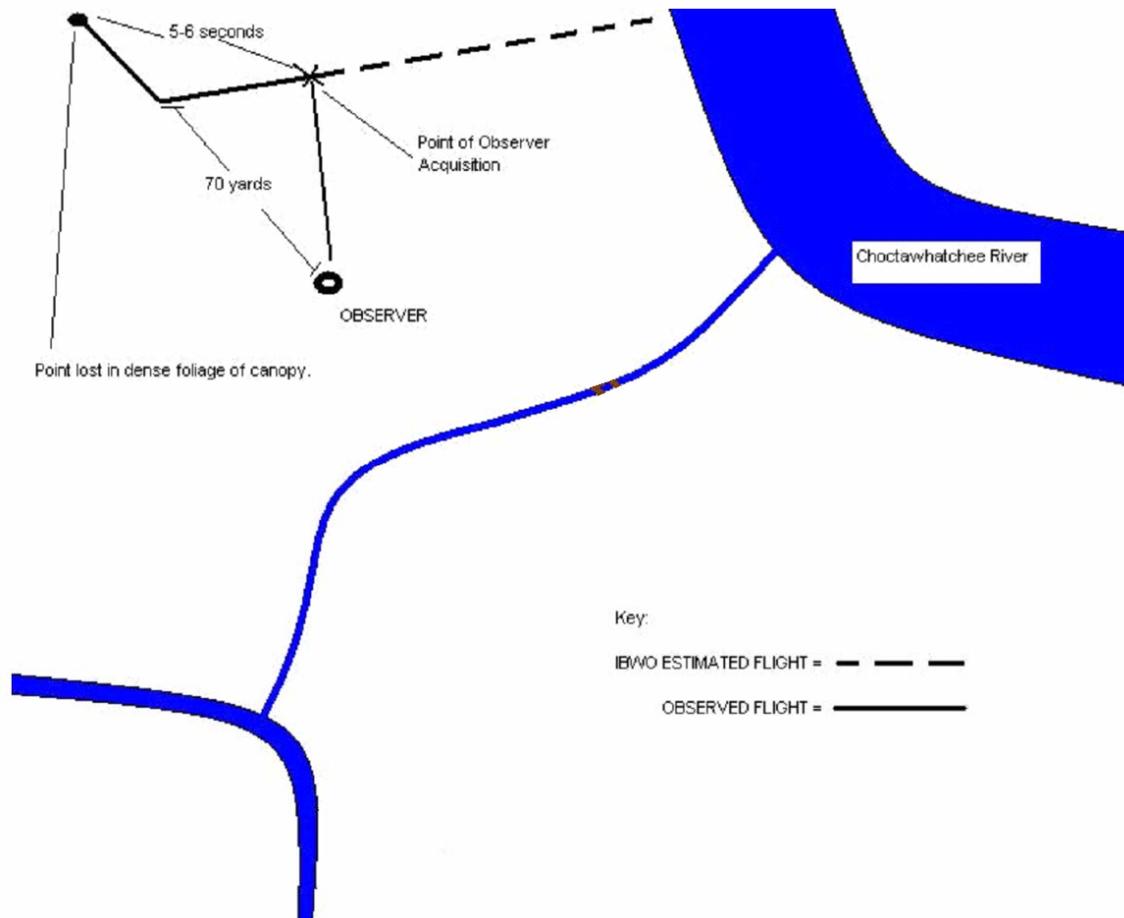
On the final down stroke the bird climbed through canopy affording a better view of the bird dorsally. The bird appeared long (almost loon-like) in flight. The large white wing patches were clearly visible and the white lines running from the neck down the flank were visible as well. The bird's head, back, rump, tail, and neck were clearly all black. I also believe I caught glimpse of the pale ivory bill. Due to the size and diagnostic field marks observed there is no doubt in my mind that this bird was a female Ivory-billed Woodpecker.



Field sketch made on May 27, 2005 by Tyler L. Hicks.



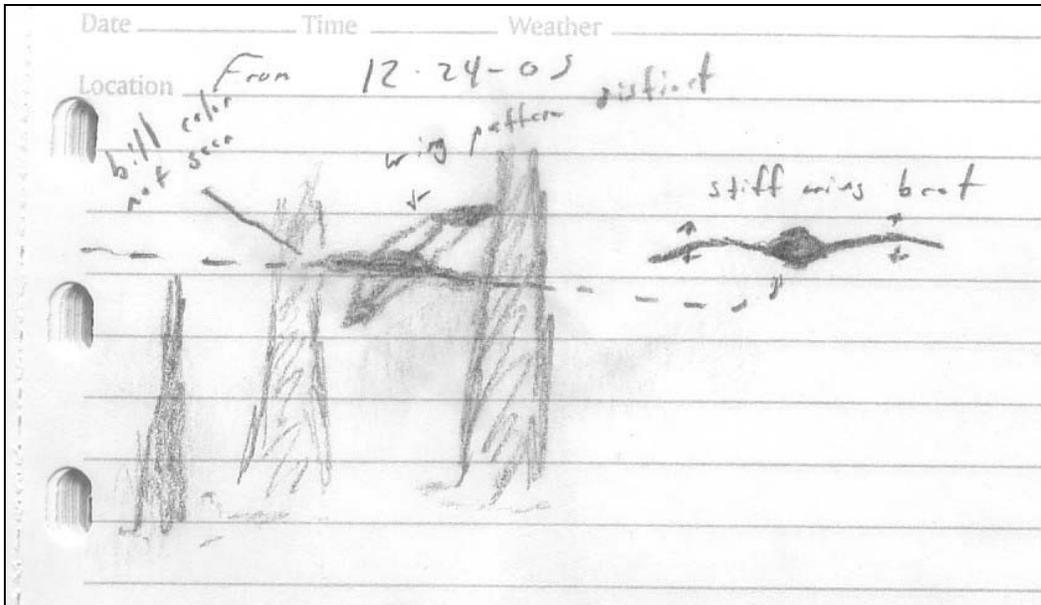
Circumstances of 27 May 2005 sighting.



Overview of position of bird and observer for 27 May 2005 sighting.

Sighting: 24 December 2005 by Tyler Hicks

While paddling "Hill's Swamp" at approximately 3:30 PM I observed in good light an IBWO flying from the south and banking east at about 50 yards. The bird was flying just below the main canopy of Hill's Swamp initially following the creek channel before banking east into forests of No-Name Hammock. Initially the identification of the bird was a mystery to me as it approached from the south. Through the trees the bird seemed like dark-colored dabbling duck in size and flight. As the bird approached nearly 50 yards away it banked sharply as it had obviously detected my presence. At this moment I observed the underwing of the bird in clear view. The underside of the wing had a trailing edge of white and the underwing linings were white as well. A black line running down the center of the underwing and spreading to cover the outer primaries divided this largely white underwing. The bird quickly moved east into an area of dense forest that had been damaged by a tornado. Although the view was brief and without binoculars I feel the bird could be nothing else but an IBWO. However no bill color was observed and at 50 yards one would expect to detect a pale ivory bill. In addition no red coloration was observed leading me to believe the bird was a female.



Sketch made on 12-24-05 by Tyler L. Hicks.

SIGHTINGS BY BRIAN ROLEK**Sighting: 21 May 2005 by Brian Rolek**

Time: Approximately 7:30AM

Geoff suddenly stopped at a bend. He had thought he heard something. He was looking to the left when I saw a huge dark bird swoop down from the trees and level off slightly above the ground. I saw a large amount of white on the back of its wings, flashing as they went up and down. It was slightly larger than an American Crow. Not realizing what I was seeing I yelled "Look to your right". Geoff's head didn't move for a short two or three seconds, but by then it was too late. The bird was gone.

I didn't get my binoculars up in time. The bird was closer than 50m. I am absolutely sure that the back of the wings were white. I could see the trailing edge of the feathers (white) with the green of the forest behind it. It was much too large to be a red headed woodpecker. In addition, I did not see any red. The body, neck, and head appeared mostly black.

Sighting: 31 July 2005 by Brian Rolek

Time: Approximately 10:30 AM

I had just finished filming a prothonotary warbler and put the camera away. I looked up and saw this (see sketch "SIGHT"). I realize I'm not an artist but looking at the characteristics of this bird, I'm sure this was it. I reached for the camera (couldn't find it) and realized I was better off just observing the bird. It flew directly above my head just over the canopy. I got a great look at it except for color. A storm was rolling in and it got dark fast. It flew just above the tree line, probably 40 to 45 feet up.

The bird glided just above the canopy, across the river, beat his wings twice to get above the canopy on the opposite side of the creek, and continued gliding. I observed a very long, thin neck, bill, and tail. Overall the bird appeared very slender and much larger than a pileated. It's body shape didn't look at all like a Pileated. I also noticed that the front of the wings were straight. The back side of the wings gradually curved to a point on both sides. The point lined up straight across with the front side of the wings. I ran after it into the woods and sat still for a short time with my camera. I didn't hear or see anything. I returned to my boat about 20 minutes later. I couldn't stay there because the mosquitoes were swarming me. I put away the camera to get back into the kayak and saw two large similar birds fly from the side I was just on back to the other side. I didn't get a good look because I went for the camera. The second bird was following directly behind the first by about 1 to 2 seconds. By the time I had the camera they were gone, but these birds looked very similar. I could see black and white somewhere on the undersides of the wings, but did not see exactly where, because I looked away to find my camera.

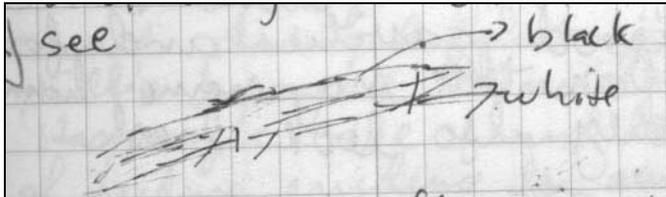
Sighting: December 27 2005 by Brian Rolek

Time: 10:37 AM

I stopped at DK (spot where Tyler and I had heard double knocks) in [LOCATION WITHHELD] heard a huge knocking similar to other IBWO detections. When I approached, I saw a bird fly away with white secondaries and black everywhere else that I could see.

1 wing beat 30-40m away.

Bird flew away and knocked several times on another tree then was not heard again.



Field sketch by Brian Rolek

Sighting: 25 January 2006 by Brian Rolek

Today I heard 2 DK's at 2:54PM.

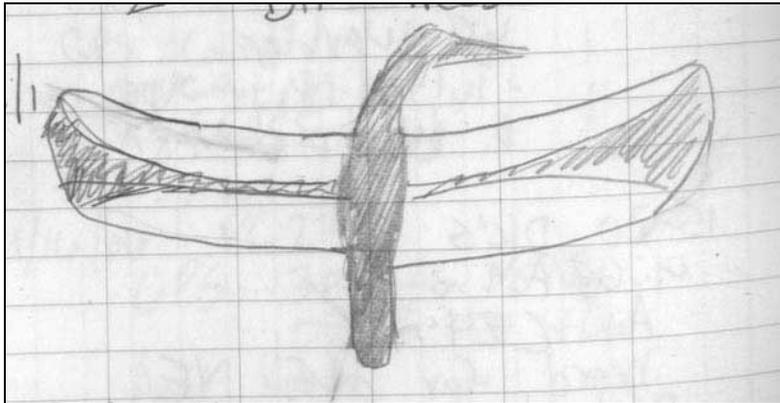
I chased the sound toward cav26 to see a large bird flying away to far from me to accurately ID. Another bird dropped from a tree closer to me and I observed white secondaries as it flew straight away from me. There was far more white than I have ever seen from a pileated and it appeared to be on the rear of the wing. The bird also looked larger than a pileated but other features were difficult to see considering the distance (approx 100m). Both birds were about 50-100 m away from a cavity currently being excavated c26. When investigated afterwards I did not find any evidence of fresh excavation.

Sighting: 1 February 2006 by Brian Rolek

Time: 08:51 AM

In [LOCATION WITHHELD] area, I observed 2 birds coming off of the same tree. Their flight looked awkward as if surprised then waiting for the other to lead. I was approx. 60m away

I observed the underside of both birds' wings. I could not note the color of their bills, just the large obvious amounts of white on the underside of their wings and the black middle widening as it reached the wing tips. They flew off eastward, probably crossing the river. As they were flying away I raised my binoculars. They were extremely out of focus. I looked at the bird on the left side of the tree. I could still see the blurry white on the top and bottom of the wing with black between the white. The bird was positioned so that its belly was facing me, with the head and tail positioned perpendicular to the ground. I could also note some white on the neck, probably being the single white line. By the time my binoculars were fully focused I could only see both birds flying directly away from me with the white secondaries showing. As they first came off the tree, their wing beats were heavy and deep while hovering. As they began their eastward flight, their beats quickly became very shallow. The bird to the right side of the tree flew eastward first, and the bird to the left immediately following behind. On this tree, there were several feedings.



Field sketch by Brian Rolek

Sighting: 2 February 2006 by Brian Rolek

This afternoon I had another sighting, this time of a single bird. I was in [LOCATION WITHHELD] observing pileateds, which seemed very active since the rain had stopped. I saw movement at the left corner of my eye to observe the bird flying about 50m away. There were some trees intermittently blocking my view. The bird flew South toward [LOCATION WITHHELD]. I could see that the bird was definitely larger than a pileated. The amount of white on the wings seemed obvious that it was not a pileated. While it was flying, I could also see that the white was showing on the back of the wings. The bird took off from low on a tree. To my right was c16. I slowly and quietly chased to hear nothing and see nothing more. This occurred at 4:12PM.

Sighting: 26 February 2006 by Brian Rolek

Time: 14:52

[LOCATION WITHHELD] I saw a large black and white bird flying low and about 100m away. I could see white secondaries flashing for about 5 wing beats. I raised my binoculars to get a better look but the bird had already disappeared into the forest.

Sighting: 27 April 2006 by Brian Rolek

Time: 16:30

[LOCATION WITHHELD] Kyle and I were canoeing up the creek. A large bird that looked like it was flying from the canopy of a tree on the east side. The bird was flying west slightly rising. Could not positively ID. Because of the poor lighting conditions we could only see the outline without color. The bird resembled a large fat duck with slender wings. The beats were shallow. It flew above the creek and quickly disappeared over the canopy. I can definitely say it

was not a hawk, heron, ibis, anhinga, owl, wood duck, cormorant, kite, pileated, or red headed woodpecker. It did resemble many accounts of Ivory bills in flight. Approx 60-80m away

Sighting: 19 May 2006 by Brian Rolek

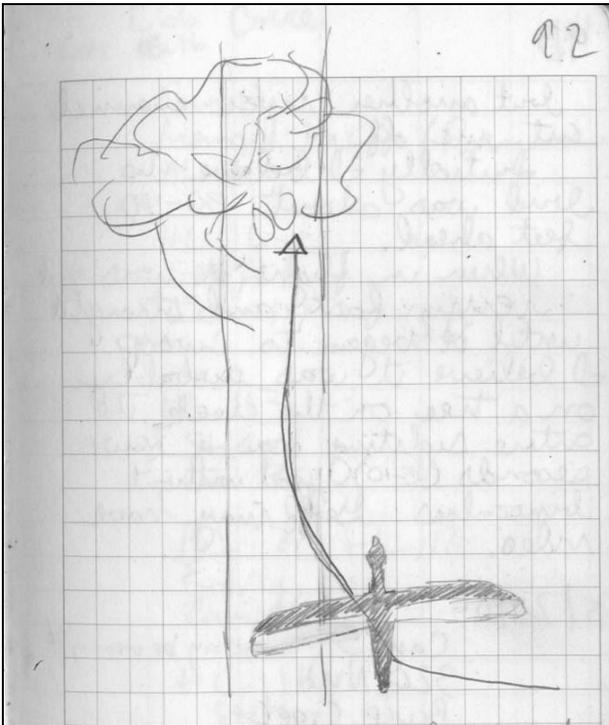
Time: Approximately 4pm

An Ivory Bill flew across [LOCATION WITHHELD]. I was looking for feeding and cavities in the forest to the left and was looking low at the time. I saw something large flying across the creek from the corner of my eye. It appeared dark, but at that time I couldn't say for sure because it was in my peripheral vision. By the time I looked upward the bird had crossed the creek and was flying directly away from me. The bird appeared almost completely white with shallow wing beats. On the upstroke and downstroke it appeared white.



Field sketch by Brian Rolek

The view was from directly behind the bird. At this point, I was unsure what type of bird it was. It changed pitch and revealed more and more of its' back, head, neck, body, and tail. As it did this, the entire rear stayed white but the head, neck, body, tail, and front of the wings appeared black. It was swooping upward to the trunk of a tree about 60-80 ft away. It appeared to land on the main trunk but a branch with leaves was obstructing my view. I looked back at Geoff to signal that I had seen the bird. I returned to the tree but could not find it again.



Field sketch by Brian Rolek

I saw movement behind the tree. I think this was the bird flying away. I approached the tree and saw nothing. I wanted to pursue but another river channel cut me off. Initially I believe the

bird was about 30-40 feet ahead. When in flight it was stiff very fast and straight until it began to swoop. I believe it was probably on a tree on the creek. The entire sighting was a few seconds (5-10?) and without binoculars.

SIGHTINGS BY GEOFFREY HILL

Sighting: 5 January 2006 by Geoff Hill

Transcribed from notes written immediately after sighting

We left camp (Beavertown) at about 0610 and floated out to the [LOCATION WITHHELD] and then up and out to the Choct. We then floated down and up into [location withheld]. About 10 min into our paddle up [LOCATION WITHHELD] I saw a bird with a wingspan greater than a Wood Duck fly over my head and away from me. The time was 0638.

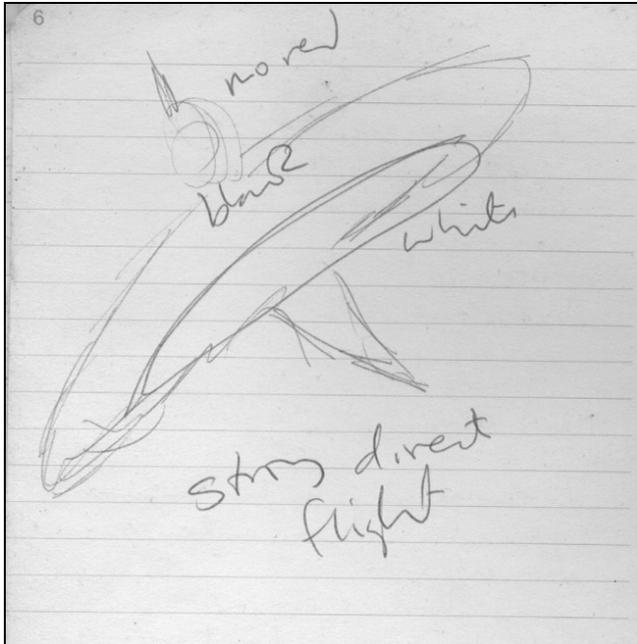
The bird was not exactly like anything I've seen before. It reminded me of a small loon. It had a long neck and long tail. Wingbeats seemed rather stiff and shallow. Chet mentioned that it seemed too small for a cormorant. I agree that it definitely was not a cormorant but the stiff wingbeats were reminiscent of a cormorant. In the early morning light I could see no coloration. It was certainly not a duck of any species, not an anhinga, not a cormorant, not a heron. I am rather confident that it was an ivorybill. It flew at tree-top level over my head and dead straight away. It was in view for about 2 seconds.

Sighting: 21 January 2006 by Geoff Hill

Time: 0955

Notes and drawing made immediately after sighting. Notes transcribed from handwritten originals.

Naked-eye view. Bird flushed from about 30 feet (10 m) as I was moving noisily through a flooded tupelo/cypress stand. It came off a tree trunk about 3 to 5 feet from the water. I never saw it perched. Flight was strong and fast. It seemed not to need many wingbeats to cover the first 100 feet. It made no sound at all as it flew. With naked eye and the bird flying away I saw few details: jet black except wide striking white band on trailing edge of wings. It looked larger and longer-winged than a pileated. It flew about 300 feet and landed in a distant tree. I could see it going in to land but it disappeared completely from view as it did so. About 1 min later, just as I turned my video camera on, I heard a second bird from my right knock and then double knock. I may have captured this on tape. I did not detect either bird again.



Field sketch by Geoff Hill

Three days later, Geoff wrote this account from memory:

I was paddling through a deeply flooded stand of timber watching my GPS and trying to avoid the numerous obstacles in my path. Floating through a flooded woods is challenging because there is no channel. You have to pick your way around the trees and over branches and bushes. Cypress knees always seemed to be lurking 2 inches beneath the surface of the water, so my kayak was constantly hanging up, forcing me to back up and go around. I was winding my way through the trees, often making a fair bit of noise, when suddenly a large bird took off from a tree near me. My main impression was black and white—mostly black but with bright white trailing edge on the wings. It was a naked eye look and the only color pattern that I noted was a broad band of white on the trailing edge of the bird. I didn't notice any white on the back or neck and I didn't see bill color.

It was an impressive flier. It seemed to cover a lot of air with shallow beats of its long wings. I estimate that the bird was 30 to 50 feet from my boat (I moved my boat before I thought to measure the distance) and maybe three to five feet above the water when it took off. It was already flying when I saw it.

I had no chance to raise my binocular. If I had been walking on a trail with binos in my hands I probably would have raised them. But I was in a kayak with a paddle in my hands so I just watched it. It flew powerfully, rising rapidly up toward a distant tree line. It was in view for about 4 seconds, by which time it was 300 to 400 feet away into distant trees. I could see it landing on a distant trunk but I never saw it actually land. It was definitely landing like a woodpecker on a vertical trunk and not on a branch like a crow. Just as it was about to land it disappeared from view behind vegetation.

I reached down, turned on my video camera and placed it in my lap. Just then I heard a single knock and then a double knock to my right. It sounded pretty close but distance was hard to judge. A dense tangle of bushes was about 70 feet to my right and it was certainly behind that, so 100 to 200 feet away is my best guess. In retrospect, I probably should have paddled immediately toward the bird that appeared to land in the distance, but charging toward a bird in a kayak in a flooded forest is not like charging toward a bird across an open field. There is no straight-line approach. Any approach by boat would be noisy and I would have had to focus more on maneuvering the kayak than on looking for the ivorybill. Instead I just sat and watched, hoping the distant bird would give me another look or that the second bird would move across

my field of view. Neither happened. I sat and watched for about a half hour, paddled through the area where the bird had landed, then headed back to camp.

On my way back to camp, I came upon a Pileated Woodpecker banging on a tree. For a moment after I heard the first bangs I was hopeful that it might be an ivorybill but after listening for a few seconds it was clear that the bangs were not powerful enough and were too fast. I carefully approached the bird, but it still flushed at about 100 feet and flew away from me. It was a very useful look because I could compare this fleeing pileated to the other bird I had just seen in the same light and viewing conditions. The pileated really didn't look much like the bird I had just flushed. The wings of the pileated were more rounded and its flight much less direct and powerful. The pileated flashed a lot of white on its wings, but the white was out on the primaries, not on the trailing edge of the wings. Also, the red on the pileated was conspicuous—very hard to miss in the gray and brown swamp. I had seen no trace of red on the ivorybill I had just watched. Failure to see red may have been due to the naked-eye view and distance, but after seeing how conspicuous the red on the pileated was, I doubted I could have missed a red crest on the ivorybill if it had been present.

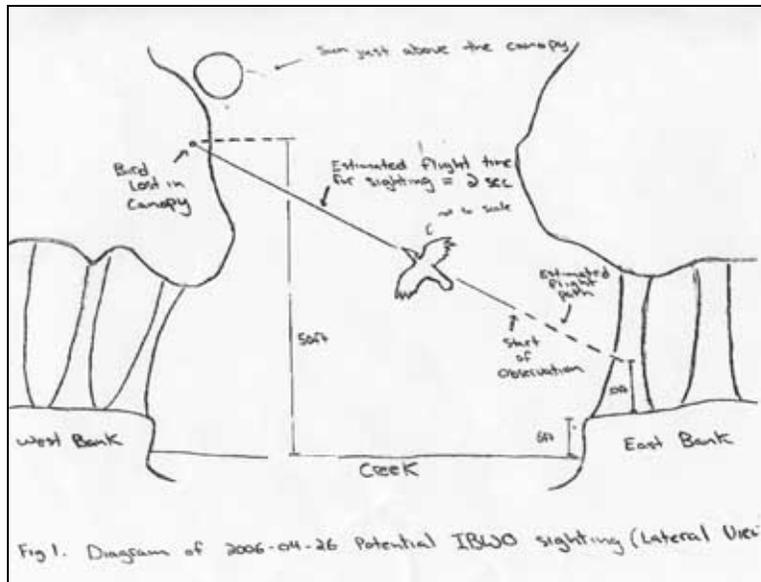
SIGHTINGS BY KYLE SWISTON

Sighting: 26 April 2006 by Kyle Swiston

I was paddling north, up [LOCATION WITHHELD] Creek, in a canoe with Brian Rolek, when we both observed a large bird fly west, across the creek, and over the canopy of the opposite bank. The sighting occurred on April 26th, 2006, at approximately 4:30pm, between [location withheld].

The bird made a direct flight from either a tree branch or trunk (we did not see the bird's takeoff) located 10-15 feet of the ground of the east bank, to the canopy of the west bank (Fig 1). Flight was not undulating, and the wing strokes of the bird were shallow. While the bird's long out-stretched neck, and quick, shallow wing beats gave it an appearance similar to that of a duck in flight, its wings were elliptical in shape.

Although shape, size, and flight characteristics, were consistent with those of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, I was unfortunately unable to make out any of the bird's coloration patterns due to bad back-lighting from the sun at the time of the sighting.



Field sketch by Kyle Swiston