

ILLINOIS ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION BOARD

MINUTES OF 205th MEETING, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Director's Boardroom

One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702

and remotely via WebEx

Approved at the 206th meeting, May 23, 2025

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Angelo Capparella, Ms. Samantha Chavez, Dr. Michael Dreslik, Dr. Joyce Hofmann, Mr. Randy Schietzelt, Dr. Tih-Fen Ting, Dr. Philip Willink, and Mr. Chris Young.

BOARD MEMBERS REMOTE: Dr. Janice Coons.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Jeremie Fant.

OTHERS PRESENT: Heather Osborn (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage ITA Coordinator), Brian Metzke (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage, Aquatic Ecologist), Ann Marie Holtrop (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Natalia Maass (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage Database Program), Joe Kath (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Michelle Bloomquist (IDNR Statewide Recovery Specialist), Kelly Neal (INPC), Valerie Njapa (INPC), Trent Thomas (IDNR Division of Fisheries), Chris Borrelli (Chicago Tribune), Roger Jansen (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Nate Hoyer (IDNR – ORC / INPC), Angella Moorehouse (INPC), Ethan Kessler (INHS), Todd Strole (IDNR), Josh Nickelson (IDNR Private Lands), Amelia Cheek (Illinois Farm Bureau), Chris Dietrich (INHS Terrestrial Invertebrates), Claire Dietrich (INHS), Phil Cox (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), K.C. Carter (INHS), Chip O'Leary (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Emily Taylor (INPC), Kaleb Baker (INPC), Laura Rericha-Anchor (Forest Preserve District of Cook County), Roger Jansen (INHS), Blake Baum, Alan Lawrence, and Christina Feng (IDNR).

1. Call to Order, Roll Call of Board Members, and Introduction of Guests

Chair Hofmann called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. and conducted the roll call. Seven voting Board members were physically in attendance, constituting a quorum. Dr. Hofmann welcomed the visitors and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Dr. Ting moved that the agenda be adopted as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schietzelt. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 204th Meeting on November 15, 2024

Draft minutes of the 204th meeting had been distributed to Board members prior to the meeting by email. Dr. Capparella moved that the minutes of the 204th meeting be approved as presented. Mr. Schietzelt seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. The minutes will be posted on the website.

4. Report from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

The Department's report was distributed to the Board at the meeting. Ms. Holtrop highlighted two recent retirements, Mark Phipps and Jenny Skufca. The Division is hoping to replace them soon.

Later in the meeting there will be a discussion regarding comments from the Division of Natural Heritage on the proposed changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species (List). These comments are from the Division's perspective and are meant to represent a diversity of opinions. Overall, Ms. Holtrop said we are all getting better at revising the List (as compared to 10-20 years ago). The petitions and data standards have been helpful, and there is always room for improvement.

5. Report from the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC)

An INPC report was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Strole highlighted that legal protection was completed by the Commission for seven tracts of land totaling 413.29 acres. Four of these tracts are privately owned, one is owned by IDNR, and three are owned by not-for-profit organizations.

INPC staff participated in 33 surveys and made 85 landowner contacts regarding Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) sites.

The Executive Director position has still not been filled. They are interviewing to fill Kelly Neal's position.

Thirteen threats to Nature Preserves were handled. There seem to be more and more intrusions. For example, a quarry was contaminating an adjacent wetland. This was noticed by a researcher conducting an aerial waterfowl survey who saw discolored water. He reported the situation to INPC, who contacted another agency, who contacted another, and so on until the Environmental Protection Agency became involved. This was a wonderful example of teamwork that appropriately addressed the problem.

Mr. Schietzelt wondered what percentage of INAI sites have protection. Mr. Strole was not sure off the top of his head, but there are roughly 1,500 INAI sites with around 600 of those being Nature Preserves.

6. Report from the Chair of the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board

Chair Hofmann provided a written report on her activities since the last meeting; the report is attached to these minutes. She performed the usual administrative tasks of dealing with email, reviewing draft minutes from the previous meeting, distributing draft ITAs and Conservation Plans to Board members, and distributing materials for the current meeting.

Chair Hofmann prepared for and attended the Public Hearing on proposed changes to the List on January 17. She thanked Mr. Young for acting as the Hearing Officer, and Ms. Bloomquist for taking care of the technical aspects.

Chair Hoffman mentioned that Ms. Maass gave a fantastic seminar at the Illinois Natural History Survey on the Illinois Natural Heritage Database.

Elections for Board officers will be held at the upcoming August Board meeting.

7. Semi-annual Review of Whether to Keep Closed the Minutes from Previous Closed Sessions

Dr. Hofmann pointed out that there have been no closed sessions since the Board voted on this issue at the 203rd meeting. Dr. Ting moved to keep the minutes of previously closed sessions closed and the motion was seconded by Dr. Dreslik. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Responses to Comments Received During the Public Hearing on the Preliminary List of Proposed Changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Chair Hofmann announced that two oral comments were submitted at the Public Hearing in January, both remotely. There was also a set of written comments submitted later by the IDNR Division of Natural Heritage (DNH). The Board needs to respond to these comments by coming to a majority opinion, then formally writing the opinion and sending it back to those who commented.

The first comment to be addressed was by Robb Telfer (Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves) who voiced his support for listing species that are hard to study, that do not have a lot of experts, and that do not necessarily have a lot of data but still meet the threshold for endangered or threatened status. This is especially the case for invertebrates, a taxonomic group that can be challenging on many levels. The Board was sympathetic to Mr. Telfer's concerns. Dr. Hofmann will draft a response.

DNH commented that full petition packages were not readily available, and that DNH supports public access to petition documents, with appropriate redactions to protect sensitive information. Dr. Willink asked if petition cover sheets were already online, and Dr. Hofmann informed him that they were. Mr. Schietzelt commented that if someone were to challenge a petition, perhaps there was some way to see relevant data. Dr. Dreslik continued by saying that Species Status Assessments and Species Guidance Documents are available publicly but suppress specific locality data. Dr. Coons suggested that a decision on this matter does not need to be made today and could be discussed later. The Board felt that this was a worthwhile idea and will continue to pursue it before the next List revision. Dr. Hofmann will draft a response.

DNH commented that there is insufficient evidence for the streamline chub *Erimystax dissimilis* reproducing in or significantly using Illinois, so it does not meet the criteria for being listed. Dr. Dreslik read the listing guidelines to help clarify this and later discussions. He specifically mentioned "criterion 4. Species which exhibit very restricted geographic ranges, of which Illinois is a part" and "5. Species which exhibit restricted habitats or low populations in Illinois." He indicated that the streamline chub meets these two criteria. Dr. Willink went on to say that most small stream fishes (e.g., minnows, darters, small sunfishes) typically have home ranges on the order to 200-500 feet. This means the streamline chub, which is considered a small stream fish, would have required multiple generations to colonize 11.5+ river miles into Illinois, and hence should be considered resident. Dr. Hofmann asked if this species could spread into other rivers besides the Vermilion. Mr. Thomas commented that it is also expanding its range in Sugar Creek and could enter that Illinois watershed in the future. There was consensus on the Board that the

streamline chub does meet the statutory eligibility requirements for listing. Dr. Willink and Dr. Dreslik will draft a response.

DNH commented that the Tippecanoe darter *Nothonotus tippecanoe* is currently expanding its range and does not meet the standard for listing. Dr. Willink described a “thought exercise” used by aquatic biologists in which there is a catastrophic event (e.g. a train carrying toxic chemicals crashing into a river or a massive input of nitrogen or phosphorus from a fertilizer plant or accidental over-application of fertilizer). They then assess whether a species could survive such an event. These examples were chosen because similar scenarios have happened in Illinois. Mr. Thomas continued by saying there was an algal bloom in the same watershed that resulted in a fish kill 20 miles long. Dr. Ting wondered if listing helped in situations like this, as listing would not prevent a catastrophic event. Dr. Dreslik observed that this indicates how important habitat is, and there are a number of philosophical questions that it raises. Dr. Hofmann continued by saying that there were indeed many interesting general questions, but there is no protection from random disasters. Ms. Chavez observed that there are always challenges on the regulatory side, but this should not impede the listing of a species. Dr. Ting felt that there needs to be more survey effort to provide context to Element of Occurrence Records (EORs), and that more data are needed. Dr. Capparella asked if fines are affected by whether a species is listed or not. Ms. Holtrop answered that there are different penalties for listed species. It was the consensus of the Board that population trends, whether expanding or decreasing, are less important than the status of the species, and that the population of Tippecanoe darter in Illinois is still vulnerable, and the species qualifies for listing. Dr. Willink and Dr. Dreslik will draft a response.

The discussion surrounding the Tippecanoe darter continued with Mr. Thomas clarifying that the data are a snapshot after dam removal and he is not sure of current trends. The Tippecanoe darter may expand its range to the same extent as the bluebreast darter. Other species are also expanding their ranges due to the dam removal. Dr. Ting wondered what the situation would be like in a few years and how much more would we know. Mr. Thomas mentioned that this particular dam removal was prioritized because of the endangered and threatened species present in the watershed and the potential benefits to them.

DNH commented that it agrees that the smooth greensnake *Opheodrys vernalis* may have declined in one region in Illinois, but it is widespread and populations appear stable in other regions so should not be added to the List at this time. Ms. Chavez clarified that the concern was that it was declining, and that it is apparently declining in some areas. Dr. Dreslik asked if it has been surveyed enough. If it is now restricted to the Chicago region, then it should be listed. If that is not the case, it should not be listed. There needs to be more data on downstate sites. Dr. Willink commented that this does appear to be a borderline species for listing and wondered if it had been discussed over the years by the Herptile Endangered Species Technical Advisory Committee (ESTAC). Dr. Dreslik clarified that the smooth greensnake had been discussed repeatedly at ESTAC meetings. Ms. Rericha-Anchor added that staff regularly see it in Cook County forest preserves and it is not uncommon in healthy habitats. It was the consensus of the Board that listing the smooth greensnake is premature at this time, as some Chicago region populations appear to be doing well and the status of downstate populations is not known. Dr. Dreslik and Ms. Chavez will draft a response.

DNH commented that more data should be included when delisting a species because of extirpation, such as historic and contemporary surveys in order to ensure scientific rigor. Dr. Dietrich stated that an individual leafhopper *Athysanella incongrua* was found in June 2024, so

the petition to delist that species as extirpated was withdrawn. That left the cobweb skipper *Hesperia metea* and Ottoe skipper *Hesperia ottoe* under consideration. Dr. Ting mentioned that the focus seemed to be more about delisting recovered species, and did not really address extirpated species. She said that perhaps there should be a special session with IDNR about delisting species. Dr. Hofmann summarized the Board's opinion by saying the Board will collaborate with IDNR to revise the petition forms to ask for survey effort (including negative results), that this survey effort needs to be quantified (following up on Dr. Ting's comments), and that the focus is on protecting species, not individuals. Ms. Holtrop added that some of this information may exist, but this was not apparent from the petitions. Such information may have been presented at ESTAC or ESPB meetings. Dr. Hofmann will draft a response.

DNH commented that the Division recommends additional information regarding historic and contemporary survey distribution and effort, characteristics of occurrence records, and statewide status and status trends be incorporated into petitions before the Board decides to approve proposals for adding species to the List. The discussion then focused on specific taxonomic groups.

For the Florida bellwort *Uvularia floridana*, Dr. Coons clarified that three of six criteria were met (species which exhibit very restricted geographic ranges of which Illinois is a part, species which exhibit restricted habitats or low populations in Illinois, and species which are significant disjuncts in Illinois). The species was first found in Illinois in 2017 and is threatened by several factors. Mr. Schietzelt asked if its appearance was due to habitat restoration or it just appeared. Dr. Coons answered that it appeared in an area with another more common species. Herbarium records may or may not help to determine its range. Ms. Holtrop wished to know if this is the result of a recent colonization event or the species has been historically declining. She said there needs to be more context. She asked if the species could be more widespread but is not being looked for. Dr. Coons replied that people are looking now. Ms. Feng clarified that the first record was uploaded to iNaturalist in 2017, but the species was not identified until 2021. That record was along a nature trail. She then suggested that perhaps Florida bellwort should be considered threatened as opposed to endangered. It was the consensus of the Board that petitions should be revised to include survey effort. Dr. Hofmann will draft a response.

At this point in the meeting there was a 30-minute recess. Dr. Coons left the meeting.

Dr. Dietrich asked if there were any questions regarding leafhoppers. Mr. Schietzelt wondered about dispersal distance. Dr. Dietrich replied that the species in question are flight limited. They have small wings and hence cannot disperse far at all. There is not much connectivity among habitats, so populations are essentially isolated. Dr. Hofmann mentioned that Ball's athysanella *Athysanella balli* is restricted to dolomite prairies, and there are only about 140 acres of dolomite prairie left in Illinois. Dr. Dietrich went on to say there were extensive surveys by the Illinois Natural History Survey in the 1930s, surveys focusing on grasslands in the 1950s, and resurveys of historic sites from 1995 to the present. The species under consideration for listing are the rarest of the rare. There are other possible candidates.

In regard to bees, Ms. Rericha-Anchor started by saying that many bees are specific to particular species of plants. Plants are surveyed extensively, and many species are becoming rare. To

survey bees, areas with appropriate plants are checked. Sometimes the particular bees are present, and sometimes they are not. Areas are sampled at appropriate times when plants are flowering. Habitat is degraded in many areas. Dr. Hofmann asked if Ms. Rericha-Anchor could provide concise survey effort to the Board. Ms. Rericha-Anchor replied that she could work with other groups to get the information. Dr. Hofmann observed that the Virginia mining bee *Andrena virginiana* can only be identified under a microscope. She asked how people monitor this species. Ms. Rericha-Anchor that a specimen is needed to verify an individual, and that the species is challenging to monitor. Ms. Moorehouse mentioned that the Terrestrial Invertebrate ESTAC started with a longer list of bees, but many had not been seen since 2013, so they were not considered for listing. She said that we are actively losing bees. Dr. Dietrich added that many of the comments about bees are applicable to leafhoppers. The leafhopper species proposed for listing can be identified in the field, are also plant specific, and should be easier to monitor.

In regard to butterflies, there is a lot of survey effort (both professional and amateur). Dr. Dreslik wondered if historical sites had been visited. Ms. Moorehouse replied that they were, but that information was not clearly asked for in the petitions. Dr. Dreslik continued by saying that it is always possible that the habitat at an EOR site could be gone. Ms. Moorehouse agreed, and once again said that information was not clearly asked for in the petitions. Ms. Rericha-Anchor added that much of this was the same for bees. Rare species are now absent. Much prairie/savanna habitat is gone. They are now looking at the last remaining vestiges of habitat. Many are smaller than an acre and need to be managed for plants and insects. Dr. Dietrich continued by saying that habitat loss is a real issue for leafhoppers as well. One bad year and they could be gone from a site.

Ms. Holtrop concurred that some species are indeed rare. This information was not clear in the petitions but could have been presented elsewhere. She is pleased that the information does exist. Dr. Ting added that it is good to know the range of species in the state, and then one is able to better judge survey effort. Dr. Dietrich clarified that negative data were included in State Wildlife Grant reports. Ms. Rericha-Anchor indicated similar data is found in reports to the INPC. Dr. Hofmann will draft a response.

9. Final Approval of Proposed Changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Mr. Schietzelt motioned that the proposed changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species, as posted for the January 2025 Public Hearing, be approved with amendments. Dr. Capparella seconded the motion.

Dr. Hofmann motioned that the leafhopper *Athysanella incongrua* be removed from the list of proposed changes. Ms. Chavez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Dreslik motioned that the smooth greensnake *Opheodrys vernalis* be removed from the list of proposed changes. Dr. Hofmann seconded the motion. The motion passed with six affirmative votes and one abstention (Ms. Chavez).

Dr. Dreslik motioned that the cobweb skipper *Hesperia metea* be removed from the list of proposed changes. Mr. Schietzelt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Dreslik motioned that the Florida bellwort *Uvularia floridana* be listed as threatened instead of endangered (as was originally proposed). Ms. Chavez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The initial motion that the proposed changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species, as posted for the January 2025 Public Hearing, be approved with amendments (as just voted on) passed unanimously.

10. Public Comment Period

There were no public comments.

11. Other Business

Dr. Hofmann mentioned that some ESTAC minutes need to be finalized. The minutes for the Plant ESTAC meetings are complete and online. Dr. Hofmann stated that she would write minutes for the Mammal and Fish ESTACs by the next meeting. Dr. Capparella will work on minutes for the Avian ESTAC and Ms. Chavez for the Amphibian/Reptile ESTAC. Ms. Maass said that she may have notes for the Aquatic Invertebrate ESTAC meeting and Dr. Hofmann will work on minutes for the Terrestrial Invertebrate ESTAC.

Mr. Young pointed out that Board members whose terms are ending in May need to apply for reappointment if they wish to continue on the Board. Terms are ending for Dr. Willink, Mr. Schietzelt, and Dr. Capparella.

Dr. Hofmann reminded members to send their time sheets and travel forms to Nicole Sandidge.

12. Next meeting information (May 23, 2025 at 10 A.M.)

The next meeting will be May 23, 2025 at 10 A.M. Presumably it will be at IDNR in Springfield.

13. Adjournment

Chair Hofmann adjourned the meeting at 1:27 P.M.



ILLINOIS ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION BOARD

One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, Illinois 62702 - 1271; dnr.espb@illinois.gov

Report from the Chair, 21 February 2025

Joyce Hofmann

Activities for the period between the 204th and 205th Board meetings

- performed follow-up for 204th meeting – arranged for the final agenda of the 204th meeting, the approved minutes of the 203rd Board meeting, and the 2025 schedule of Board meetings to be posted on the Board’s website
- monitored the Board’s email account – responded to some messages, forwarded others to appropriate personnel at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- reviewed the draft minutes for the Board’s 204th meeting
- prepared for the public hearing on proposed changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species – wrote the notice and arranged to have it posted on the website and sent to the State newspaper, updated the registration form and agenda, created a list of the proposed changes arranged by type of change and taxonomic group, and collected the cover sheets of petitions for posting on the Board’s website
- attended the public hearing in Springfield on 17 January and read the opening statement
- attended the 249th Illinois Nature Preserves Commission meeting in Springfield on 28 January and presented the report from the Board
- distributed comments received during the public hearing and the two-week hearing period to Board members
- had a conference call with Vice-Chair Ting and Division of Natural Heritage Chief Holtrop in preparation for 205th Board meeting

- distributed five draft Incidental Take Authorizations and five Conservation Plans to Board members for potential review
- prepared for the 205th Board meeting – prepared the notice for the 205th meeting, developed a draft agenda for the 205th meeting, arranged to have the notice and draft agenda posted on the Board's website and at the IDNR building, and distributed materials for the 205th meeting to Board members