Reuter 1986

RR-86-120

UU GMK BRJ
MIS:WOODPECKERS
NEW SIGHTINGS OF IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS IN CUBA:
HAVANA, JUNE 14, REUTER -- ONLY MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST SIGHTINGS IN DECADES OF A PAIR OF IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS IN EASTERN CUBA, FARMERS IN A MOUNTAINOUS ZONE OF WESTERN CUBA CLAIM THEY SEE THE RARE BIRDS AND HEAR THEIR TOY TRUMPET CALL QUITE OFTEN.
UNTIL MARCH OF THIS YEAR, NO IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS HAD BEEN OBSERVED SINCE A U.S. EXPEDITION SIGHTED EIGHT PAIR OF THEM IN EASTERN CUBA IN 1956. THEY WERE THOUGHT TO BE EXTINCT IN TWO OF THEIR FORMER HABITATS, MEXICO AND THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES BUT ORNITHOLOGISTS SUSPECTED THAT EASTERN CUBA MIGHT BE THEIR LAST REMAINING REFUGE.
IN 1985, LESTER SHORT, ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY IN NEW YORK TOOK PART IN AN EXPEDITION TO EASTERN CUBA WHICH FAILED TO SPOT THE BIRDS BUT FOUND EVIDENCE OF THEIR EXISTENCE.
LAST MARCH, AN EXPEDITION OF CUBAN BIRD WATCHERS OBSERVED A PAIR OF IVEROY-BILLED WOODPECKERS FOR TWO MINUTES NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE YAREY RIVER IN EASTERN CUBA. IN EARLY APRIL, LESTER SHORT IN COMPANY WITH CUBAN ORNITHOLOGISTS CONFIRMED THE EXISTANCE OF THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS WHEN HE OBSERVED A PAIR OF THEM FOR LESS THAN THIRTY SECONDS.
IF TRUE, REPORTS OF IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS IN WESTERN CUBA IS GOOD NEWS TO CONSERVATIONISTS. A 72 YEAR OLD FARMER IN CUBA'S MOST WESTERN PROVINCE, PINAR DEL RIO, SAID THAT RESIDENTS SEE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKERS FREQUENTLY IN THE PINE FOREST AROUND THE SIERRA DE PENITENCIA. HIS DISCRIPTION OF THE BIRDS, WHICH ARE ABOUT 20 INCHES LONG, FIT THAT OF THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER, AIN SAID, AND ADDED THAT FOREIGN BIRDWATCHERS WOULD BE WELCOME TO COME AND SEE FOR THEMSELVES.
==LEM/RTR
NNNN