Unusual Wildlife Sightings

The Department of Natural Resources would like your help in reporting sightings of unusual wildlife—mountain lion, wolf, black bear, armadillo, elk or non-native deer—to monitor range expansions of wildlife species or their escape from captive situations. All of these species typically avoid direct contact with people. In most cases, it is best to simply alert the public and monitor these animals while they are in an area. Removal of the animal is usually not necessary or practical.

Mountain lion, wolf, elk and black bear were extirpated (eliminated) from Illinois by the early to mid 1800s due to habitat alteration and hunting pressure. Today, no wild breeding populations of these species exist in Illinois. However, depending on the species, transient animals could find their way into Illinois. Transient animals are typically single, often subadult animals born in the wild and traveling from surrounding states in search of a new home area.

If you have seen one of these species in Illinois, complete the Unusual Wildlife Sightings report on the Living with Wildlife Web site at http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/wildlife.

Be as specific as possible with your description of the animal.

If available, include good quality digital images or photographs of the animal. Tracks (preferably with a ruler next to them for scale), scat or prey remains can all be useful in helping a biologist confirm the identity of the animal.

Large mammals can travel many miles in a single day, so reporting sightings quickly is important.

If you are not sure about what type of animal you saw, use the species descriptions and photographs available on the Living with Wildlife Web site.

The **nine-banded armadillo**, a quirky, armor-plated mammal native to the New World tropics, has undergone an amazing range expansion, helped by humans intentionally and inadvertently transporting this species to new places. From 1990-2006 at least 136 armadillos were reported from 42 Illinois counties.

Elk and non-native deer (such as fallow deer or sika deer) are sometimes sighted after escaping from captivity.

Also Report!

Alligator snapping turtles are a state-endangered species and fully protected by law. Reintroductions are under way to return this turtle to strategic watersheds in Illinois. Sightings of turtles (digital photos or 35 mm color prints appreciated) should be sent to Illinois DNR, Endangered Species Program, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271 or endspec@illinois.gov.

By reporting sightings of unusual species, you help Illinois biologists develop an understanding of the status of rare, transient or escaped captive-bred animals.