

# Public Hearing Comments Regarding the Revision of the 2025 Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

## Oral Comments Received During the Public Hearing:

### **Allison Sacerdote-Velat- Chicago Academy of Sciences**

I had expected that there might be some concerns regarding the focus of where a lot of our demographic data had been collected from, specifically that a lot of the information we had was from the Chicago region. I did want to take the time to reiterate that we also incorporated data from Lee County and Grundy County from, this is for the smooth greensnake, from some of the sites that are considered the larger populations across all of our sites in, about five or six counties. We have been observing increasing instances of snake fungal disease and the same kind of challenges to egg survival rates due to the permeability of greensnake eggs. They continue to desiccate in drought years. We continue to see similar challenges with reduced output, reproductive output during drought years, and I don't think that this is something that is limited to the Chicago region. I think this is just tied to the natural history and physiology of the species more broadly and it's something that I would expect to see throughout the species range. So that was my main comment. Additionally, I know there are some data gaps regarding the impact of pesticide drift, given that this is a snake that feeds on invertebrates. I feel that this is something that's very challenging to quantify. We don't have historic data on insect densities for most of these sites, but where pesticide drift maybe occurring, I would expect generally an increase in or excuse me, a decrease in the prey base for the species. So that's my main comment. Thank you.

### **Robb Telfer - Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves and the Wild Things Conference**

I am Robb Telfer, I work with Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves and the Wild Things Conference and I was perusing the list of proposed listing species, and I wanted to just voice my support for making sure that some of the species that are hard to study, that don't have a lot of experts, that don't have a lot of data but still meet the threshold from the Board to acquire listing. That they'd be accepted as endangered or threatened because I know that it's been my experience that it's been very challenging to enforce, invertebrate, rare invertebrates protection because some of them, their nesting habits or their behaviors aren't well known. And so it's hard to protect them when you can't know where they are a hundred percent of the time and I know that it'll be hard to enforce some of the harder to find species, but I also don't think that that is, in my opinion, a very good reason not to list them. And that we need to continue to work and with the support of the public to, protect these things and find new ways and rise to the challenge of making sure that our rare species are protected. So, I just want to make sure that that gets said, and that there's a large contingency of people I think who would hate to hear that species were not accepted for protection if, just because it was, it would be difficult to enforce the protection. So yeah, that's my comment.

## Written Comments Received:



January 31, 2025

Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board  
One Natural Resources Way  
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Dear Board Members:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Heritage (Division) appreciates the Endangered Species Protection Board (Board) and Endangered Species Technical Advisory Committee members' effort and dedication to developing a preliminary list of proposed changes to the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species (list). In preparing these comments, the Division considered: a species' eligibility for listing as per statutory guidance and petition criteria, fidelity to statutory language, thoroughness of information petitioners used to evaluate species, petitioners' conclusions (i.e., add to list, delist, status change) based on that information, and adherence to the spirit of relevant statutes. The following comments relate to proposed changes to the list as it was presented to the public on January 17, 2025.

1. The purpose of the Board's solicitation of public comments is to receive responses to proposed changes to the list and to engage the public in the listing process; however, petition documents are not available to the public. Substantive public comment requires access to the information the Board uses to propose changes to the list. The Division supports public access to petition documents, with appropriate redactions to protect sensitive information, in future revisions to the list.
2. The Division identified two species that may not meet eligibility for listing under the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act (the Act) or adhere to the spirit of the Act.
  - a. Part 10/7 of the Act requires at least one of three eligibility criteria (Federally listed, reproduces in the state, otherwise significantly uses the state) be met before a species may be considered for listing. One species, *Erimystax dissimilis* (Streamline Chub, add to list) is not Federally listed and the petition does not provide evidence that it reproduces in and/or otherwise significantly uses Illinois. The Division does not support adding this species to the list as it does not appear to meet statutory eligibility requirements.
  - b. Part 10/2 of the Act suggests the focus of the Act are those species which benefit from measures provided in the Act until those measures are no longer needed. Species that are expanding their range into Illinois and are becoming more widespread may not meet this standard as their status is improving without the measures of the Act. At least one species, *Nothonotus tippecanoe* (Tippecanoe Darter, add to list) appears to be a recent colonizer of the state and is becoming more widespread. The Division does not support adding this species at this time as it appears to be expanding its range.
3. Although all petitioners supplied requested petition components, the Division has difficulty concurring with some proposed actions (list, delist, etc.) due to insufficient information provided. Many petitions rely only on occurrence (i.e., positive observation) information and did not provide sufficient context of historic status and historic and contemporary survey effort. Without that context, it is difficult to conclude these species are rare and declining rather than just the appearance of rarity or declining distribution as a result of insufficient survey

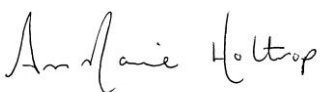
effort. The Division recommends additional information regarding historic and contemporary survey distribution and effort, characteristics of occurrence records (e.g., abundance, live individual or dead material), and statewide status and status trends (rather than site- or occurrence-based information) be incorporated into petitions before the Board makes a decision to approve requested actions for these species. Including this information will improve confidence in assessments of a species' status under criteria used by the Act and petition process.

Specific species of concern due to lacking the context described above are: *Andrena quintilis* (Eastern Scaly Miner Bee), *Andrena virginiana* (Virginia Mining Bee), *Anthophora walshii* (Walsh's Athophora), *Argynnis aphrodite* (Aphrodite Fritillary), *Athysanella balli* (Ball's Athysanella), *Colletes aestivalis* (Alumroot Cellophane Bee), *Colletes andrewsi* (Andrews' Cellophane Bee), *Dieunomia nevadensis bakeri* (Baker's Nomia), *Epeolus ainsliei* (Ainslie's Epeolus), *Epeolus interruptus* (Interrupted Epeolus), *Fitchiella robertsonii* (Fitch's Elephanthopper), *Flexamia albida* (Leafhopper), *Flexamia grammica* (Sand Reed Leafhopper), *Macropis nuda* (Naked Oil-collecting Bee), *Melissodes apicatus* (Pickerelweed Long-nosed Bee), *Nomia nortoni* (Norton's Nomia), *Poblicia fuliginosa* (Planthopper), *Polyamia rossi* (Ross' Polyamia), *Protandrena bancrofti* (Mining Bee), and *Uvularia floridana* (Florida Bellwort).

4. The petition form used by the Board identifies that a species may be delisted if it is extirpated from Illinois. No scientific information standard is identified for determining extirpation, which eliminates a species as a species of the state. The Division has identified three species proposed for delisting due to extirpation in which the petition does not have sufficient information to reach that conclusion: *Athysanella incongrua* (Leafhopper), *Hesperia metea* (Cobweb Skipper), *Hesperia ottoe* (Ottoe Skipper). The Division recommends petitioners provide additional data to justify sufficient sampling has occurred throughout the organism's range to determine the species is no longer present in the state. Additional data could include context of historic and contemporary survey distribution and effort, characteristics of occurrence records (e.g., abundance, live or dead material), and statewide status and status trends (rather than site- or occurrence-based information) before a species may be considered extirpated. The Division requests the Board's collaboration in identifying species considered extirpated prior to delisting species under the extirpation criterion to ensure appropriate scientific rigor is used when evaluating which ones are considered species of the state.
5. At this time, the Division disagrees with the Board's determination that *Opheodrys vernalis* (Smooth Greensnake) should be added to the list. Distribution records and trends in distribution identified in the petition for this species suggests it is relatively widespread and its status stable. The Division recognizes the species has declined in one region of Illinois; however, the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act requires that a species be "in danger of extinction in the wild in Illinois" or be "likely to become endangered in the wild in Illinois within the foreseeable future" to be listed as endangered or threatened respectively. The Division does not concur with the Board's assessment that this species meets the definition of endangered or threatened and does not recommend adding this species to the list at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed listing changes. I wish you well in your deliberations and look forward to our continued collaboration in the future.

Regards,



Ann Marie Holtrop  
Chief, Division of Natural Heritage