

Project Coyote Update, March 17, 2011
by
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Bill Benish and I visited the Project Coyote search area from February 9-16th. Frank Wiley joined us for part of the time.

To our dismay, we found that the adjacent property mentioned in my November trip report had been heavily logged. Figure 1 below, taken from the edge of the property, provides a panoramic view of the extent of the logging. The impact of this activity on the putative Ivory-billed Woodpecker population remains to be seen. We are trying to stay optimistic, and the slash may provide an important food source in the short term.



Figure 1. Panoramic view of logging on an adjacent parcel.

We found few recent indications that ivorybills may be present in our search area. There was some fresh scaling high on the honey locust discussed in the March 26, 2010 update. The condition of these high branches has deteriorated to the point where the bark is loose, and the work could easily be that of Pileated Woodpeckers. We also found fresh work on a lower branch that evokes Plate 8 in Tanner (Figures 2 and 3.) The bark on this limb appears to be tight, and the wood is hard, based on chips found on the ground (none of which were particularly large.) The appearance of this work matches what someone with a memory of the Singer Tract has told us is typical of ivorybills. We have placed two remote cameras on the tree, one aimed at the lower branch and the other at the high ones.



Figure 2. Feeding sign on honey locust limb.



Figure 3. Detail of fresh feeding sign on a small honey locust limb.

Bill and I spent two and a half days on Pomme de Terre Wildlife Management Area. Much of the habitat in the WMA is good; tall hardwoods are plentiful in some areas, and there were few signs of human activity in the northern sections; we did not see or hear anything highly suggestive of ivorybills, although we did find a few cavities of suggestive size and shape including at least one that appeared to be under construction (See Figure 4.) There are numerous honey locusts with scaling on high branches on Pomme. Such scaling resembles some of the photographs in Tanner, but all the bark chips

I found were of a size and in a condition that is well within the range of known Pileated work.



Figure 4. Fresh cavity, Pomme de Terre, WMA, Louisiana. (Photo by Bill Benish)

On the morning of February 15th, Frank, Bill and I went to place the second camera on the scaled honey locust. Around 11:30 am, a series of anthropogenic double knocks were performed. Frank and I were stationed 10 yards apart, while Bill was approximately 75 yards to the west of my location. 43 seconds after the first ADK in the series and 31 seconds after the final one, Frank recorded two double knocks that apparently came in response to the ADKs. Bill heard the DKs, but Frank and I did not.

The possible double knocks are faint and may not be audible without headphones. The audio file, which includes the final ADK in the series, is available on the Project Coyote updates page.

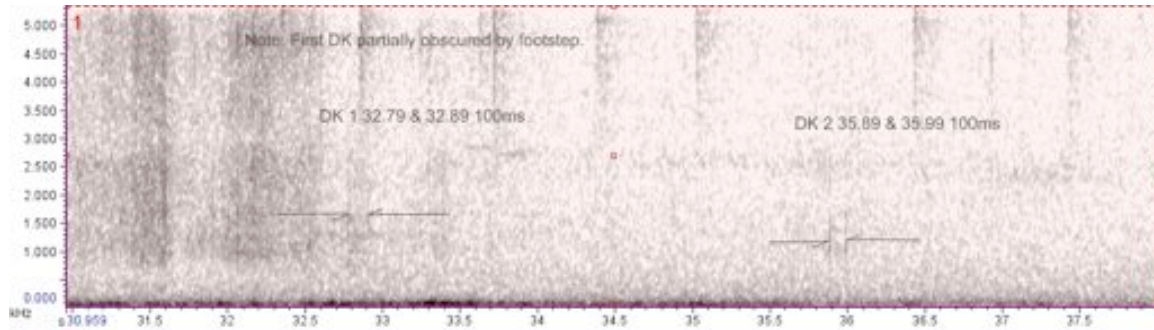


Figure 5. Sonogram showing two putative double knocks recorded on February 15, 2011.

There are some discrepancies among the analyses of these knocks. Frank Wiley calculates the intra-knock interval (that is, the space between the first and second raps within a double knock) for both DKs at approximately 100 milliseconds. One outside analyst calculated them at 132 and 103 ms respectively, and another at 125 and 105 ms. The discrepancy among these estimates, which are very close for the second knock, may be due to the interference of the footstep as noted in Frank's text on the sonogram. We have been informed that known *Campephilus* double knocks have a maximum interval of 90 ms.; however, Cornell's criteria for evaluating possible DKs included a maximum intra-knock interval of 120 ms.

The inter-knock interval (the space between two sets of double knocks) is just over three seconds; if the two knocks came from the same source, this is something of a departure from known *Campephilus* behavior. Double knocks are often fairly widely spaced – as much as 20-30 seconds apart. This clip, of a Cream-backed Woodpecker has intervals of approximately six seconds between DKs, the shortest we were able to find online.

<http://tinyurl.com/4p5lo5o>

With regard to both the intra-knock and inter-knock intervals, it is not clear how much, if anything, can be inferred from the behavior of other *Campephilus* woodpeckers. There are no recordings of ivorybills double knocking, and the written descriptions do not shed much light on this behavior. It is clear that the two double knocks recorded on February 15th were temporally associated with ADKs. This is a very rare occurrence, and it seems reasonable to infer that the double knocks were a response, possibly from an Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Thus, while we are somewhat discouraged by the logging, and the indications that ivorybills may be present in our search area are nowhere near as abundant as they were a year ago, the fresh feeding sign and the possible double knocks recorded in the vicinity of the sign give us reason to remain optimistic.