

WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

December 19, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

MEETING NOTES

Attendees

Committee Members: Joy O’Keefe, Laura Adamovicz, Scott Meister, Mike Eichholz, Chris Jacques, Robin Warne, Katie Baughman

Visitors: Melissa Custic, President IISC; Nathan Grider and Mike Wefer, IDNR

Wildlife Committee Folders: [Illinois Invasive Terrestrial Species](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A33I7-FEZNeV3Rd2Dk7C6T-Th7aY4FnM)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A33I7-FEZNeV3Rd2Dk7C6T-Th7aY4FnM>

Literature File:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1y-IaJSHY0snLIWHZCvcZ5cZBDu1RaD_F

Mediterranean Gecko Proposal:

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RBxpOOGv5DlBvtDL0SOL6weojlrEno-g/edit>

Outdoor cat proposal

- **IDNR Position:**
 - Issue is complex due to political history and capacity issues in IDNR.
 - IDNR funds research but must prioritize among competing needs.
 - No current capacity for outreach or new initiatives.
- **Terrestrial Invasive Wildlife Committee Role:**
 - Part of Illinois Invasive Species Council (IISC); Advisory only;
 - Provides recommendations without expectation of immediate action.
- **Proposal Intent:** Improve understanding of public perceptions and educational opportunities regarding outdoor cats.
- **Statewide Survey Idea:** Could inform IDNR’s stance and political perspective.
- **Education & Outreach:**
 - Suggested posting educational info on IDNR site;
 - Possible collaboration with U of I Extension if prioritized.
 - Veterinary Associations could assist with education, but public resistance noted.

Action items for Committee:

- Committee acknowledges limited resources and political challenges.
- Review and refine outdoor cat proposal. Focus on recommendations for IDNR about what to include on their website.
- Joy to draft language for review before next meeting.
- Lydia to add “Outdoor Cats” to next meeting agenda.

- Send proposal to IISC Council after review.

Action items for IDNR:

- Consider linking IISC priorities (including information on outdoor cats) on IDNR webpage.
- If in agreement, find ways to indicate to public that reducing the outdoor cat population is a priority. Perhaps through their website.
- Explore improving communication channels with IISC and other committees.
- Evaluate TNR law for potential strengthening (long-term), as it may compete with the goal of reducing the outdoor cat population.
- IDNR to weigh outdoor cat issue against other priorities for funding/research. Committee stressed the need for a proposal to understand Illinoisans' knowledge of outdoor cat issue to inform future work.

Collaborations:

- U of I Extension may assist with resource development if prioritized.
- Consider statewide survey to gauge public perception.
- Engage veterinary associations for educational messaging.

Relationship Building:

- Nathan committed to improving IDNR–IISC interactions.
- Melissa to help identify better communication strategies.

Other Business

Joy moved on to the meeting agenda and the discussion of the proposal on Mediterranean geckos. She shared the proposal virtually so the committee members could follow along.

Distribution: Joy reached out to Jeremy Schoemacher. He knew the locations of geckos down south and has his own observations. (Joy posted Jeremy's map on the proposal document.) She asked if Jeremy's map aligned with what the committee has found. **Scott M. will look to see if it is aligned.**

Damage Possibilities: **Robin to take a look** and see if what Mike has provided the changes correctly.

Joy put scores into the document.

Uncertainty: – **Needs more info**

Value of a community science program: Liza wrote about and **could be expanded upon.**

Joy asked that everyone read through the proposal so the committee is ready to finalize the proposal.

Homework:

Everyone to look over the proposal.

The committee recommended saying with the 3rd Friday of the month at 1:00 for future meeting dates. Lydia will schedule them to summer.

Next species: It is recommended that red-eared sliders (turtle) be tackled next.

Happy holidays to all!

Adjourn.