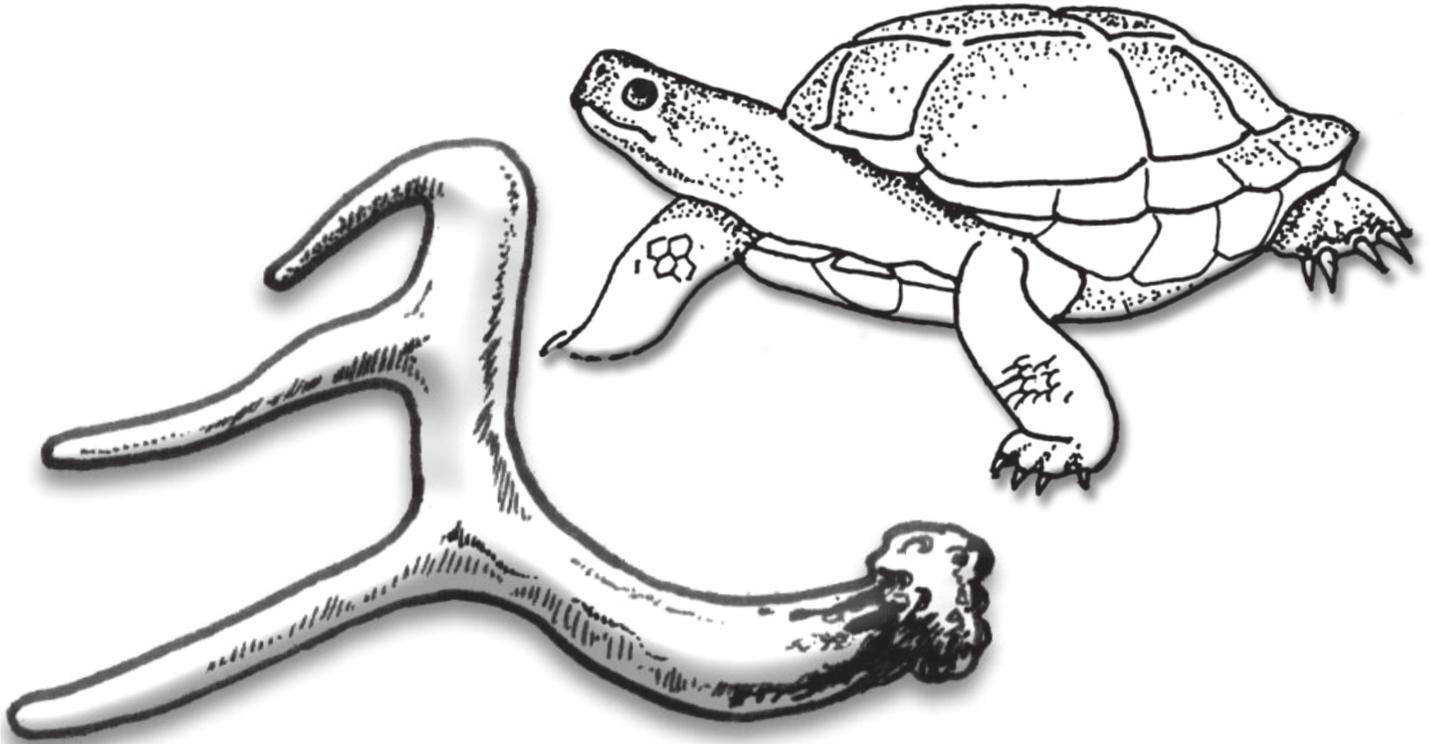
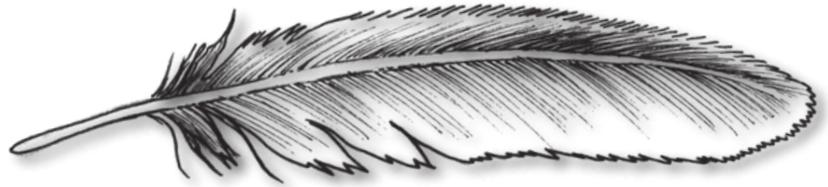




State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources



# Wildlife in the Classroom



**Illinois Department of Natural Resources**  
Division of Education

One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702  
<https://dnr.illinois.gov/education.html>

217-524-4126  
[dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov)

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## Possessing Wildlife or Wildlife Remains in the Classroom

Has a student ever brought an animal to your classroom and asked you to keep it? Have you ever seen a feather or a bird's nest and wanted to use it to supplement your lessons? Has anyone donated an empty hornets' nest to your school? Do you know the Illinois and federal laws that apply to these situations?

Teachers often come into contact with wildlife or wildlife remains, willingly or not. It is important for you to know what to do before you are placed in these situations. The following information, while not all-encompassing, will provide you with some general guidelines. If you would like to read the entire Wildlife Code legislation for Illinois, you can access it at <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp> under the "Agriculture and Conservation" section.

Even though it is legal to possess some species, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) does not endorse the collection of live specimens. Before agreeing to host wildlife in your classroom, ensure that you can provide it with the care that it will require to survive and also that you can keep your students safe from the creature and any diseases it may carry.

Permits are required for possessing some wildlife and wildlife remains. See the text in this publication for more information. No collecting is allowed on state parks or nature preserves. On private land, the educator must obtain permission from and follow the wishes of the landowner regarding collecting on his/her property as well as meeting all other collecting regulations from state and federal governments.

### Types of Permits

1. An **Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research** allows the salvage collection of fauna species without intent to rehabilitate. Salvage is defined as the recovery of deceased animals or parts of deceased animals (including nests and eggs). This scientific permit may also be used for live capture of species for scientific research. To be eligible for an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research the applicant must be:
  - a) 18 years of age, and
  - b) engaged in scientific research that may include, but not necessarily be limited to, research sponsored by universities and colleges.

This permit is recommended for teachers who want to or may have contact with or possess wildlife and wildlife parts in their teaching. Teachers who are interested in obtaining this permit should make a written request on school letterhead and send it to the IDNR Division of Wildlife Resources, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702. A new permit must be requested each school year. The permit is free of charge.

2. An **Illinois Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna** may be used as a salvage permit (see definition above) as well as allowing the permit holder to rehabilitate injured, abandoned or orphaned animals. To be eligible for an Illinois Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna the applicant must be or have:
  - a) 15 years of age,
  - b) a salvage permit the previous year or submit a reference statement from a licensed veterinarian, zoological curator, conservation police officer or an IDNR Wildlife Resources, Natural Heritage or Fisheries biologist, as appropriate, stating that the applicant has experience in treating and handling wild animals and has facilities available to treat, care for and produce self-dependent fauna for release to the wild, and
  - c) public or state scientific, educational or zoological institutions available which will take dead and/or permanently disabled fauna.

Information on obtaining an Illinois Scientific Permit for Salvage and Rehabilitation can be obtained by writing to the IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702 or calling 217-782-6431.

3. A **Permit for Possession of Endangered or Threatened Species** is required to collect any endangered or threatened animal or any part or product (skin, bones, eggs, nest, etc.) of an endangered or threatened animal. Details on obtaining an endangered species permit are available at <https://dnr2.illinois.gov/ORCAApplicationReview/>.

#### 4. **Aquaculture Permit**

Any person who shall engage in the breeding, hatching, propagation or raising of aquatic life, whether indigenous or nonindigenous to Illinois, shall first procure a permit from the IDNR. Contact the IDNR Aquatic Nuisance Species and Aquaculture Program for more details (see contact information in the "Aquatic Life" section).

#### 5. **Temporary Aquaculture Facility Authorization**

*Trout in the Classroom*, *Bass in the Class* and other similar programs allow teachers and their students to raise and then release fish species that have been provided by IDNR fish hatcheries and/or certified sources. Specific fish release locations shall be determined by the IDNR. Please contact the IDNR Aquatic Nuisance Species and Aquaculture Program for more details (see contact information in the "Aquatic Life" section).

#### 6. **Fish Importation Permit**

Live fishes, viable fish eggs or viable sperm of any species of fish may require a fish importation permit and other required permits from the State of Illinois. Please contact the IDNR Aquatic Nuisance Species and Aquaculture Program for additional information (see contact information in the "Aquatic Life" section).

### **Aquatic Life**

A teacher must possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research in order to possess aquatic life taken by sport fishing devices. Season dates, size and creel limits apply. "Aquatic life" means all fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, crustaceans, algae, aquatic plants, aquatic invertebrates, and any other aquatic animals or plants. The Illinois Administrative Code Section 870.10, Aquatic Life Approved Species, lists aquatic species that may be possessed. A copy of the Aquatic Life Approved Species list can be obtained from the address shown below. Regulated daily and possession limits apply. The law also relates to animal parts, such as a mussel shell or an empty crayfish claw. Collecting rules vary per species. Speak with an IDNR Conservation Police Officer, read the latest *Illinois Fishing Regulations* booklet and obtain the required permits before collecting any aquatic organism. Please visit <https://www.ifishillinois.org/programs/aquaculture.html> for more information about possessing aquatic life.

#### **Aquatic Nuisance Species and Aquaculture Program**

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Division of Fisheries

One Natural Resources Way

Springfield, IL 62702

217-785-8772

Fax 217-785-2438

### **Herptiles (Reptiles and Amphibians)**

A teacher must possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or a Scientific Permit for Scientific Research in order to possess any Illinois native herptile species legally taken in the state. Management of herptiles is regulated under the Herptile Code, but still allows sport fishing of herptiles for personal consumption under the Aquatic Life Code. Possession limits exist for native herptile species unless a Herpetoculture License is obtained. Regulations also exist for the keeping of boas and pythons, "special use herptiles" and any endangered/threatened species of herptile. More information can be obtained and questions can be answered by

writing to the IDNR Division of Natural Heritage at One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702 or calling the IDNR Office of Law Enforcement at 217-785-7743.

**Example:** If you find a box turtle, toad, garter snake or other native reptile or amphibian and want to keep it in your classroom, you must possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or a Scientific Permit for Scientific Research. If you catch any reptile or amphibian species using sport fishing devices, you must have a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or a Scientific Permit for Scientific Research in order to possess it. In both cases, you must follow all of the applicable regulations for possession, etc., and the license/permit options are the same.

## **Birds and Mammals**

**White-tailed Deer** – Inedible parts, including bones and shed antlers, may be kept if found on private property, with the landowner's permission, and some state property (State Fish and Wildlife Areas). They may not be taken from Illinois state parks. City parks, nature preserves, forest preserve districts and other areas may have their own rules. It is imperative that you talk to site staff before removing any natural object from public land.

**Feathers** – Feathers from migratory bird species cannot be collected without a federal permit. A state salvage permit must be obtained before a federal permit will be issued. Feathers of nonmigratory game birds (wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant, common bobwhite, etc.) cannot be collected without a permit, but if a properly licensed hunter would like to donate the inedible parts of these birds, harvested legally, to a school, he or she may do so. If the school accepts the items, it must keep the name of the hunter on file.

**Nongame Species** – A "nongame species" is defined as any species for which there is not an established hunting season. These species are protected. A person cannot take any inedible parts of these birds (including nests and eggs) or mammals without a permit.

## **Scenarios**

Think about it!

1. Is the species protected?
2. What regulations apply?
3. Where is the animal or object?
4. What permit or license is needed?

## **Aquatic Life**

**Q:** I am taking my students (high school seniors, all older than age 16 years) on a field trip to conduct aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling in a local stream. We will be using seines, kick nets and aquatic dip nets. I have permission from the landowner to access the property and perform the sampling in the stream. We will be observing and releasing organisms but not collecting them for later study. Do I still need a fishing license or a collecting permit?

**A:** Yes. You should possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research.

**Q:** My class of fourth-grade students and I are attending a program at a local park district's nature center. One of the activities that we will take part in is aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling in a pond. Since the park district owns the pond and is hosting the event, do I need any type of collecting permit?

**A:** The park district staff members are organizing and hosting the event so they are responsible for obtaining the appropriate permits. However, if any specimens are to be kept by you for use in your classroom you will need to possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research.

**Q:** One of my students brought a mussel shell to school and gave it to me to use for demonstration purposes in class. She found it on a local river bank. Can the student legally possess this shell? Is it legal for me to keep this animal part as a teaching tool?

**A:** It is legal for the student to retain possession of the mussel shell as long as the student is under the age of 16 and followed the regulations regarding collection of this species. Once the student turns 16 years of age, he/she is required to have either a current Illinois fishing license or a current Illinois combination sportsman's license in order to possess the mussel shell. If the mussel shell is to become the possession of the teacher, he or she is required to possess a valid Illinois fishing license, a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research.

## Herptiles

**Q:** A 10-year old student brings to class a turtle that she found on her uncle's farm. Can the student legally possess the turtle? Can the teacher keep the turtle in the classroom?

**A:** It is legal for the student to retain possession of the turtle as long as the student is under the age of 16 and followed the regulations regarding collection of this species. Once the student turns 16 years of age, he/she is required to have either a current Illinois fishing license or a current Illinois combination sportsman's license in order to possess the turtle. If the turtle is to become the possession of the teacher, he or she is required to have a current Illinois fishing license, current Illinois combination sportsman's license or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research.

**Q:** A teacher wants to raise tadpoles in the classroom then release them in a local pond when the frogs/toads reach maturity. Is it legal to do so?

**A:** Teachers should only raise tadpoles that have been purchased from a pet store. As long as he or she is in possession of the tadpoles or frogs/toads, he or she should keep the purchase receipt. Should any of the frogs/toads reach maturity, they cannot legally be released into the wild without the permission of the IDNR. This law is important because it prevents diseased wildlife and wildlife that is not native to Illinois from being released and harming native populations. A teacher who raises tadpoles should be prepared to keep any resulting frogs or toads, and there could be many of them.

## Insects and Spiders

**Q:** Students on a nature hike find a monarch butterfly pupa at their local state park and ask to collect it so they can watch the butterfly emerge in the classroom. Should the teacher let them collect the pupa?

**A:** No. It is unlawful to remove flora or fauna from state parks. Collection of unprotected species on private land is permissible with consent of the landowner. Protected species cannot be collected anywhere without a scientific collection permit.

## Mammals and Birds

**Q:** A local hunter has legally harvested a turkey and her son would like to take some of the turkey's tail feathers and the beard to his class for display. Can he legally do so?

- A:** Yes. An educator may legally obtain inedible parts of all huntable species in Illinois from a licensed hunter who has legally harvested the animal. Inedible parts include bones and feathers for birds and bones and pelts for mammals. The educator is required to keep the name of the donating hunter on file.
- Q:** You are walking around your yard and find a blue jay feather. As you will be teaching about bird feathers in the next few weeks, you pick it up to take to school. Is possession of this feather legal?
- A:** No. You are required to have an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research or Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna to possess nonmigratory bird feathers. Feathers from migratory birds require additional permits because they are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. An exception is noted in the Q/A prior to this one.
- Q:** You, the educator, have obtained an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research. It is mid-June, and the Canada geese in your area are molting their wing feathers. Near a local pond that your neighbor owns, you notice numerous flight feathers on the ground. You obtain permission from your neighbor to collect these feathers. Is it legal for you to collect these feathers?
- A:** No. For migratory species you are required to have a federal collection permit as well as a permit from the IDNR.
- Q:** You are a teacher and are out for a walk in the woods. You spot a shed antler that you would like to take to your classroom. Can you collect and keep it?
- A:** It depends on where you are taking your walk. If you are on private property, and you have permission from the landowner to collect shed antlers, there is no law to prohibit you from doing so. If you are on an IDNR State Fish and Wildlife Area, you are also allowed to collect and keep inedible parts of deer. If you are in a state park or nature preserve, you are not allowed to collect and keep shed antlers.
- Q:** On a nature walk at a local nature camp, one of your students notices a small bird's nest on the ground, and she would like to bring it back to the classroom. Is it legal to do so?
- A:** By law, you must meet two requirements. First, it must be legal to remove the bird's nest according to the rules and regulations of the nature camp. If there is no rule prohibiting the removal of the nest from the camp, you must have an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna to retain possession of the nest.
- Q:** On a walk in the woods, you find a raccoon skull. You would like to use it in your classroom to illustrate the skull shape and dentition of these mammals. Is it legal for you to take it?
- A:** Inedible parts, including bones, may be kept if found on private property, with the landowner's permission. They may not be taken from Illinois state parks. City parks, nature preserves, forest preserve districts and other areas may have their own rules. It is imperative that you talk to site staff before removing any natural object from public land. You must have an Illinois Scientific Permit for Scientific Research or an Illinois Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna to retain possession of the skull.