

**Final Report Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant #04-046W**  
**Illinois Nature Preserves System Traveling Educational Displays**  
**Prepared by Michael R. Jeffords, June 2004**

The Illinois Natural History Survey has successfully completed the development and construction of two portable exhibits on the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission. Each laminated exhibit, complete with an aluminum display frame and easels, details the work of the commission on the identification, protection, stewardship and defense of the Illinois Nature Preserves. The exhibits were designed by Michael Jeffords and Loren Kirkwood, INHS, with text from the commission. The exhibit includes a montage of habitat, organismic, and human-related activities associated with the commission's work. Attached is a mock-up of the 40"x60" display panel.

# Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

## *Saving Illinois' Natural Treasures*

Less than 1% of the original Illinois landscape exists today.

Created in 1963, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) acquires private and public lands in protecting high-quality natural areas and habitats of endangered and threatened species in perpetuity, through voluntary dedication or registration of such lands into the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

A NATURE PRESERVE is a tract of land that has been permanently protected by state law due to the presence of high-quality communities rare plants, animals, or other significant features. Endangered nature preserves have the strongest legal protection for land in the state and are protected forever.

The register of LAND AND WATER RESERVES is a voluntary protection program for areas supporting significant natural resources. The register provides protection and management for lands that may not qualify as nature preserves and may allow for activities not permitted on nature preserves.

Today, INPC protects over 80,000 acres of private and public land in over 540 protected areas throughout the state. Nature preserves protect over 3% endangered and threatened plants and animals. In fact, more than 25% of all Illinois endangered or threatened species occur in state-dedicated nature preserves.

The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, completed in 1978 and updated annually, designates the state's highest quality natural areas and serves as a guide for the INPC when determining the eligibility of lands for INPC programs. Identified natural areas include high-quality communities such as forests, prairies, swamps, and wetlands as well as other significant features within each of Illinois' natural divisions.

Stewardship activities maintain and resume the natural integrity and full complement of native plants and animals within our protected natural areas. Many natural areas are subject to overgrowth by nonnative plants and invasive brush. Aggressive infestations of plant species crowd out our native plants, which are important food and habitat for wildlife. The lack of riparianity sites allows brush to encroach in prairies and woodlands.

Stewardship activities conducted by agency staff, landowners, and volunteers include site surveillance to watch for problems or threats, control of exotic species, prescribed burnings, and brush control. Volunteers, working with the Volunteer Stewardship Network, provide valuable stewardship work on many protected areas. Volunteers work closely with owners or managers of sites and provide much-needed maintenance work under the stewardship guidance.

In addition, preserves and reserves are used extensively for scientific research. Every year, scientists, volunteers, and students obtain permission for management activities, rare species monitoring, and research within nature preserves and land and water reserves.

Natural areas are subject to numerous threats of destruction or degradation. Off-road vehicle use, vandalism, dumping, fire or removal, and poaching of rare plants or animals are among the more common threats. Landowners, staff of conservation agencies or groups, and volunteers are the eyes and ears that maintain protected areas and look for signs of abuse. Surveillance of protected areas often detects potential problems before they become worse. INPC works vigorously to head off potential threats and halt activities that are damaging to nature preserves and registered reserves.







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# Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

## *Saving Illinois' Natural Treasures*

Less than 1% of the original Illinois landscape exists today.



### ◆ Protection

Created in 1963, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) assists private and public landowners in protecting high-quality natural areas and habitats of endangered and threatened species in perpetuity, through voluntary dedication or registration of such lands into the Illinois Nature Preserves System.

A NATURE PRESERVE is a tract of land that has been permanently protected by state law due to the presence of high-quality communities, rare plants, animals, or other significant features. Dedicated nature preserves have the strongest legal protection for land in the state and are protected forever.

The register of LAND AND WATER RESERVES is a voluntary protection program for areas supporting significant natural heritage resources. The register provides protection and management for lands that may not qualify as nature preserves and may allow for activities not permitted on nature preserves.

Today, INPC protects over 80,000 acres of private and public land in over 540 protected areas throughout the state. Nature preserves protect over 350 endangered and threatened plants and animals. In fact, more than 25% of all Illinois endangered or threatened species are in state dedicated nature preserves.

### ◆ Identification

The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory, completed in 1978 and updated annually, designates the state's highest quality natural areas and serves as a guide for the INPC when determining the eligibility of lands for INPC programs. Identified natural areas include high-quality communities such as forests, prairies, savanna, and wetlands as well as other significant features within each of Illinois' natural divisions.

### ◆ Stewardship

Stewardship activities maintain and restore the natural integrity and full complement of native plants and animals within our protected natural areas. Many natural areas are subject to overgrowth by non-native plants and invasive brush. Aggressive introduced plants often crowd out our native plants, which are important food and habitat for wildlife. The lack of rejuvenating fire allows brush to encroach in prairies and woodlands.

### ◆ Defense

Stewardship activities conducted by agency staff, landowners, and volunteers include site surveillance to watch for problems or threats, control of exotic species, prescribed burning, and brush control. Volunteers, working with the Volunteer Stewardship Network, provide valuable stewardship work on many protected areas. Volunteers work closely with owners or managers of sites, and provide much-needed management work under the site owner's guidance.

Natural areas are subject to numerous threats of destruction or degradation. Off-road vehicle use, vandalism, dumping, timber removal, and poaching of rare plants or animals are among the more common threats. Landowners, staff of conservation agencies or groups, and volunteers are the eyes and ears that monitor protected areas and look for signs of abuse. Surveillance of protected areas often detects potential problems before they become worse. INPC works vigorously to head off potential threats and halt activities that are damaging to nature preserves and registered reserves.

In addition, preserves and reserves are used extensively for scientific research. Every year, scientists, volunteers, and students obtain permission for management activities, rare species monitoring, and research within nature preserves and land and water reserves.

