

ILLINOIS ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION BOARD

MINUTES OF 193rd MEETING, February 11, 2022

via ZOOM

Approved at the 194th meeting, May 20, 2022

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Angelo Capparella, Dr. Janice Coons, Dr. Jeremie Fant, Dr. Joyce Hofmann, Mr. Randy Schietzelt, Mr. Bruce Ross-Shannon, Dr. Tih-Fen Ting, and Dr. Philip Willink.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Chris Young

OTHERS PRESENT: Heather Osborn (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage ITA Coordinator), Todd Strole (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage, INPC), Austin Omer (Illinois Farm Bureau), Dave Glover (IDNR Rivers and Streams Program Manager), Cassi Saari (Chicago Park District - Natural Areas), Samantha Chavez (interested citizen), Brian Metzke (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage, Aquatic Ecologist), Katie Kucera (Plants of Concern - Research Assistant, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves - volunteer), Amy Doll (Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves), Ann Holtrop (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Laura Stamp (Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School) and her class, Greg Wahl (private landowner), Brad Semel (IDNR Endangered Species Recovery Specialist), Brent Pease (Southern Illinois University, Forestry Program), Charles O'Leary (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage), Chris Miller (INHS CREP Specialist), Christopher Benda (Southern Illinois University, Plants of Concern), Denice Beck (retired volunteer coordinator for McHenry County Conservation District), Jake Lux (INHS CREP Specialist), Jennifer Kuroda (volunteer Mississippi Audubon), Kristen Ragusa (IDNR Private Lands, CREP Specialist), Matt Evans (Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves), Natalia Maass (IDNR Division of Natural Heritage, Database Program), Trent Thomas (IDNR Division of Fisheries), Ann Hughes (IDNR/INHS Private Lands, CREP Specialist), Jill Kennay (Natural Land Institute), Kerry Leigh (NLI), James McGee, Sallyann Roberts, Allison Bryant, David Zaya, Jeff, and one other who did not officially identify himself.

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

Chair Hofmann called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. and read the roll call. Eight voting Board members were in attendance, constituting a quorum. Dr. Hofmann welcomed the visitors and asked them to introduce themselves. It will be noted that since a class was in attendance, there were multiple times during the meeting that people would provide background information on how the ESPB and IDNR worked to provide context to a given discussion.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Schietzelt moved that the agenda be adopted as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ross-Shannon. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

3. Approval of Minutes from the 192nd Meeting

Draft minutes of the 192nd meeting had been distributed to Board members prior to the meeting by email. Dr. Coons moved that the minutes of the 192nd meeting be approved as presented. Dr. Fant seconded the motion and it passed unanimously on a roll call vote. Dr. Hofmann said that she would have the minutes posted on the website.

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

The Department's report had been distributed to the Board via email. Ms. Holtrop stated that IDNR works closely with the ESPB on endangered species issues within the state. She continued by saying that this is a very busy time of year for permit applications. There are also several Incidental Take Authorizations (ITAs) being reviewed. One project that was highlighted involved assessing the viability of Mottled Sculpin populations using Element Occurrence Records (EORs). The assessment utilizes NatureServe guidelines, and it is hoped that this will improve future data collection. Furthermore, Species Leads will be working on various Species Status Assessments, such as for the Orangefoot Pimpleback mussel. There is a growing interest in plants in Illinois, since there are many plants on the Endangered and Threatened Species List. IDNR will be working with INHS on a two-year project to start producing s-ranks for the plants, similar to what was done for animals. They will also be working with the Chicago Botanic Garden and others on how to transfer and share data. There are also a couple State Wildlife Grant projects on bats, focusing on land management and stewardship opportunities.

Mr. Ross-Shannon asked how long it would take to assess all the plants. Ms. Holtrop replied that it would probably take 1-2 years to figure out deliverables, and then they would take it from there. Dr. Coons asked what the highest ranking was for the Mottled Sculpin populations. Mr. Metzke replied that there is an "Excellent" rank, but it was not used because all populations in Illinois are under threat. Therefore "Good" was the highest ranking used. Dr. Capparella asked if there were any updates on Bell Bowl Prairie. Ms. Holtrop replied that there weren't, but the US Fish and Wildlife Service will do another assessment in the spring. Dr. Ting asked what genetic markers were being used in the guano of the bat genomics project. Ms. Holtrop did not immediately know, but she said she will check.

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

An INPC report was distributed to the Board via e-mail. Mr. Strole is now Director of the INPC. He commented that there is a lot of overlap between endangered and threatened species and protected lands and preserves in Illinois so there are many opportunities for cooperation between ESPB and INPC. He highlighted one project involving Mottled Sculpin at the Bluff Springs Fens restoration. There is a robust population on the preserve. They are now working with local landowners and interest groups to continue with the restoration work, which benefits the Mottled Sculpin population. There is also a significant amount of interest in the Cerulean Warbler that is not well studied in Illinois, despite declines in some areas. Also, there is published pollinator research being done on 18 preserves by an INPC staff member.

Mr. Schietzelt noted that the Cerulean Warbler has largely disappeared from northeast Illinois, but is still present along the Mississippi River in the Shawnee area, and wondered why. Mr. Strole said that was a question of interest and he would look into it. Ms. Chavez asked if there was a plan to prioritize protection on Illinois Natural Areas Inventory sites. Mr. Strole said there was, but many sites are privately owned, so one must work with the landowners. Dr. Capparella

noted that previous INPC reports to the ESPB included problems at Natures Preserves, such as encroachments, and wondered if those could be included in future reports. Mr. Strole said that he has the data and would include that information in future. Dr. Ting wondered if most biological surveys on preserves were long-term or short-term (usually in response to an immediate need). Mr. Strole replied that they ran the gamut, but most were short-term. Mr. Ross-Shannon congratulated Mr. Strole on his new appointment.

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

Chair Hofmann previously 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. She discussed updated material for the ESPB website with Victoria Arterberry (IDNR). The revised petitions for adding to, removing from, or changing status on the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species still need to be added to the website. Two of the petitions require information from a table detailing the listing history of each species. Jeannie Barnes is working on an updated table. The petition to add a species does not require this information and will be added first to the website. There is no news on Board appointments. Appointments for Dr. Capparella, Mr. Schietzelt, and Dr. Willink will expire in May. Dr. Coons thanked Dr. Hofmann for updating the website. Dr. Ting asked if IDNR Legal needed to review the revised petition forms. Dr. Hofmann did not think that was the case, but will look into it.

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

Chair Hofmann pointed out that there have been no closed sessions since the Board voted on this issue at the 191st meeting. Mr. Ross-Shannon moved to keep the minutes of previously closed sessions closed and the motion was seconded by Mr. Schietzelt. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

8. Establishment of a Timeline for the 2025 Review and Revision of the Illinois List of Endangered and Threatened Species

Dr. Hofmann pointed out that it had been suggested that the Board start plants sooner, perhaps first. Dr. Coons agreed. During the previous round, plants required several meetings because there were so many of them, and it was a bit of a rush to submit the petitions on time. Dr. Hofmann commented that it should be possible to get the Endangered Species Technical Advisory Committees (ESTACs) organized more quickly this time, and perhaps some could be approved at the May meeting. Dr. Ting commented that it should be straightforward to use the previous schedule and work backwards when scheduling dates and deadlines. Dr. Fant noted that it would be better to wait to start the plants until the field season is completed and data can be entered. Dr. Coons suggested February as a start date. Dr. Capparella mentioned that the Avian group did not really need to wait and could start in the fall. Dr. Willink continued by saying fish and herp fieldwork is very seasonal, and ESTAC members would not be available until after the end of fall field season. Dr. Hofmann suggested the process to setup the ESTACs begin at the May and August meetings of the ESPB.

9. Recruitment of Members for Endangered Species Technical Advisory Committees

Dr. Hofmann suggested starting with the previous ESTAC list, then recruiting members as needed. She has already had one new volunteer and will put a notice on the ESPB website inviting interested individuals to apply for ESTAC membership. Dr. Willink mentioned that previous ESTAC meetings were considered Open Meetings, hence anyone could attend. Dr. Hofmann clarified that the ESTACs were later considered to be ad-hoc committees (this was largely in response on how to approve meeting minutes), but she wasn't certain if Open Meeting Act requirements still applied. Mr. Ross-Shannon continued by saying only actual members could vote. Mr. Schietzelt wondered if there would be any discussions involving sensitive locality data that could present a problem. Dr. Coons replied that such situations are easier to handle in-person than in Zoom meetings. Dr. Hofmann will confer with Mr. Young about the issue. Ms. Holtrop felt that inclusion of IDNR staff would benefit the ESTACs. Dr. Hofmann told her that any IDNR staff interested in participating should contact the ESPB. Mr. Strole will reach out to INPC staff with a similar request. Dr. Hofmann mentioned that new members may have to take Open Meeting Act training, and that the ESPB should start contacting existing members prior to the next Board meeting. Contact persons for particular taxonomic groups are: Dr. Ting for mammals, Dr. Coons and Dr. Fant for plants, Dr. Hofmann for herps and terrestrial invertebrates, Mr. Schietzelt for aquatic invertebrates, Dr. Capparella for birds, and Dr. Willink for fishes.

10. Public Comment Period

James McGee asked if there is any work occurring on improving the vegetation management guidelines. Mr. Strole replied that there is information on the INPC website, but it does tend to focus on invasive species on preserves. Guideline sheets are updated periodically. Samantha Chavez asked if the ESPB has given any advice on the issuance of ITAs for Rusty Patched Bumble Bee or Franklin's Ground Squirrel at Bell Bowl Prairie. Dr. Hofmann replied that no ITAs have been received, so the ESPB has not commented. Christopher Benda asked if it was correct that there is a vacancy on the ESPB and if the Board received any nominations. Dr. Hofmann replied that there is a vacancy, but then clarified that the ESPB does not know about nominations. That is handled through the Office of Executive Appointments. The ESPB does not know about appointments until they are made or someone informs the ESPB. The Governor makes the appointments, following a self-nomination process. Christopher Brenda continued by saying a nomination has been filed. Brent Pease asked if the INPC maintained a list of projects online, and added that there is a student starting work on the Cerulean Warbler and he would be happy to discuss further options. Mr. Strole clarified that there is a list of INPC projects in a database, but it is not online. He would be happy to talk more. Samantha Chavez asked what the public can do to help support the ESPB and ensure funding is restored and staff hired. Dr. Hofmann clarified that there has been no staff since 2015. The Board was able to finish the last revision without staff, but could do more with funding and staff. IDNR has been very helpful and supportive. With funding, there is the possibility of administering grants again. Mr. Schietzelt mentioned that he and Dr. Hofmann had to hand-modify EOR graphs for ESTAC members during the previous list revision and that would not work this time. He thought perhaps the Illinois Natural Heritage Database staff could help. Amy Doll suggested that ESPB document its tasks and impacts, so others can advocate for funding. Cassi Saari recalled from the previous ESPB meeting that the ESPB was going to discuss plant protection and the inequality with animals (e.g., see the 2012 annual ESPB report), and that would happen at the current meeting.

Dr. Hofmann will put the issue on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Ross-Shannon commented that IDNR is starting to address this issue with the plant project it is starting with INHS. Dr. Hofmann said that there are complicating legal issues with plants on private land.

11. Other Business

Dr. Hofmann pointed out that the Board needs to generate a Biennial Report this year. It will mostly be updates from previous reports. To help with this, she asked ESPB members to tally their hours from July 1, 2020 to the present, so this can be included. If anyone has any ideas for additions to the report, they should let Dr. Hofmann know. The report is due this summer.

12. Next Meeting Information (May 20, 2022 - format TBD)

Dr. Coons commented that virtual meetings make it easier for some to attend. Dr. Hofmann continued by saying that it is nice to interact in person, but maybe a hybrid model would work. There was a large turnout for this meeting (possibly a recent record), especially among IDNR staff since it is a State holiday.

13. Adjournment

Chair Hofmann adjourned the meeting at 11:53 A.M.



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Report from the Chair, 11 February 2022

Joyce Hofmann

Activities for the period between the 192nd and 193rd Board meetings

- performed follow-up for 192nd meeting – arranged for the final agenda of the 192nd meeting and the approved minutes of the 191st Board meeting to be posted on the Board’s website
- sent 2022 schedule of Board meetings for posting on the Board’s website and publication in the State newspaper
- monitored the Board’s email account – responded to some messages, forwarded others to appropriate personnel at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
- completed online Ethics and Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prevention training
- reviewed draft minutes for the Board’s 192nd meeting
- distributed four draft Incidental Take Authorizations (ITAs) and one Conservation Plan to Board members for potential review
- reviewed updated material on the Board’s website and sent minor corrections to Victoria Arterberry
- attended 240th meeting of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission via WebEx on 25 January 2022 and presented a report on behalf of the Board
- prepared for the 193rd Board meeting – prepared the notice for the 193rd meeting, developed an agenda for the 193rd meeting, had the draft agenda posted on the Board’s website and at the IDNR building, and distributed materials for the 193rd meeting to Board members