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Join us for Boneyard Creek Community Day on April 7. Help clean up an important waterway in the Chambana area. We are registering as a group, fill out this form if you are in.

Illinois Conservation

Curious Encounters with Wildlife in Illinois

After almost 60 years of studying butterflies in Illinois, the United States, and the World, former Illinois Natural History Survey entomologists Mike Jeffords and Susan Post are publishing a comprehensive manual titled “Butterflies of Illinois – A Field Guide,” which includes stunning photos of the 107 species of butterfly native to Illinois. Top sites in Illinois for butterfly viewing in as suggested by the Jeffords and Post are; Mason County, the best place to see the Fritillary butterfly; Bonnie’s Prairie – Iroquois County in the 10.6-acre Illinois Nature Preserve; and Loda Cemetery Preserve. Find the complete article here.
A team of about a dozen volunteers lead by Vern LaGesse, the director of the 120-acre Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary, oversaw the controlled burn of 300 acres on March 15. LeGesse stated that the purpose of the controlled burn was to make way for the diverse plant species that grow on the prairie by eliminating last year’s build-up of thatch. “It lets the other plants germinate their seeds and grow,” said LeGesse “the fire also helps reduce any woody trees that have invaded into the prairie.” Not all of the 300-acres surrounding the Nipper Wildlife Sanctuary are burned every year, some are on a four or five-year burn rotation. These areas are left for ground nesting birds to have cover for their spring nests. Read the full article from The State Journal-Register.

Great Spangled Fritillary By MONGO - Own work, Public Domain

US & World Conservation

And then there were two...

On Monday, March 20, Sudan, the last male northern white rhinoceros died at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya, leaving behind his daughter, Najin and his granddaughter, Fatu who are the last northern white rhinos in the world. An elderly rhino at age 45, Sudan was suffering from a series of infections and health issues.

Controlled Burn Rejuvenates Prairie Near Loami

A subspecies of the southern white rhino, and arguably considered their own species by some researchers, the northern white rhino was brought to extinction by war, habitat loss and poaching for their horns. “This is a creature that didn’t fail in evolution,” said Thomas Hildebrandt, head of reproduction management at the Leibnitz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in Berlin and one of the projects leaders. ‘It’s in this situation because of us.’

Angalifu, male Northern White Rhinoceros at San Diego Wild Animal Park By Sheep81 - Own work, Public Domain

Great Spangled Fritillary By MONGO - Own work, Public Domain

And then there were two...
Scientists across the world and across disciplines are taking on the challenge of keeping the northern white rhino subspecies from disappearing completely. They intend to use a combination of classic reproduction techniques and innovative stem cell technology. To find out more, read the complete article here.

Related news...

Australian artists unveil 17-Foot bronze sculpture in Astor Place NYC. The sculpture is entitled “The Last Three.” Read the full article from One Green Planet.

“The Last Three” sculpture by Gillie and Marc Schattne. Source Gillie and Marc Art/Facebook

Trump Appoints Trophy Hunters to Conservation Board

Interior secretary Ryan Zinke has appointed 16 board members to rewrite federal rules for importing the hides of trophy kills into the US. Zinke is confident that the board, the majority of which are trophy hunters themselves or members of the NRA, will support his stance that the best way to protect critically threatened or endangered species is by encouraging trophy hunting in several African nations. One member of the board, Steven Chancellor, has logged nearly 500 kills including 18 lions, 13 leopards, six elephants and two rhinos. Another board member, Peter Horn is a former vice president of the Safari Club International Conservation Fund, a group interested in expanding the number of countries from which trophy kills can be imported, and a vice president for high-end gun maker Beretta. To read more, find the complete article here.

Related news...

Ban on Elephant and Lion trophies from six African countries has been lifted. Read the full article from the New York Times.

Invasive species of the month

What is an invasive species? According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, an invasive species is one that is not native to a particular ecosystem and that does or is likely to cause harm to the environment and/or the economy.
The Cattle Egret is an invasive species of heron found in many parts of the world, including Illinois. Originally native to southern Spain and Portugal, in the early 19th century it began “one of the most rapid and wide reaching natural expansions of any bird species.”

Cattle egret (Bubulcus ibis)

It is speculated that the cattle egret first arrived in the America’s in 1877 after flying across the Atlantic Ocean, but it was not thought to be established there until 1930. They arrived in North America in 1941 and were bred in Florida beginning in 1953. They are now seen throughout the country from Florida to California. Also known as the cow crane, cow bird or cow heron, cattle egrets are in the habit of following cattle or other large animals and feeding on insects that are attracted to these animals. Although considered invasive in Illinois, they are not known to cause any significant ecological damage. They can, however be a safety hazard at airports and spread disease.

Endangered Species of the Month

Indiana Bat (Myotis sodalis)

From US Fish and Wildlife service: The Indiana bat was listed as endangered in 1967 due to episodes of people disturbing hibernating bats in caves during winter, resulting in the death of large numbers of bats. Indiana bats are vulnerable to disturbance because they
hibernate in large numbers in only a few caves (the largest hibernation caves support from 20,000 to 50,000 bats). Other threats that have contributed to the Indiana bat's decline include commercialization of caves, loss of summer habitat, pesticides and other contaminants, and most recently, the disease White-Nose Syndrome.

Indiana bats are quite small, weighing only one-quarter of an ounce (about the weight of three pennies) although in flight they have a wingspan of 9 to 11 inches. Their fur is dark-brown to black. They hibernate during winter in caves or, occasionally, in abandoned mines. During summer they roost under the peeling bark of dead and dying trees. Indiana bats eat a variety of flying insects found along rivers or lakes and in uplands. Click here for more information on endangered species in Illinois.