The Big Woods of eastern Arkansas is well known for its deer, waterfowl, bears, and turkeys, however, the wildlife wealth of this largest block of forest on any tributary of the lower Mississippi River also includes six endangered species, three birds and three freshwater mussels. The Big Woods is a complex of forest, wetlands, and rivers; some of the most valuable wildlife habitat in America.

The three species of endangered mussels in the White River are all rare, but the pink mucket (*Lampsilis abrupta*) likely occurs in small number throughout the lower river. The scaleshell (*Leptodea leptodon*) has only been found once in the White River near Newport. Since 1965 the fat pocketbook (*Potamilus capax*) has been located in the Big Woods only once in the most southern part of the White River.

The now famous 2004 rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) has focused conservation attention on the Big Woods. The Ivory-bill requires a large area of big trees, as much as 2-4 square miles for a single breeding pair, and a much larger, but undetermined, area for a population. The Big Woods currently has about 550,000 acres of forest, some young and some mature, and the careful management of this forest is critical.

The Pine City Natural Area supports a small, remnant population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*). The Red-cockaded Woodpecker excavates cavities in living pine trees, sometimes requiring a full year to complete, which can result in a shortage of nesting and roosting sites.

In the Big Woods only the lower Arkansas River has sand bars suitable for nesting Interior Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*) and even there nesting is limited to only one to three sites each year.

### How You Can Help Endangered Species

The biggest threat to freshwater mussels in the Big Woods is excessive turbidity in the White River and other streams. No till and other agricultural practices that reduce soil runoff would contribute to turbidity reduction.

Reforestation, of both hardwoods for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and pines for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, will create more habitat for endangered species, and also for many other species of wildlife such as deer and turkey.

During the Least Tern summer nesting period avoiding camping and driving on sand bars on the lower Arkansas River would help increase nesting success for this endangered species.