

PRESS KIT



Ghost Bird

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A DOCUMENTARY BY SCOTT CROCKER



CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR

The New York Times

"Crocker has turned a bird-watching tale into a multilayered story that will fascinate practically everybody in *Ghost Bird*, a **witty, wistful** documentary."

NEW YORK
MAGAZINE

"Critics' Pick! This **spellbinding** documentary takes a small item from recent history...and turns it into a cosmic lament for the forest primeval and man's search for environmental redemption."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

"By turns **witty and metaphysical**, *Ghost Bird* evokes the offbeat Americana of Errol Morris's "*Vernon, Florida*," while examining the nature of belief and the blurry margins of fact."

npr

"Beautifully crafted...heartbreaking, ironic and infuriating. **It's a stunner.**"

IFC
Where all the cool movies go.

"*Ghost Bird* is a rare beast indeed — a matter-of-fact documentary about a seemingly innocuous subject that manages to become **profoundly moving.**"

ARTFORUM

"*Ghost Bird* considers the ways in which collegial debate, **intellectual rigor**, and a collective desire for objective truth are in danger of extinction."

MACLEANS.CA

"By turns **comic, mesmerizing and deeply poignant**, this investigative documentary is reminiscent of the work of Errol Morris in the way it casts a spell while telling a story and building a case."

TimeOut
New York

"Thanks to Scott Crocker's crisply edited balance of scientific backbiting, naturalist noodling and a macro-philosophizing...what could have been a niche-specific doc becomes something **oddly compelling.**"

Boxoffice

"Crocker...has fashioned an eco-doc that acknowledges the complexity of conservation issues without diluting its own activist stance...**Ghost Bird has teeth.**"





GHOST BIRD PRESS KIT

CONTENTS:

SYNOPSIS	Page 3
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT	Page 6
PRODUCTION NOTES	Page 11
CAST & CREW	Page 13
DIRECTOR'S BIBLIOGRAPHY, FILMOGRAPHY	Page 15
CINEMATOGRAPHER'S BIOGRAPHY	Page 16
COMPOSER'S BIOGRAPHY	Page 16
PHOTO GALLERY	Page 17



SYNOPSIS

LOG LINE:

Set in a murky swamp overrun with birders, scientists, and reporters, Ghost Bird explores the limits of certainty, the seductive power of hope, and how one phantom woodpecker changed a sleepy Southern town forever.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS:

In 2005, scientists announced that the Ivory-billed woodpecker, a species thought to be extinct for 60 years, had been found in the swamps of Eastern Arkansas. Other creatures have wrongly been presumed extinct, but the reappearance of the Ivory-bill was celebrated around the world as the rediscovery of a lifetime, prompting the largest recovery effort ever undertaken for a lost species. Millions of dollars poured in from the government while ornithologists and birders flooded the swamps to find the rare bird. Down the road, the town of Brinkley, Arkansas - itself on the brink of extinction – was transformed by the hope, commerce and controversy surrounding their feathered friend. But continued sightings by expert birders only highlighted the mysterious absence of credible evidence. Now six years later, the woodpecker remains as elusive as ever. Ghost Bird brings the Ivory-bill's blurry rediscovery into focus revealing our uneasy relationship with nature and the increasing uncertainty of our place within it.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

With over one hundred bird species having already been driven to extinction, what are the chances of one coming back, and if one did, how would we respond? Answers arrived in April of 2005 when scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology held a press conference at the U.S. Department of the Interior announcing that the world's third largest woodpecker, believed extinct for over half a century, had been rediscovered. At a time when extinctions are disturbingly commonplace, the miraculous reappearance of the Ivory-billed woodpecker was welcome news celebrated by nature lovers and conservationists across the planet.

It all began when a kayaker encountered a giant woodpecker in Eastern Arkansas. The sighting was quickly re-confirmed by two birders, which in turn led to the Lab of Ornithology launching a secret expedition during which the nation's top ornithologists reported over a dozen Ivory-bill sightings in as many months. Then a blurry four-second video was determined to be all that was needed for the scientists to finally reveal their remarkable secret. The second coming of this striking black and white phoenix with its meter-long wingspan was doubly good news to the citizens of neighboring Brinkley who welcomed the flood of tourists with Ivory-bill burgers, haircuts, souvenirs and an annual festival.

Also known as the “Lord God Bird”, the Ivory-billed woodpecker had once been counted among North

Ghost Bird



America's most spectacular birds. By 1900 their numbers had plummeted with the clear-cutting of the Southeast's swamp forests to where they were so rarely seen that many already presumed they were extinct. On a 1935 expedition to document the country's disappearing birds, Arthur Allen, founder of Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, located a small remnant population of Ivory-bills in Louisiana and obtained the only audio and visual recordings ever taken. Accompanying the Allen expedition was Cornell undergraduate Jim Tanner who went on to study Ivory-bills for his PhD. On several trips that included his intrepid newlywed, Nancy, Tanner closely observed their behavior and even attempted banding a fledgling. He reported his findings in his classic book "The Ivory-billed Woodpecker" which, after his death, became the only real reference outside of Nancy's own first-hand knowledge.

Immediately following the 2005 rediscovery announcement, David Sibley, best-selling bird guide author and illustrator, traveled to Brinkley and set off into the woods eagerly looking for signs of Ivory-bills. Tanner's book in hand, Sibley looked for eight days only to notice how well used the area was by hunters and fishermen. More perplexing was Sibley's observation that the Ivory-bill's favorite food source, larvae conspicuously pried from under the bark of newly dead trees, had never been harvested from the forest's most promising trunks. Could a large bird really live here unnoticed and leave no trace of existing?

In June of 2005, *Science* published Cornell's findings in a cover story with seventeen co-authors. While the scientific community's response was almost unanimously enthusiastic, Dr. Jerome Jackson, longtime Ivory-bill biologist and friend of the late Jim Tanner, found the video evidence problematic. To his educated eye, it suggested the markings of a more common Pileated woodpecker. Yale's curator of ornithology, Dr. Richard Prum, also took exception to disparities between the video and Cornell's conclusions. In learning that Dr. Jackson also shared his suspicions, the two decided to collaborate on a rebuttal. Just as they were submitting it to *Science*, Lab of Ornithology Director Dr. Fitzpatrick contacted them with news that he had persuasive new evidence. The paper was shelved. Reflecting on not having published the rebuttal for what later amounted to dubious audio recordings, Dr. Prum wonders if maybe Fitzpatrick, "maybe threw us a bone."

Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology houses over 61 Ivory-billed woodpecker specimens, by far the largest collection anywhere. Presided over by Dr. Scott Edwards, the museum's curator of ornithology, the stuffed birds are neatly arranged in drawer upon drawer with even their un-hatched eggs and the stump of a roost hole on display. Dr. Edwards concedes that the final disappearance of Ivory-bills from southern swamps shares a disturbing symmetry with the appearance of stuffed specimens in the nation's scientific institutions.

While the greed of specimen collectors is partly to blame, the wider demise of the species was due to a more basic human appetite. As the country's population grew and relocated, habitat everywhere was



sacrificed for homes, farmland and an insatiable hunger for natural resources. Tragically, this was the fate of the last known remaining Ivory-bill population in the Singer Tract, owned by the famous sewing machine company. Even the combined efforts of president FDR and two governor's who offered to buy out the land's logging rights failed to prevent the Chicago Mill and Lumber Company from cutting down every last tree.

Midway between Little Rock and Memphis, Brinkley was once a thriving crossroads of two major train lines. With the arrival of the interstate and an off-ramp Walmart, Main Street's storefronts have gradually been boarded up. At the very least, the second coming of the Ivory-billed woodpecker promised economic salvation. Yet while the town attempted to reverse its misfortunes on the back of a bird, Cornell's search expedition was swimming in funds including ten million dollars from the Bush Administration making the woodpecker quest the largest and most costly effort ever to resurrect a lost species. What the administration neglected to disclose was that their funds were taken from other conservation projects, some of which involved endangered birds threatened with extinction themselves.

With Cornell unable to provide new evidence, the skeptics returned to the video for more critical analysis, determining that, at best, the bird's identity was inconclusive. At worst, it was a common Pileated woodpecker. "If you go out looking with something in mind," explains David Sibley, your expectations lead you to find, "the thing you're looking for." In its absence, the iconic Ivory-bill becomes a haunting reminder of our conservation failures. Yet, the sacrifice of the "Lord God Bird" ultimately helped galvanize the early American environmental movement by inspiring the founding of the Nature Conservancy and later, the adoption of the Endangered Species Act. In the end, this may be the Ivory-bill's most important legacy. "You can never prove that they don't exist," concludes Dr. Jackson, "That ghost is still out there."

Ghost Bird features music by The Pixies, The Black Keys, Under Byen, Hazmat Modine, The Black Heart Procession and an original score by Zoë Keating.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT: Requiem For Certainty

Introduction

The Ivory-billed woodpecker's alleged rediscovery has been well documented in numerous books and throughout media around the globe. Lengthy articles in *Science*, *Outside* and *The New York Times Magazine* have also chronicled the story. **Ghost Bird** is unique in that it steps out of the swamp and takes an even wider perspective of the rediscovery, fully exploring all of its political, cultural and economic dimensions. As a result, surprising insights are made and significant facts are uncovered, some having been previously censored. These new revelations not only help explain what really happened in the swamps of Eastern Arkansas, they reframe the fundamental assumptions upon which the Ivory-bill's rediscovery has previously been understood. What in the press has usually started and ended with the unprecedented recovery of a lost species, this documentary pursues into the unsettling territory of human ambition and wishful thinking. In the end, **Ghost Bird** emerges finding less to say about extinct woodpeckers than about our yearning to look for and even see them, whether they are there or not.

Genesis

While the aim of most documentaries is to reveal objective truths, Ghost Bird grew out my desire to explore the limits of certainty in a non-fiction film. In an era of extraordinary access to information, I wanted to create an emotional experience in the viewer that placed them in opposition to the world of facts and restored an appreciation and respect for a state of not knowing. The Ivory-billed woodpecker's ambiguous rediscovery presented the perfect opportunity to explore this in the context of an environmental parable about the dire consequences of human hubris. Suspended between our longing for belief and the finality of extinction, the mystery of the reappearing Ivory-bill only gets deeper in light of our increasingly precarious relationship to nature. However, unlike a conventional mystery that begins with questions and proceeds to uncover answers, I wanted Ghost Bird to start with answers that became more and more doubtful until all that was left were questions. Stripped of our assumptions, we must reconcile ourselves with the world, not as we wish it to be, but as we are making it, for better or for worse. Not being a birder, I learned about the Ivory-bill's rediscovery after the story jumped from the science sections to the front pages of newspapers. As miraculous as the reappearance of a lost species was, I was equally intrigued by the yearlong top-secret search to find it, and the endless hours birders spent waiting to see it in the snake infested swamps of Arkansas. To me it sounded like a Samuel Becket play, "Waiting for a woodpecker." I didn't get personally pulled into the story until September of 2005 when I happened to meet a cameraman who had been hired by Cornell's Lab of Ornithology to live in the swamp in order to shoot high definition video of an Ivory-bill. Fourteen months later, he emerged with a couple brief sightings and a few compelling bird calls only to discover his second wife had left him. I thought,



“Wow, these people are seriously obsessed.” I wanted to find out why.

I began reading everything I could about Ivory-bills, which is a lot for an extinct species. That's when I learned about the prior history of sightings and searches, the power of the woodpecker's allure and why it's called the Grail Bird. Over time, Ivory-bills and birders' quests to find them have taken on mythical proportions, like looking for the Loch Ness Monster, or giant footprints in the snow. More importantly, the legacy of the Ivory-bill impressed me as a powerful and compelling environmental story. Imbued in this iconic bird are our hopes, our fears, and our failures, making its story one that needed telling. By December I decided I had to go to Brinkley near where all of the sightings were happening to find out what was going on for myself. This was before any serious skepticism had surfaced, and while I didn't go into it skeptically, given the history of past Ivory-bill “rediscoveries”, I didn't blindly believe everything the search team reported either.

Obstacles

What I immediately discovered upon arriving in Brinkley was how incredibly warm and inviting the locals were - and how impossibly controlling Cornell's Lab of Ornithology was. Their search team had genuine conservation concerns regarding access and sensitive scientific information, however from day one they denied me interviews with anyone they had influence over. This pattern repeated itself again and again for the next eighteen months as people affiliated with Cornell, contractually or otherwise, agreed to be interviewed and then had last-minute changes of heart. At first this exclusivity appeared to be simply territorial protectionism since Cornell had commissioned their own documentary and didn't want anyone else scooping them. However, the longer they went without finding the bird, the more it started to look like denial simply to prevent their bubble from bursting.

An additional obstacle was working within an unpredictable timeframe since the story was unfolding in real time and could suddenly change. I had to be ready to travel at a moment's notice in order to document the critical shifts from unbridled optimism to more open questioning to resignation as the various phases of the story affected the various players. There was also the immanent possibility that at any minute a definitive photograph of an Ivory-bill would appear, though the anticipation of that happening slowly faded.

Story

While editing the film, I found there were really two stories I was weaving together. There was the historic Ivory-bill story about how it went extinct, was re-found and filmed in 1935, only to have its forest cut down. Then there was the contemporary story of the reappearance in Arkansas in 2004, the political and scientific issues it raises, and how it impacted the town of Brinkley. Jumping back and forth between the historic and the contemporary narratives, a layering of meaning developed as the present was informed



by the past, and the past became interpreted through the present. Looking back, we see how little has changed about the way we treat natural resources and how early we knew what we were doing wrong. Looking forward, we see how quickly we jump to conclusions from first impressions, especially when we are invested in the outcome. These perspectives create a dialectical juxtaposition between states of belief and skepticism that I wanted the audience to alternately experience.

To arrive at these contradictory states of mind it was important that the viewer go into the film forgetting there was any question of whether the Ivory-bill had been rediscovered or not, an objective made all the harder since it is the underlying premise of the film. I believe what made it possible was the same profound desire to believe that overcame the scientists, the town and really anyone who learned about this amazing bird and still wanted it to be a part of our natural world. At heart, this is what the story is about, the role belief plays in shaping what we want to be true.

The thematic structure that unites the historical and contemporary narratives is extinction itself. Ghost Bird considers the central question of the Ivory-bill's extinction, but there is also the struggling town of Brinkley whose future hangs in the balance like so many other small towns across the country. As the citizens of Brinkley helplessly watch the last of their resources vanishing with factory closures and population loss, their fate begins to resemble the Ivory-bill's.

Another kind of extinction I wanted to address in the film comes back to the limits of certainty but as it relates to what we do know. Both Nancy Tanner and Virginia Eckelberry, each over ninety at the time of production, carry with them first-hand accounts of having witnessed the Ivory-bill. Though the film preserves their individual accounts, their experiential knowledge will be lost with them, a reality underscored by the unfortunate passing of Virginia in the fall of 2009.

A related and equally pressing subject I wanted to explore is how the current proliferation of information in our lives is easily confused for knowledge. We are falsely led to think that the more information available, the more knowledge we can derive from it, which is not always the case. Take for example the thousands of hours of digital audio Cornell recorded, or their comprehensive analysis of the four-second video. In each case, the scientists required special algorithms and sophisticated image enhancement in order to arrive at their conclusions, which are now suspect. Manufacturing truth out of selected fragments is no different than believing the sum of a few parts is greater than the whole.

Despite having found no new evidence, Cornell continues to maintain their certainty of having seen an Ivory-billed woodpecker and of having documented it on video. At the same time, they admit that the bird has not been as "persistent" as they had hoped and as of the winter of 2010 they are no longer searching.

POV

Rather than becoming an editorial presence in the film, I wanted to allow the subject to reveal itself as fully as possible without my dominating the viewer's experience or what they came away with. Since I refrain from making a final declaration about the fate of Ivory-bills and even leave the possibility of their



existence open-ended, I am often asked what my personal opinion is. My answer is that if we can't get irrefutable documentation of their existence, what matters most is that we collectively come to grips with taking responsibility for causing Ivory-bills to go extinct as well as all the other species mankind is wiping out. There is a profound moral question at the heart of this global ecocide issue which, taken to an extreme, becomes a selfish question about our own self-preservation; is there any acceptable number of species we are can justify destroying, and how many will it take to irrevocably upset the fragile balance of life we depend on? For me, those questions dwarf whether or not a few Ivory-bills are still living in the swamps of Arkansas.

The film's political point of view is shaped largely by how the Bush administration used the Ivory-bill rediscovery as an environmental decoy while simultaneously delisting species and aggressively lobbying to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling. Unfortunately, the Lab of Ornithology ended up being the administration's publicity tool and the bait in the funding switcheroo that ironically put other endangered birds at even greater risk. Cornell even reached out to Laura Bush to announce the rediscovery, but when the hot secret started leaking out early, Gale Norton, then Director of the Dept. of the Interior, stepped in to take Laura's place, only later to leave Washington to go work for Shell. In retrospect, there were influential people in and outside the administration that only saw the upside of an environmental victory story and I don't think many of them lost any sleep over whether it was true or not.

A less deliberate point of view that the film ends up having resulted from the Lab of Ornithology's refusal to allow me to interview their staff and associates. This put individuals who had agreed to meet with me in a difficult situation that Cornell consistently solved by borrowing G. W. Bush's doctrine of "Either you are with us or you are against us." Defectors would lose their privileged access to the Lab's exclusive search effort. This policy inevitably limited my interviews to the skeptics and few free agents, like David Luneau, who had found Cornell's non-disclosure agreements circumspect. Because of Cornell's controlling influence in general, *Ghost Bird's* skeptical perspective ends up being a welcome counterpoint to the still prevailing belief that Ivory-bills were discovered in Arkansas.

Lastly, while I didn't want to downplay the mistakes made by key players in the rediscovery, I didn't want the viewer to be left with the impression that there were easy scapegoats that let them off the collective hook of species extinction. Unless we each feel strongly about this issue, the loss of the planet's biodiversity will continue to be a tragedy of the commons we blame on others and feel unable to reverse.

Style

A recent film I was inspired by was *Darwin's Nightmare*. Hubert Sauper's circling inquiry into the toxic economy running amok on the shores of Lake Victoria transcends being a fact-based documentary to become a lyrical and philosophical work that is more accurately labeled a non-fiction film. Connecting with the viewer on the level of emotional truth was a quality I wanted to bring to *Ghost Bird*, particularly in light of my open-ended narrative objectives. The issues in the film had to resonate with, hit audiences



deeper and stick with them longer than a more cerebral, journalistic treatment generally does. This was a challenge given that the story hangs on considerable detail and background information. Part of how I went about accomplishing the connection was using the soundtrack to shape the emotional architecture of the film and make connections that the spoken word and image could not.

Conclusions

Was the 2004 rediscovery of the Ivory-billed woodpecker a momentary miracle at a time of exponential species loss, or was it an unprecedented case of wishful thinking by the nation's leading scientists in the field of ornithology? Despite the most expensive, intensive and widely publicized search ever for a missing species, we will probably never know. In retrospect, we are left to marvel at how a perfect storm of hope swirling around a phantom woodpecker pulled so many into its dizzy vortex. The long list of casualties includes PhD's, 70 million birders, and a revered scientific journal suggesting more than a general acceptance of the thin evidence; its prevalence reveals a wide-spread willingness to confuse science and belief.

Like Iraq's much feared weapons of mass destruction, which led us into a preemptive and protracted war, the equally non-existent Ivory-bill is emblematic of how easily our deepest desires and undisclosed ambitions can masquerade as intelligence, no matter how false. As an unrivaled superpower able to manufacture and unilaterally enforce facts, the United States may be in danger of losing more than its threatened birds. *Artforum's* review of *Ghost Bird* bluntly observes that in America, "collegial debate, intellectual rigor, and a collective desire for objective truth are in danger of extinction." While truth may be the first casualty of war, it is increasingly being trampled on by Pax Americana's global warming naysayers, Wall Street bankers, even optimistic ornithologists chasing extinct woodpeckers.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Production

Ghost Bird began production in December of 2005, during an exploratory trip to the small town of Brinkley, Arkansas and to the adjacent swamps of Bayou DeView, the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, and the Dagmar Wildlife Management Area. Brinkley is situated equal distance between Little Rock and Memphis, Tennessee, and sits at the extreme Northwest tip of the Mississippi Delta's geographical and cultural border. The Delta is the birthplace of the Blues and the depressed, post-slavery economic conditions that gave rise to them. It was also once heavily forested by ancient Cypress and Tupelo forests. Lumbering gave way to cotton, rice and soybean farming which over time have transitioned from sharecropping plantations to even larger agribusiness holdings. It is in the area's limited remaining swamp forests that searchers were intensively looking for Ivory-bills.

The filmmakers arrived in Brinkley as the scientific search effort was beginning its first public season, the prior one having been conducted entirely in secret. Winter is the most productive time to search since sightings are more likely with the leaves are off the trees, the cooler temperatures mean fewer mosquitoes, and one of the most deadly snakes in North America, water moccasins, are hibernating. The search also brought the spotlight to the citizens of Brinkley who were hopeful that the bird would soon be irrefutably documented and that the birders of America would be filling the hotels, restaurants and gift shops. In fact, the prevailing concern outside of Brinkley was that bird enthusiasts would overrun the woods and scare off the elusive woodpecker. "Let's not love this bird to death," cautioned Gale Norton, then Secretary of the Interior, during the April 2005 press conference.

Principal photography for *Ghost Bird* was shot over the following two years, which included several more trips to Brinkley. These visits revealed a town growing ever more anxious about its future as the "Birding Mecca of America." Awaiting more definitive evidence, the fledgling eco-tourist trade continued to promote itself, but their enthusiasm diminished the longer it took for a photograph to surface. Chronicling this unfortunate transition was necessary for shaping the core narrative of the film. It was also important because of the parallel the film makes between the "the bird's" disappearance due to habitat loss, and Brinkley's own demise due to losing its livelihood, the sad fate of so many economically depressed small towns across the nation.

Additional photography for interviews was completed in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Florida, Minnesota and Arizona. Ivory-bill specimens were documented at Yale University's Peabody Museum and Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology which houses 61 birds, by far the largest collection of this species anywhere.



Visual Style

The aesthetic sensibility of *Ghost Bird* was achieved with a minimal crew of only the director and the cinematographer. As a result, the filmmakers were able to capture interviews with a remarkable intimacy and candor. This sense of immediacy was additionally facilitated by using a small and unobtrusive high definition camera with an onboard microphone, employing hand held camerawork, and through the creative use of available lighting. Since location set ups were neither imposing nor lengthy, the atmosphere of relaxed conversation was preserved, so even the viewer feels as if they have just walked into the room.

The use of text cards rather than narration emphasizes and foregrounds the voices of the interview subjects, clarifying the separation between them and the director's editorial and contextual contributions. The text cards also allow viewers to remain more active participants instead of passively absorbing a narrator's seemingly omniscient observations.

The inclusion in *Ghost Bird* of the archival films *So Little Time* (c. 1970) and the Woody Woodpecker cartoon, *Pantry Panic* (1941), provide comic relief with an undertone of historical context. Outdated and irresistibly camp, these two excerpts deliver simplistic messages about the vulnerability of species and of our culpability in eliminating them. Their datedness also betrays our tragic failure to have heeded their warnings, leaving us to continue wrestling with our collective guilt for presiding over the largest mass extinction in 65 million years.

Soundtrack

The choice and use of music in *Ghost Bird* evolved over the course of production and is central to the film's emotional architecture. Although there are a mix of musical styles throughout the soundtrack, two types dominate. The first is the original score by cellist Zoë Keating. A post-modern minimalist with classical roots, Zoë composes, performs and records using highly layered, multi-tracked loops. Conceived and realized over ten months, her score is arresting and deeply affecting, exquisitely realizing the nostalgia, pathos and enigmatic beauty of the Ivory-billed woodpecker and the swamps it once inhabited.

The second style of music reinforces the regional mood in the film, being mostly contemporary popular material that owes its inspiration to the South's regional blues. Arguably closest to this source is Sonny Terry's "Lost John." However, The White Stripes' "Little Bird," Hazmat Modine's "Fred of Ballaroy" and The Black Keys' "Countdown" offer contemporary riffs on the blues vernacular which convey the spirit of The Delta with an appropriately updated edginess.



CAST & CREW

Principal Interview Subjects

David Luneau is an avid birder and veteran Ivory-bill hunter with ten years of searching behind him. Before shooting his infamous video in Bayou DeView, David participated in the 2000 search for Ivory-bills in Louisiana's Pearl River. A promising recording from that expedition proved to be not of an Ivory-bill, but the report from a turkey hunter's double-barrel shotgun. Although David actively searched with the Cornell team, and contributed his video to their confirmation evidence, he continues to search and appears in the film as a free agent.

Nancy Tanner, who is in her early nineties, joined her husband, Jim Tanner, on several field expeditions following the first rediscovery of Ivory-bills in the early 1930's. With their combined fieldwork being the most significant contribution to this species' little known biology, Nancy remains the sole living person to have first-hand knowledge of the flight, call and behavior of the bird. Why she was not consulted by Cornell, is a question that remains unanswered

Dr. Jerome Jackson is widely considered to be the world's leading authority on Ivory-bills. He has been actively searching for them for over twenty years and has written extensively about them. In the 1980's he traveled to Cuba on an Ivory-bill expedition where he believes he had a brief sighting of one. Why he was not asked to participate in the Arkansas search is perplexing.

Dr. Richard Prum is the Curator of Ornithology at Yale University's Peabody Museum. With nothing to gain but notoriety, Dr. Prum was one of the first academics to challenge the confirmation evidence. His co-authored paper with Dr. Jackson drew the attention of Cornell before it went to press, and remains unpublished.

Dr. Scott Edwards is Curator of Ornithology at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ). While he maintains a neutral presence in the Ivory-bill debate, he was a contributor to a recent DNA comparison study, which surprisingly determined that domestic Ivory-bills are a different species than their presumed extinct Cuban cousins.

Tom Nelson, a.k.a. the Ivory-bill skeptic, established a blog early on as a clearinghouse for skeptics and believers to share information, debate and rant. A serious birder, it seems ironic that Mr. Nelson has since shifted the considerable skeptical attention of his blog to debunking the science behind global warming.



Virginia Eckelberry (92), was the wife of celebrated wildlife artist Don Eckelberry, who sketched and painted what many believe was the last indisputable sighting of a living Ivory-bill. Her appearance in *Ghost Bird* is the first time she has told her husband's story publicly.

Complete Cast

Ronnie Steinbeck – Hunting and Bird Guide, Paradise Wings Hunting Lodge

Dr. Richard Prum - Curator of Ornithology, Yale University

Dr. Jerome Jackson - Biologist, world expert on Ivory-billed woodpeckers

Dr. Scott Edwards - Curator of Ornithology, Harvard University

David Sibley - bird guide author and illustrator

Chuck Volner - swamp guide

Nancy Tanner – (age 92) teacher, wife of Jim Tanner

Virginia Eckelberry – (age 91) wife of bird illustrator Don Eckelberry

Sandra Kemmer - Brinkley Chamber of Commerce

Tim Barksdale - wildlife photographer, Cornell search team member

David Luneau - professor, computer engineer

Katie Jacques - Editor Brinkley Argus

Thomas Jacques - Managing Editor Brinkley Argus

Dave Hamner - sportsman

Mike Mills - river guide

Tom Nelson - blogger

Dr. John Fitzpatrick – Director, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Bobby Harrison – Oakwood College

Tim Gallagher – Editor Living Bird Magazine

Gene Sparling - Sportsman

Gale Norton – Former Dept. of the Interior Secretary

Crew

Throughout the project, *Ghost Bird* has operated with a micro-crew. Production was undertaken by the director, Scott Crocker, and cinematographer, Damir Frkovic, with the occasional help of a local volunteer PA. While this kept professional and travel costs to a minimum, it also made for an extremely nimble team which was able to respond rapidly as news and events unfolded.

The same team completed the majority of post-production, transitioning from behind the camera to the editing facility. Scott Crocker shepherded the film from rough assembly through final cut, while Damir



Frkovic acted as technical supervisor, visual effects guru, and final color timer.

The sound was finessed and mixed by the director's longtime film audio conspirator Malcolm Fife (*Benjamin Button, Zodiac, Being John Malcovich*).

The original musical score was composed, performed and recorded by avant-cellist Zoë Keating (*The Secret Life of Bees, Frozen Angels*). See "Composer's Biography" below.

Principal Crew

Director - Scott Crocker

Cinematographer - Damir Frkovic

Editor - Scott Crocker

Musical Score – Zoë Keating

Visual Effects - Damir Frkovic

Sound Mixing - Malcolm Fife

Producer - Scott Crocker

DIRECTOR'S BIBLIOGRAPHY, FILMOGRAPHY

Scott Crocker is an American documentary and feature film director whose award-winning work has screened at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), San Francisco's De Young Museum and at film festivals around the world. Trained principally as a visual anthropologist, Scott graduated *magnum cum laude* from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine and has studied with cinema verité iconoclast Jean Rouch, maverick cinematographer Haskell Wexler, and philosophical film theorist Stanley Cavell. Under Small Change Productions Scott has developed and directed films concerned with memory, identity and the narrative impulse. He was born in Pasadena, California and currently resides in Berkeley.

FILMOGRAPHY

The Understudy - 90 minutes, 16mm (1994)

A screwball comedy with an existential twist about Hamlet and a case of mistaken identity.

In English and Hungarian with English subtitles. Directed by Scott Crocker, Cinematography by Toshi Ozawa, Dave Scardina, Editing by Scott Crocker Music by Joseph Brinkmann, Produced by Small Change Productions. **Cast** - Eva Magyar, Gabor G. Gyukics, Louis Frederick. **Premiere:** Cinequest Film Festival.

Honors/Awards - Best Regional Feature, Northwest Film and Video Festival: Selection, American Independent Features Abroad for the Berlin International, Film Market: short-listed Sundance Film Festival.

(Cont.)



Boneshop of the Heart - 55-minutes, 16mm (1990)

A documentary on five "outsider artists" from the American South. Directed by Scott Crocker, Cinematography by Toshi Ozawa, Editing by Scott Crocker, Produced by Small Change Productions.

Cast - Vollis Simpson, Lonnie Bradley Holley (The Sandman), Charlie Lucas (The Tin Man), Thorton Dial Sr., and Bessie Harvey. **Premiere:** Hawaii International Film Festival. **Honors/Awards:** Honoree, American Anthropological Association; Honoree; The American Folklore Society.

CINEMATOGRAPHER'S BIOGRAPHY

Ghost Bird was shot in HD video by Damir Frkovic. Damir is a Canadian cinematographer and stills photographer with over 20 years of experience in the film, animation and design industries. He started out as an industrial designer and stills photographer and soon moved into cinematography and visual effects production for commercials, feature films, and animation.

Damir worked at Pixar Animation Studios for many years as a technical director and has subsequently continued and expanded his career as both a successful director of photography, visual effects designer and as a world class photographer.

www.frkovic.com

COMPOSER'S BIOGRAPHY

Ghost Bird's original musical score was composed and performed by avant-garde cellist Zoë Keating. Born in Canada and classically trained from the age of eight, Zoë studied music at Sarah Lawrence College in New York City and the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole in Italy. Armed with just her cello and a small box of electronics, Zoë records layer upon layer of cello, transforming her solo performances into multipart works.

Zoë has worked with a wide range of artists, including Grammy nominated Imogen Heap, Grammy and Academy Award winner Mark Isham, The Dresden Dolls, Rasputina, DJ Shadow, and Paolo Nutini. In 2008 she performed her music live with the Valencia Ballet, and contributed her signature layered cello on Mark Isham's score for "The Secret Life of Bees". Her self-produced album "One Cello x 16: Natoma", rose to #1 on the iTunes Classical and #2 on the iTunes Electronica charts. Zoë has also performed live on National Public Radio, in the Nevada desert, in medieval churches, in punk clubs, and before thousands of screaming teenagers in mainstream rock venues across North America and Europe.

[zoe keating: avant cello](#)

Ghost Bird



PHOTO GALLERY

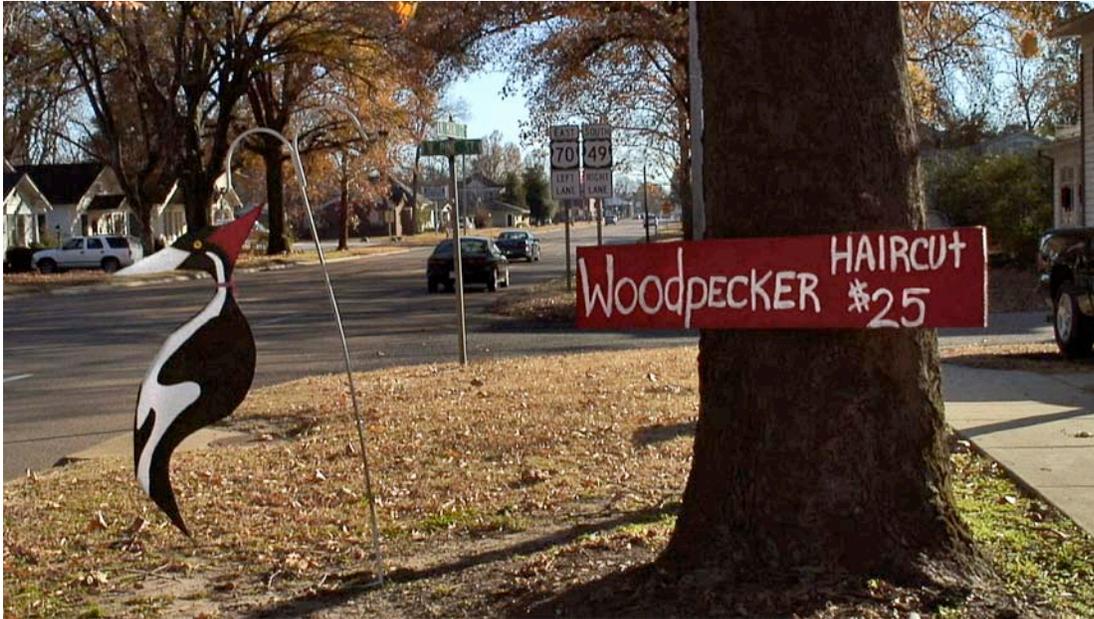


1. Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology houses the world's largest collection of Ivory-billed woodpeckers - 61 specimens.



2. Bestselling bird guide author and illustrator David Sibley was one of the first to publicly question the scientific evidence confirming the Ivory-billed woodpecker's existence.

Ghost Bird



3. Brinkley, Arkansas became ground zero in the search for and hype surrounding Ivory-billed woodpeckers after the announcement of their rediscovery in 2005.



4. Hunters in a soybean field near Brinkley, Arkansas. Duck stamps and hunting licenses fund the protection of habitat that would otherwise be vulnerable to clear cutting, the primary cause of extinction for Ivory-billed woodpeckers.

Ghost Bird



5. David Luneau in *Byou DeView* where in 2005 he videotaped a strange woodpecker. A veteran of previous Ivory-bill expeditions, David has been actively in search of the "Lord God Bird" for over a decade.

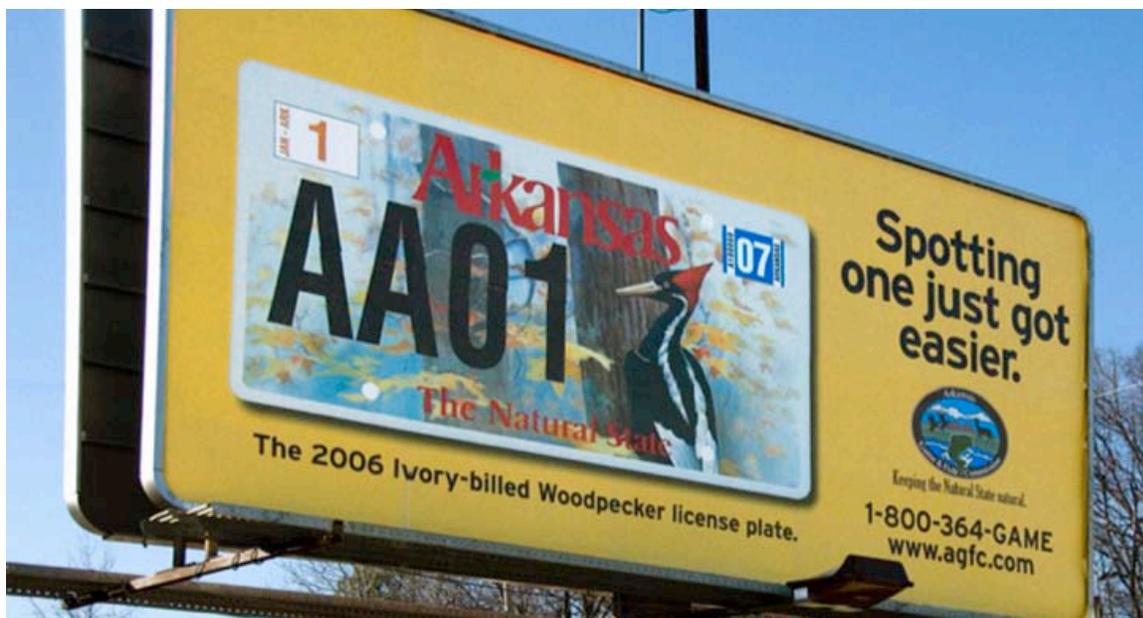


6. Gene DePriest, proprietor of Gene's Bar-B-Que, the unofficial Ivory-bill search headquarters, Brinkley, Arkansas.

Ghost Bird



7. Deep in the "Hot Zone", where the leading ornithologists in the US observed multiple Ivory-bill sightings in 2004-'05.



8. The only Ivory-bill you'll ever see? Arkansas, "The Natural State," was quick to embrace the bird's rediscovery.