

## WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

November 21, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### NOTES:

Folders: [Invasive Species Folder](#)  
[Mediterranean Gecko Folder](#)

#### Attendees:

Joy O'Keefe  
Laura Adamowicz  
Katie Baughman  
Michael Eichholz  
Gary Glowacki  
Liza Lehrer  
Stephany Lewis  
Robin Warne

- Welcome to new members of the committee and introductions
  - New members: Laura Adamowicz – wildlife veterinarian, PhD in reptiles and amphibians at U of I. Stephany Lewis -- veterinarian at U of I. Robin Warne -- Natural History Survey
  - All committee members present introduced themselves
  - Joy explained our role as a committee focusing on terrestrial, invasive wildlife. Listed the past species we have evaluated: feral swine, nutria, and outdoor cats.
- Outdoor Cat Proposal,  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UCRawHk4CuuhdU6JMYpdw9GDcGVRW13i/edit>  
The IL Invasive Species Council discussed the proposal and stated they were not going to vote on the designation of outdoor cats as an invasive species. The State said they were going to discuss the proposal. Joy followed up with an email and initially received no response from the State. Later was told that the State forgot about the proposal and could not find their copy of it. The proposal was resubmitted to the State for review and we are still waiting on a response.
- Joy spoke to Mike Dreslik from the Illinois Natural History Survey and he suggested red-eared sliders as a potential species to discuss.
- We are going to continue with the Mediterranean gecko proposal but it likely will be shorter than previous proposals. We may choose not to propose that it be listed as invasive.
- Robin asked what our about the audience(s) and goal(s) of our proposals

- Joy responded that the audience is DNR and the goal depends on the species
  - Examples:
    - Feral swine – don’t allow hunting, monitor/eradicate as they pop up, consult with USDA as needed
    - Nutria – continue monitoring; list as invasive
    - Outdoor cats – proposed that we list them as invasive, conduct a statewide survey of public knowledge about outdoor cats, follow up with an educational campaign based on knowledge gaps, follow up to see if the education campaign was beneficial; also proposed changing the language related to cats on the State website to mirror the stance taken by Florida and other states with similar cat policies
- Mike added that we make recommendations and complete a rating system to understand potential impacts but the state ultimately decides on them; new/altere regulations can potentially come out of the process; DNR will be meeting in December
  - Joy said she will follow up with the DNR about the cat proposal again when they have their meeting
- Joy confirmed that members could access the proposals folder in Google Drive
- Discussion of the Gecko Proposal document
  - IL distribution
    - Robin described that Carbondale is the epicenter
      - Associated with restaurants; geckos likely accidentally transported in boxes and plants rather than through the pet trade in IL
    - Some reports from Bloomington
    - Can look at reports on iNaturalist through Gecko Watch
  - Life History
    - Robin – gecko distributions are so tied to human structures so they typically don’t pose much risk to native species in terms of disease transmission
  - Diet
    - Section is partially filled in but not sure who worked on it
  - No official control so far
  - Damage Potential
    - Climate/Host interaction
      - Joy initially said “Medium (2)”; Mike leaned toward “High (3)”
      - Discussion:
        - Robin asked the group what criteria there are for us to consider a species “established”

- Liza described that geckos could be indoors or outdoors but outdoor populations would be limited by climate
  - Robin described that geckos have been documented dispersing from restaurants to neighboring buildings, so they can move around outdoors
  - Mike asked Robin if he looked for any hibernacula
  - Robin responded that he did not but the geckos likely overwinter in buildings and crawl spaces
  - Mike said he could see us listing it as a 2 or 3 but we should describe why; if we decide on a 3, mention that it would be limited based on urbanization and human transport
- Known pest range rated a 1
- Reproduction:
  - Stephany Lewis filled this section in
  - Marked it tentatively as a “medium” rating
  - Mediterranean geckos have 1-3 clutches per year and 1-2 eggs per clutch; other gecko species tend to have more clutches
  - Mediterranean geckos can, however, store sperm for up to 4 months in their oviducts so females could reproduce for up to 4 months without encountering an additional male
- Economic Impact
  - Laura Adamovicz section
    - Geckos carry their own lung worm (they are the hosts); potential concern if it could infect other species but no definitive evidence of that so far; snakes in Florida are impacted by a different type of lungworm
    - Geckos could also potentially contract and spread fungal skin infections but likely would only impact pets (e.g., bearded dragons, which are the typical hosts for the fungus)
  - Stephany agreed with Laura that there would likely be limited health risks to people but some infections could potentially spread to pets
- Environmental Impact
  - Katie added a link in the comments to the updated IL T&E list in case anyone was curious about the changes made this year; it was updated 10/31/25
  - Joy and Katie agreed that we probably do not need to list every species that could be impacted by the gecko since most species on the T&E list are not associated with human structures the way that geckos are
  - Joy asked if anyone knew the lower temperature limit for Mediterranean Geckos; around 3.3 °C; could geckos inhabit

- cliffs/caves with bats?; no evidence of that so far since they are associated with buildings
  - Robin said likely low environmental impact overall
    - Little competition; where they are in IL, no native species of skinks or similar species
- Uncertainty
  - Joy asked if there was anything we wanted to add or discuss
  - Laura – distribution could be larger than we know; disease burden unknown
  - Mike – What is their ability to disperse? Especially with climate change, how will geckos be able to use natural areas?
  - Robin said many areas are too wet for geckos; they are adapted to drier and warmer landscapes
- Rating overall = low
  - Not widespread
  - Low impact (as far as we know)
- Recommendations:
  - Liza – suggested community science programs to document public sightings
  - Mike – suggested potentially moving the recommendations to the top of this section and then justifying them with the rest of the information afterwards to help reviewers focus in on what we are suggesting
  - We also discussed having a <1-page summary at the beginning of the proposal to make sure the reader knows the main points right away.
- Next Steps:
  - Clean up the proposal
  - Add text to the sections that you have been tagged on:
    - Distribution – Robin; Mike adding supporting info
    - Economic Impacts – Laura
    - Ecological Impacts – Scott
    - T&E Species Impacts – Katie
    - Recommendations/Community Science Programs - Liza
  - Make edits anywhere needed, even if you have not been assigned a specific section
  - Council will meet on December 10<sup>th</sup> from 9am-12pm
    - We discussed trying to finish the proposal before December 10<sup>th</sup> so it could be discussed at the December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting but ultimately decided that it would be challenging time-wise
    - We will try to wrap it up at or shortly after our next committee meeting instead so we can have one more round of discussions as a group

- This means the Council will likely not review our gecko proposal until February or March
- Our next meeting will be December 19th at 1pm
  - Everyone should look at the proposal and try to help finalize it
  - Also come prepared with ideas about which species we could do next