

Tuesday, January 13, 2009 8:18 AM
From: "Mark Patterson" <mpatterson@plos.org>
To: "Mike Collins" <cinclodes@yahoo.com>

Dear Mike

We have now consulted with two independent experts who were asked to comment specifically on the fieldwork in your article and how it is presented and interpreted.

Both experts feel that this article is publishable if the focus is on flight mechanics, and the potential for flap rate analysis to help in the identification of the ivory-billed woodpecker. However, neither expert supports publication of the current manuscript in PLoS ONE because of the poor quality of the field data (which are largely unconnected with the flight mechanics part of the article), and the claim that the data provides evidence for the existence of ivory-billed woodpeckers. One of these experts has offered to act as a replacement academic editor if you are willing to revise the article, although I should stress that the original editor, Sean Rands, supports the decision here.

The key revision that is required for publication is therefore that the field data (videos, audio, and accompanying images) be completely removed from article. This will produce a shorter more focused article. As and when higher quality video evidence is gathered, flap rate analysis can be applied by yourself and others in an effort to support the identification of putative sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker.

In addition to removing these sections of the article, the controversy surrounding the existence of the ivory-billed woodpecker needs to be presented in a more balanced fashion in the abstract and introduction. For example, you cite papers reporting evidence for putative ivory-billed woodpeckers, but the subsequent criticism of this work also needs to be cited.

We hope you find these comments constructive, and that you will be able to revise the article accordingly. We feel that such a revised manuscript would represent a solid contribution that would support the case for bringing additional analytical tools to bear on this important topic.

Sincerely

Mark Patterson