



Endangered Species in Illinois . . . Private Property Rights & Responsibilities



IF AN ENDANGERED PLANT OR ANIMAL IS ON MY PROPERTY . . .

~ **how would I know?** For assistance identifying whether a plant or animal is an endangered or threatened species, contact the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Heritage. Staff maintain endangered and threatened species information in their Springfield office. The northeastern and southern parts of the state are where most of these plants and animals are found, particularly in relatively undisturbed forests, prairies, streams, and wetlands. Endangered species are less likely to occur on land currently in agricultural production.

~ **will my land be condemned by the state or federal government?** No.

~ **will the state or federal government try to buy my land?** Not likely, because all land with rare species on it does not need to be in public ownership, and it would be too expensive. If your land provides habitat for endangered species, a biologist might request permission to meet you or visit your property. The biologist will respect your decision if you decline the invitation. Or, you may want to meet and learn more about possible assistance to support the unique habitat that your property provides.

~ **will there be restrictions on how I use my land?** Yes and No.

Yes: killing or injuring endangered animals is prohibited by law (because animals in the wild move freely across property boundaries they belong to everyone). Selling endangered plants that grow on your land is prohibited by law.

No: plants growing on your land are considered part of your property. Advice is available on how to manage parts of your land to provide habitat for plants and animals, but the decision to be a good steward is entirely up to you.

~ **are there any benefits?** Maybe. Many people enjoy knowing that they have rare plants or animals on their land, sharing in Illinois' history and helping to preserve the diversity of life for the future. Depending upon factors such as current land use, whether you would commit to preserving the unique resources on your property, and whether you or another party would enter into an agreement to manage the property in a certain way, there may be options to consider and a property tax reduction may be possible.

In reality stewardship does not call for more land acquisition by governments to preserve ecosystems, but for a change of attitude about everyone's backyard.

—James P. Karp, 1993, "A Private Property Duty of Stewardship: Changing Our Land Ethic," *Environmental Law*, Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark University, Vol. 23:735, p.749.

The "Give and Take" of Public Interests and Private Property:

Local, state and federal governments bear the responsibility of providing for the common good. Zoning ordinances, state laws, and federal protections provide basic assurances that neighbors won't inordinately harm each other.

The value of a parcel of privately owned land isn't solely a function of its current appraised value. It is rather the cumulative effect of the stewardship or improvements by the previous owners and many factors beyond the boundaries of the parcel, such as tax-funded water and sewer systems, sidewalks, policing that provides a safe community, aesthetic and scenic values of the landscape, quality of the water and air, and vegetation and wildlife.

Unlike many commodities, there is a finite quantity of land, each parcel of land is unique, and its existence will outlive any one owner. Once altered, it may or may not be possible to restore its features. More than 90% of land in Illinois is privately owned; landowners are encouraged to be good stewards and participate in voluntary assistance programs.

For information about endangered and threatened plants and animals in Illinois, contact personnel in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Heritage office nearest you:

R E G I O N S		I: 2612 Locust Street	Sterling, Illinois 61081	(815/625-2968)
		II+III: 2005 Round Barn Road	Champaign, Illinois 61821	(217/333-5773)
		IV: 4521 Alton Commerce Parkway	Alton, Illinois 62002	(618/462-1181)
		V: 11731 State Highway 37	Benton, Illinois 62812	(618/435-8138)
		HQ: 524 South Second Street	Springfield, Illinois 62701	(217/785-8774)

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