Habitat protection is key to rare species protection.

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) was created in 1963 by an act of the Illinois General Assembly. Its primary mission is to assist landowners in protecting natural areas and habitats of endangered or threatened species through voluntary, permanent dedication of Illinois Nature Preserves or registration of Land and Water Reserves in perpetuity or for a term of 10 years or more.

There are 328 Illinois Nature Preserves covering more than 44,000 acres in 79 counties and 131 Land and Water Reserves covering in excess of 35,000 acres in 58 counties. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) owns and/or co-owns 111 nature preserves (22,000-plus acres) and 50 registered reserves (about 23,000 acres); the rest are owned by a variety of other entities including other public bodies, private individuals and businesses, and non-governmental organizations. The Illinois Natural Heritage Landmark is for landowners with a natural area who desire a voluntary, non-binding management agreement. There are currently 138 landmarks totaling more than 6,157 acres in 56 counties.

Because about 25 percent of all occurrences of threatened or endangered species in Illinois are located in nature preserves or registered reserves, the INPC staff work closely with DNR and the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board. Active restoration management has a much greater role today than when the commission was first created.

—**Thomas V. Lerczak**, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Additional information on Illinois nature preserves is available at www.dnr.state.il.us/INPC/index.htm.

This group of scientists and citizens decides which species need special protection.

Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board

The Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board (IESPB) was created with the passage of the Illinois Endangered Species Act in 1972. Illinois was the first state to pass an endangered species act—even before the federal act was passed. This nine-person, voluntary board, made up of professional biologists and citizen advocates, determines what animals and plants are to be included on the list of Illinois endangered and threatened species.

Currently there are 144 animals and 339 plants listed in Illinois, and nearly 80 percent of these plants and animals are found on private property. The Illinois list is reviewed for changes every five years, with the last list revision occurring in 2004. IESPB also are required to publish a biennial report of the board actions. Staff and Technical Advisory Committees work with the Department of Natural Resources on the conservation, recovery and management of endangered and threatened species. IESPB staff also provide educational materials on endangered species to the citizens of Illinois.

—**Randy Nÿboer**, Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board

For more information on the board and Illinois endangered and threatened species, visit www.dnr.state.il.us/espb/index.htm.