

# *Illinois Issues*

July/August 2000 \$3.95

*A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield*



## **Natural encounters**

*More Illinoisans*

*are coming*

*face-to-face*

*with wildlife.*

*And more*

*of them welcome*

*the experience*



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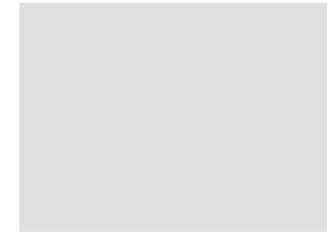
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CONVERSATION WITH THE PUBLISHER

*Ed Wojcicki*



Let's find out:  
Are civic habits declining?

by Ed Wojcicki

A Harvard University professor finds it significant that Americans are attending fewer picnics than they used to half as many in 1999 as in 1975. We're also playing far fewer card games, thereby creating fewer opportunities for informal conversations about community issues. And every year since the mid-1960s, fewer Americans believe that most people can be trusted.

So says Robert Putnam, a professor of public policy whose new book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, is destined to stimulate critical national dialogue for years to come. I hope it does, because he contends that nearly every form of social connectedness among Americans has been on the decline in the past three decades.

But is he right? Some scholars say he's asking the wrong questions and looking in the wrong places for answers. The critics say forms of civic involvement may be *changing* but not declining.

Putnam's book follows his short, controversial scholarly article, *Bowling Alone*, published in 1995. The catchy title alludes to his conclusion that more Americans are bowling, but fewer are joining bowling leagues.

About two years ago, I began asking whether Illinoisans' civic habits are the same as other Americans'. No one seems to know. So I'm delighted to announce that we intend to find out. We are

collaborating with the United Way of Illinois and the Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Springfield to measure the level and forms of Illinoisans' civic engagement. Our emphasis will be on participation in local groups and activities, formal and informal.

More important, we intend to conduct far more than a research project. We also want to find out *why* some people are engaged and others are not. We will share our findings and bring people together to discuss strategies for sustaining and enhancing civic engagement in its many forms in Illinois. It's a long-term project.

Thanks to funding from two Illinois corporations and the Woods Fund of Chicago, we are starting our survey this summer. We hope to announce initial findings at the United Way's Governor's Breakfast this fall.

Putnam asks some compelling questions about social interaction, and he asks whether it matters.

We think it does, and we think our civic engagement project will help Illinoisans learn something important about themselves. Representatives of most groups seem to be asking, 'How can we get more people involved?' While our project is not designed simply to answer that question, we believe it could provide valuable insights for leaders in the nonprofit, private and public sectors of Illinois. I'll keep you posted about our progress in the months to come. □

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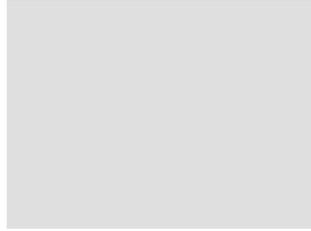
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*Peggy Boyer Long*



Our design is more inventive and inviting. And that benefits you

by Peggy Boyer Long

It's hard to miss, we think. This year's annual environment issue is a stunner.

Color helps, of course. It's the second time we've run four-color inside the magazine. (The first was last December's arts issue.) For his enthusiastic support of this endeavor, we want to thank our publisher Ed Wojcicki. Thanks also to our printer Multi-Ad of Peoria for the extra attention color requires.

The photographs help, too. For that, we need to thank the many talented nature photographers who shoot for the state departments of natural resources and transportation, as well as The Nature Conservancy and Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center in Springfield. Special thanks are due to avian experts Vern Kleen and Dennis Oehmke for granting us access to their photographic collections of Illinois birds.

All told, art director Diana Nelson managed to round up some 130 photographs to select from, the most ever for any single issue of the magazine. Even

the ones she didn't use are gorgeous, and some of us managed to find more than one opportunity to stop by her light table just to look at the "critters" as she made the final choices. Those she did choose appear throughout the following pages.

We don't want to pass up this chance to thank her, too. Over the last couple of years, Diana has begun to develop a distinctive new "look" for *Illinois Issues*. We believe it's more inventive and inviting and, as a result, more informative. The photographs, illustrations and graphics complement the words, sometimes telling their own stories.

And that benefits you, our readers.



art director Diana Nelson

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Diana has a special talent for integrating the visual and the written texts. Before she came to the University of Illinois at Springfield's Institute for Public Affairs, which includes *Illinois Issues*, she spent a decade as art director for another journalistic publication. But we had no idea how multiskilled she would turn out to be. It's no wonder she was chosen last spring by her peers as a university Employee of the Month. She's responsible for the design of our *Roster of State Government Officials* and all of the institute's books, including works by such scholars as campaign finance expert Kent Redfield. And she's our Webmaster, electronic guru and (endlessly patient) techie troubleshooter.

We'd like to clone her. But, then, we'd probably have to ask for her help.

We want to thank you, too, for your support through another year. This is our last issue for the summer. We'll be back in September. □

# Illinois Issues

A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield

July/August 2000

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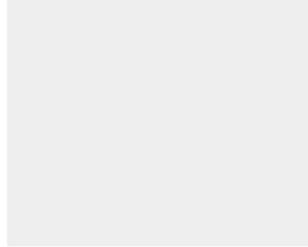
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*Credits: The owl on our cover was photographed by Dennis Oehmke. Thanks also to the departments of natural resources and transportation, The Nature Conservancy and Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center.*

**Editorial and business office:** Building K-10, University of Illinois at Springfield, P.O. Box 19243, Springfield, IL 62794-9243. Telephone: 217-206-6084. Fax: 217-206-7257. E-mail: ilissues@uis.edu. E-mail publisher: wojcicki@uis.edu. E-mail editor: boyer-long,peggy@uis.edu. **Subscription questions:** *Illinois Issues*, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 251, Mount Morris, IL 61054 or call 1-800-827-0266. Hours are 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday (except holidays). **Subscriptions:** \$39.95 one year/ \$72 two years/ \$105 three years; student rate is \$20 a year. Individual copy is \$3.95. Back issue is \$5. *Illinois Issues* is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin and is available electronically on our home page: www.uis.edu/~ilissues. *Illinois Issues* (ISSN 0738-9663) is published monthly, except during the summer when July and August are combined. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, IL, and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Illinois Issues*, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 251, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

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*Burney Simpson*



## A congressional vote could lure more Illinoisans to the dragon's lair

by Burney Simpson

In Western tradition, the dragon is the embodiment of evil. (In myth, St. George slew one to win the hand of a princess.) But in the East, the dragon is a sign of good luck. And it's this image of the dragon, long the cultural and national symbol of China, the U.S. Congress will choose if it votes to give that nation permanent normal trade status.

The designation would eliminate the need for the annual review that has been required over the past two decades. To promote the deal, China pledged to lower tariffs on imports, agreed to allow foreign-owned businesses greater access to its consumers and promised to abide by international trade rules.

So what's the potential impact on Illinois? Like the image of the dragon, it could be good or bad, depending on whom you ask.

As a major exporter of agricultural and industrial goods, this state presumably could profit from increased trade. Farming interests believe the move would help reverse years of sagging commodity prices. And telecommunications and heavy equipment manufacturers believe Chinese consumers are hungry for their products.

Schaumburg-based Motorola, for one, estimates China would become the second biggest market for cellular telephones, behind America. Thus,

***As a major exporter of agricultural and industrial goods, this state could profit from increased trade with China. But Illinois also could lose jobs to poorly paid Chinese workers.***

the company is eager to take advantage of cuts in tariffs, which drive up costs of goods shipped in and out of overseas ports.

Motorola already claims to be the largest American investor in China, having pumped \$1.5 billion into that market over the last decade. Motorola's sales to China accounted for about 10 percent of the company's \$31 billion in revenues last year. And it employs about 10,000 Chinese who are making such products as phones and pagers, says Norm Sandler, director of global strategic issues.

"We want more opportunities to sell to Chinese consumers. And we want to level the playing field with our competitors," Sandler says. Those competitors include Nokia and Ericsson, two European firms that might have a leg up if Congress does not agree to permanent trade status.

Peoria-based Caterpillar Inc. is a China booster, too. That company opened an office in Beijing more than 20 years ago and now has about 500 employees in the country. One Chinese operation, the An Tai Bao coal mine on the border of Inner Mongolia, uses 160 pieces of Cat machinery, including massive \$2 million trucks that were manufactured at the firm's Decatur factory.

Meanwhile, the promise of tariff reductions has lots of other Illinois exporters salivating over the prospect of selling to the 1.2 billion Chinese. By 2005, tariffs on agricultural commodities could be cut in half and entirely eliminated for high-tech goods, according to goTrade, a lobbying arm of the Business Roundtable. The organization found that Illinois exported goods and services worth \$1.03 billion to China in 1998. That's substantial, but minor compared to the \$36.5 billion the state exported that year.

The city of Chicago also is aggressively wooing the Chinese. The public/private Chicago Partnership for Economic Development sent a delegation of several dozen high-powered business representatives, academics and legal experts to Shanghai last month, addressing questions about e-commerce, intellectual property law and venture capital in a series of seminars.

Other proponents of the change in China's status, though, are wary about making precise projections on how much Chinese trade could grow. "I think some have been making promises they can't keep. It's up to us to increase our [exports]," says Mark Lambert, communications director for the Illinois Corn Growers Association. Still, Lambert says Illinois corn farmers could triple the current 47 million bushels they send to China annually.

***There isn't unanimous*** support in Illinois for change.

Union and human rights activists see it as a sellout to corporate influence. They argue American jobs

will be lost to poorly paid Chinese workers.

The AFL-CIO, which represents nearly one million Illinois workers, has actively fought the proposal. That organization charges American corporations would locate in China, pay subsistence wages and sell their products to the Chinese. "This is for multinational firms, not for workers," says Bill Looby, the group's spokesman. "[China doesn't] have to abide by rules of workers rights or human rights. They have forced labor camps where workers earn pennies."

The AFL-CIO is for international trade, says Looby, as long as workers aren't pitted against workers in a race to the bottom. "Trade is good if it's fair. Exports mean jobs. Our workers are among the best in the world. We just don't want [trade] where the game is rigged."

According to the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank, the United States could lose 872,091 jobs in the next decade as firms move their operations to China. Illinois, according to that report, would be among the hardest hit states, losing more than 38,000 jobs.

China's low-cost products already are flooding this country. The U.S. Department

of Commerce has reported that the United States is on track this year to a trade deficit of \$80 billion with China.

Political reaction has been mixed. Illinois' U.S. Sens. Richard Durbin, a Democrat, and Peter Fitzgerald, a Republican, each support normalized trade relations. But the 20-member

Illinois delegation to the U.S. House split evenly along party lines. Ten Democrats opposed the trade measure and 10 Republicans supported it.

Opponents in the delegation are skeptical that China would abide by its pledge to open its borders. In his agonizing decision to oppose the measure, U.S. Rep. David Phelps, a Democrat who represents workers in the Decatur Caterpillar plant, as well

NAFTA," says Phelps. "We have the lowest commodity prices since the Depression. We've lost American jobs in textiles and steel after NAFTA. I'm sure we'll lose jobs after the China vote."

U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, a Democrat whose district includes Chicago's Chinatown, also voted against the measure. "This will benefit China, the multinational corporations and some businesses. But how does that benefit get to the average citizen?"

U.S. Sen. Durbin sees both sides of the equation. He says labor and business representatives have valid points. But he chides unions for not embracing globalization.

"We have to accept the reality of world trade. This is a fact. And to think we can reverse it and go back to some day in the past and see prosperity, I don't think that is realistic," he says. Instead, Durbin believes, unions should have grabbed this opportunity to demand better training for workers who could lose their jobs. In fact, he argues, more American jobs could be lost to technological change than to cheap foreign labor.

In the near term, he supports an "antisurge" safeguard to prevent under-

priced Chinese-made products from flooding the United States and wiping out American producers.

In any event, a thumbs-up congressional vote — with President Bill Clinton's certain signature — would guarantee more Illinoisans visit the dragon's lair. It remains to be seen whether anyone will get burned. □

### GOING GLOBAL

Illinois exported \$33.2 billion in goods in 1999, according to studies for the state's commerce department. In an effort to boost that figure, Gov. George Ryan opened Illinois' eighth overseas trade bureau in Johannesburg last May. He's also talked about leading a trade mission to China, though there are no plans to open another office in that country.



BUREAU	TARGET AREA	1999 EXPORTS
Brussels	Europe	\$8.6 billion
Budapest	Eastern Europe	\$80 million
Hong Kong	Pacific Rim	\$3.6 billion
Johannesburg	Sub-Saharan Africa	\$489 million
Mexico City	Central America	\$3.2 billion
Tokyo	Japan & Korea	\$3.1 billion
Toronto	Canada	\$8.7 billion
Warsaw	Baltic States	\$384 million

#### PROPOSED OFFICES

Israel	Middle East	\$1.3 billion
Sao Paolo	South America	\$2.1 billion

Source: Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

as agricultural interests, expressed disappointment at the results of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement among the United States, Canada and Mexico. Supporters of that agreement also argued it would mean more jobs and increased exports.

"I think the benefits [of China trade] are overrated, just as they were with

# BRIEFLY

Edited by Rodd Whelpley

Photograph by William A. Britten

**Shallow waters trouble Lake Michigan boaters**

Lake Michigan is slowly dropping. So are profits associated with the Great Lakes shipping industry and prospects for a carefree pleasure boating season.

As of mid-June Lake Michigan water levels were nearly two feet below their average level for that time of year.

Don Wadleigh, operations manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Chicago, says the reduced lake levels are taking their toll on both commercial shipping and recreational boating.

Most of the commercial ships coming into southern Lake Michigan are stopping first in Toledo or Cleveland to lighten their loads before going on to Chicago. One business, Lafarge Corp., a cement distributor, estimates it has had to reduce its



This shows Lake Michigan's shoreline in Chicago at full pool. Low water levels this year make it a good time to start shoreline protection projects.

shipping capacity by 3,000 tons per load over the last two to three years.

Little boats feel the pinch, too. Waukegan, Portage and Michigan City, the three major recreational harbors near Chicago, are all being dredged to allow access to the lake, Wadleigh says. The Waukegan dredging alone will cost \$150,000. But there are navigational issues, as well. Boaters need to be wary of the danger posed by submerged objects that may be closer than usual to the surface.

Wadleigh says that while reduced

lake levels mean whiter beaches and less storm damage to lakeshore property, they also result in the loss of coastal wetlands and the destruction of some fish spawning habitats.

For the long haul, though, Toby Frevert, Great Lakes coordinator for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, doesn't seem worried. "The [water] levels will come back."

Former U.S. Sen. Paul Simon hopes limited recreational opportunities on the lake this summer will encourage people to focus more on water conservation. He believes Lake Michigan water issues are going to become increasingly controversial over the next decade, as water supplies in California and other parts of the southwestern United States are depleted. "There will be pressure to get water from areas of the U.S. that have it and send it to areas that don't." In his 1998 book *Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It*, Simon explores the potential for using desalinated seawater to satisfy human needs. But he argues the best plan right now is to decrease demand by making water a more costly commodity.

Heather Nickel

## Shoring up the shoreline

Toby Frevert, Great Lakes coordinator for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, says this is a good time to work on Chicago's shoreline project because low lake levels make the shore more accessible.

In fact, the state is planning to spend \$42 million over five years to rebuild Lake Michigan's eroding shoreline.

"The existing structures that guard the Lake Michigan shoreline in Illinois from flood and storm damage not only have expired, they have crumbled away," Gov. George Ryan said in a printed statement boosting the project.

The initiative, which has been under way for about a decade, is expected to cost \$301 million. But most of the money will come from federal sources.

To qualify for those dollars, Chicago must come up with \$128 million. The state's share is part of Ryan's Illinois First program designed to upgrade infrastructure statewide.

Heather Nickel

## REPORTS

Prejudicial punishment, legislative conflicts of interest

• African-American males make up 90 percent of the drug offenders in Illinois prisons, according to "Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs" by Human Rights Watch. Further, says the New York-based advocacy group, black men are being sent to Illinois prisons on drug convictions 57 times more often than white men.

The study looked at U.S. Department of Justice data for those going to prison for drug crimes in 37 states in 1996, the most recent year for which complete numbers were available. The report cites mandatory sentencing for drug offenses and police targeting of crack cocaine users in poor, minority neighborhoods as the reasons behind the racial discrepancy in incarceration rates.

• Curious about whether your state legislators have a personal stake in a piece of legislation? Want to know if their jobs outside Springfield are influencing their votes in the Statehouse? Would it help to find the type of investments they are making?

If you're trying to find such information about an Illinois legislator, you'll likely have a tough time. According to the Center for Public Integrity, Illinois ranked 42nd out of the 50 states in what it requires to be made public about legislators' private income, other assets and potential conflicts of interest. That may sound embarrassing, but when the center handed out report cards, 23 other states received the same failing grade.

For its report, "Our Private Legislatures: Public Service, Personal Gain," the center analyzed the 1998 financial disclosure forms of more than 5,700 legislators nationwide. The Washington, D.C.-based center is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit research organization.

Nationwide, 25 percent of state legislators sat on committees that regulated their business interests and 18 percent had connections to the businesses and organizations that lobbied them. In Illinois, 21 percent of legislators sat on committees that regulated their professional interests. Lawmakers defend the practice, saying they sit on certain committees because that's their area of expertise. Farmers work on farm proposals, for instance.

The center's report is available online at [www.publicintegrity.org/reports/50states/project.html](http://www.publicintegrity.org/reports/50states/project.html). Visitors to the site can also view Illinois legislators' financial disclosure forms.

Burney Simpson

## WEBSOURCE

Frogs R Us

Frogs and other amphibians are like the canaries in a coal mine: Their demise is a warning sign the environment is not safe.

Amphibians have a two-part life cycle. Their eggs and young live in water, and the adults live at least partially on land. So they sample two environments during their life cycles. "With this realization came a shift in concern from the disappearance of a few frogs and toads to the real possibility that the health of our planet is deteriorating," says Christopher Phillips, associate research scientist and curator of amphibians and reptiles at the Illinois Natural History Survey.

The survey has released a new field guide covering the state's 102 species of amphibians and reptiles. A Web version can be found at [www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cbd/collections/herp\\_links/TOC.html](http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cbd/collections/herp_links/TOC.html).

The guide includes full-color photographs and biological descriptions of all species living within Illinois' borders, their natural history, a statewide distribution map divided by county and an easy-to-follow key.

Beverley Scobell

## Canoeing Cook and the collars

Imagine floating down a tree-lined stream in a 26-foot canoe with only the rhythmic sounds of the paddle. A blue heron is stalking a fish in an inlet shallow. The bumblebees are feeding on sweet-smelling purple thistles, and the beaver parents are busily chomping down river willows to carry back to their wetland lodges. This could remind a person of that time when adventurers and settlers traveled primarily by way of Illinois' many rivers and streams.

That is, until a 747 out of O'Hare rumbles over. This canoe trail flows through one of the most developed, heavily populated regions of the state: Cook and its collar counties.

"Yet there are places where it is so peaceful you would swear you were nowhere near civilization," says Gary Mechanic, chairman of the board for the Des Plaines River Watershed Alliance and a member of the Illinois Paddling Council.

Mechanic and his fellow canoe enthusiasts and river conservationists are creating a system of nearly 500 miles of water trails for nonmotorized boats, canoes and kayaks. The plan was approved last September by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and developed in conjunction with Openlands Project and the Illinois Paddling Council. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources provided funding.

When completed, the system will link 174 access and portage sites along 10 waterways, including Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, the Des Plaines River, the DuPage River and the Fox River.

"The 10 major waterways of northeastern Illinois encompass the best of several worlds of paddling. They are urban and rural, crowded and empty, easy and challenging. They present a spectrum of paddling experiences found in few places in the world in such close proximity," says Mechanic.

Beverley Scobell

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## Ryan vetoes abortion restrictions

Gov. George Ryan last month rejected a politically controversial plan to prevent the state from paying for abortions for poor women whose health is endangered by pregnancy.

Ryan's action means Illinois statutes will continue to allow for state funding of abortions in cases of rape, incest and when the mother's life is at stake. In his veto message, Ryan said, "I find it impossible to separate health from life. We live in a very health-conscious society, with a special concern for women's health. Why, then, would we not be concerned about the health of a pregnant woman — rich or poor?"

Ryan campaigned on an anti-abortion platform, and the action disappointed much of his conservative constituency. Virginia Nurmi, director of public policy for the Illinois Family Institute, an anti-abortion organization, says the decision is "inconsistent with where he [Ryan] was before."

But abortion rights forces, which argued that the measure would have discriminated against poor sick women, voiced satisfaction with the decision. Steve Trombley, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood/Chicago Area and the Coalition of Illinois Abortion Rights, says, "The governor showed he is a true compassionate conservative by putting people above politics."

The state paid for nine abortions in 1999 to protect the health of the mother, according to the Department of Public Aid.

An override of the governor's veto would require the support of three-fifths of the legislature.

Heather Nickel

## GOVERNOR'S ACTION

By mid-June, Gov. George Ryan had signed 185 of the 247 proposals the General Assembly sent to his desk last spring. He vetoed two, one of which would have restricted abortion options for poor women, and he suggested changes in another. Here are some bills the governor signed that *Illinois Issues* has been watching.

✓ Driver data The court records of drivers who have had violations in more than one county will be centralized in a database maintained by Secretary of State Jesse White. This change comes in response to last year's Bourbonnais truck and train crash that killed 11. The truck driver had four traffic violations from several Illinois counties but stayed behind the wheel under court supervision. White says if his office had had all the information prior to the crash, it would have rescinded the trucker's permit. Judges, prosecutors and the police will have access to the database. The law takes effect October 1.

✓ Fuel additives Gas with more than 2 percent MTBE will be labeled at the pump. The additive cuts fuel emissions but pollutes groundwater. MTBE is a competitor to corn-based ethanol, an additive produced in the Midwest.

✓ Bad bugs Nurseries that knowingly transport the Asian long-horned beetle and other insects under quarantine could face fines ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. The beetle has devastated trees on the North Side of Chicago and has been found in that city's south suburbs. This summer, the Illinois Department of Agriculture plans to add gypsy moths to its list of insects under quarantine.

✓ Generic drugs Illinoisans will have an easier time getting generic drugs that have been approved for use by the Federal Drug Administration. Gov. Ryan vetoed a similar bill last year, but the measure he signed this time around gives the state's advisory drug council authority to review any drugs.

At presstime, the governor and lawmakers were heading into a special session to consider action against high fuel prices. Among the options was a temporary suspension of the state's share of the sales tax on gas.

Burney Simpson

## PRESS BOX

### Governor reduces the number of boards; the price could go up

Gov. Ryan signed into law a bill that abolishes several boards, commissions and panels and reconfigures others. But the new law also hikes wages of the members of key commissions. Prior to the signing, two Chicago newspapers published stories on the issue.

*Chicago Sun-Times* reporters found that Gov. Ryan has rarely named women or minorities to fill posts on state boards and commissions. More than 90 percent of those selected for paying positions have been white and 77 percent have been men. And of the 112 appointees who could expect annual compensation of \$1,000 or more, only 10 have been minorities. Reporters Dave McKinney and William Hatfield tracked more than 1,000 Ryan appointments. A spokesman for the governor said the racial makeup of the boards is a work in progress. Last year, Ryan issued an executive order calling for greater diversity in state government.

*Chicago Tribune* reporter Ryan Keith found that the plan to streamline state government by abolishing or consolidating some boards and commissions could end up costing an additional \$500,000. Keith learned that most of the positions being eliminated were nonpaying, while members of newly consolidated boards would see raises.

Burney Simpson

## UPDATES

- Courts need to give more weight to parents' wishes when deciding whether to grant grandparents rights to visit their grandkids, according to a June U.S. Supreme Court ruling on a Washington state law (see *Illinois Issues*, June, page 28).
- The first all-Internet Illinois university, approved last month by the state Board of Higher Education, will offer graduate degrees in business and computer technology beginning this fall (see *Illinois Issues*, February 1999, page 22).
- The Chicago Mercantile Exchange voted last month to move from a membership organization to a for-profit business led by a management team, a response to competition from all-electronic trading (see *Illinois Issues*, April 1999, page 24).
- Missouri became the fifth state to outlaw the suspected police practice of racial profiling when Gov. Mel Carnahan agreed last month to legislation requiring officers to record the race, age and sex of all motorists they stop and to indicate whether a search was conducted (see *Illinois Issues*, June, page 18).
- Pan American Airways will become the first air carrier to provide passenger service from the heavily subsidized MidAmerica Airport near Mascoutah (see *Illinois Issues*, March, page 28 and September 1997, page 18).
- The U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision last month that Cynthia Herdrich, formerly of Bloomington, could not sue her HMO under federal law (see *Illinois Issues*, April, page 10).

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# OWLS AND BATS AND COYOTES, TOO

*Throughout the Chicago metropolitan region, more Illinoisans are getting an up-close look at nature. And more often, they're welcoming the experience*

by Alf Siewers

Courtesy of Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center

A dusty road through an old industrial wasteland leads to the Hegewisch Little League's ball field, built on old steel mill slag in one of Illinois' worst-polluted urban areas.

But in the twilight, when the parking lot security lights come on and Little League organizer Larry Wedryk sits with kids in the bleachers, it's not the homer in the gloaming but nature they see.

"They come out of what we call the swamp, the bushes and weeds and underbrush, come flying out of nowhere and there they are, all this wildlife," says Wedryk. Raccoons, foxes, rabbits, herons, sandpipers, opossums, red-tailed hawks. They have all paraded through, above and around the Chicago field and parking lot that at night becomes a "wild kingdom" for Wedryk and his buddies. And don't forget the big snapping turtle behind the left field bleachers.

This adaptation of bird and beast in the Lake Calumet region on the city's southeast side, an area sometimes written off as irreparably damaged by the industrial revolution of the last two centuries, testifies to an unfolding story — two, really: nature's continuing resourcefulness, and the evolution of relations between wildlife and people.

This is not a local story only. Throughout the Chicago metropolitan region, more Illinoisans are getting an up-close look at nature. And more often, they welcome the experience — even when it comes to wildlife's less cuddly representatives. Soccer moms are learning to build houses for once-maligned bats.



Baby raccoon

Neighbors are going to bat for coyotes. And "citizen scientists" have armed themselves with clipboards and are tracking critters large and small, furry and slimy, through wood and field, vacant lot and back alley.

**But Hegewisch is** as good a place as any to start this tale.

The economic shifts of the past couple of decades swept industry and people out of the region. And nature has been moving back in. Even the lake sturgeon has been spotted once again trying to come up the formerly heavily polluted Calumet River to spawn. At the same time, a sea change

in environmental perspective is under-way in some quarters. The melancholy late-20th century search for the mythical native Lake Calumet thismia plant has been tempered by a recognition that surviving Chicago-area ecosystems, though damaged and abused, are powerfully resilient.

Rising public interest in still-viable flora and fauna has encouraged the resurgence of remnant habitats. As have government-funded efforts to preserve, even restore, abandoned spaces. Just last month, Gov. George Ryan and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley unveiled a joint public-private plan aimed at revitalizing a 6,000-acre tract in the Lake Calumet area. The state will contribute \$20 million to the effort, the city \$14 million. The project calls for another \$6 million from the federal government and \$28 million from corporations and foundations. The idea is to blend new commerce into the natural environment, restore wetlands and establish a center that will highlight the region's industrial past and natural history.

Situated between North Woods, Great Lakes and prairie belt, under a major global butterfly and bird flyway, built on an old complex of marshes that (together with the Kankakee River valley) once rivaled the Everglades in size, this is one urban region with a lot of natural history. Neighboring Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, for example, recently was ranked almost as rich in species as the Grand Canyon and Great Smoky Mountains national parks, though only a fraction of their size.



Ox-eye daisies, I-290 at Thorndale Avenue exit

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



Magnolia warbler

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



Mourning dove

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Brown thrasher*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Dickcissel*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Hooded warbler*

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation



*I-74 west of Morton in Tazewell County*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Carolina wren*

And ironically, though it has meant habitat destruction on a large scale, the region's very urbanness has served to protect some species on a small scale. While relatively homogeneous farming throughout most of the state has reduced flora and fauna drastically, Chicago-area preserves, parks, suburbs and industrial wastelands have become dwindling havens of biodiversity. And while more delicate species continue to lose ground to urban sprawl, others seem to thrive. Deer, beavers, coyotes and Canada geese, for example, were once thought virtual goners in the area, but are now increasing in city and suburban environments where they've accommodated to human-related food sources. In some cases, their populations now exceed those of presettlement times.

There's been accommodation by human inhabitants, too. "It seems there are more and more situations coming up where people are trying to become involved with more animals that are out of the norm of bunnies and cardinals," says Ders Anderson, greenways coordinator for the Openlands Project of Illinois and an organizer of the Friends of the Fox River group. Those bat houses, for example, are designed to draw flying mammals for insect control. And there are other more nebulous reasons to attract, or not repel, nature. When a coyote ate a poodle in suburban Inverness, some residents opposed the call to trap the coyotes on village lands for the simple reason that they liked hearing them howl.

For any number of reasons, practical and otherwise, over the past decade thousands of volunteers have accepted the call of wildlife habitat projects in northeastern Illinois. Regional coalitions in developed areas along the urban crescent that sweeps north from Lake Calumet to McHenry County have organized community leaders around wildlife issues.

"It used to be that people thought of wildlife as either pests or pets, and there is much more of a sense now that nature can 'be' in the metropolitan area, that they are not

pests and they are also not pets, that they are really wild," says Stephen Packard of the National Audubon Society's Chicago region office and a key mover in the Chicago Wilderness habitat coalition.

**Still, all is not peaceable** in the urban wildlife kingdom.

With more people living closer to other mammals pressed for space, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' tally of animal nuisance complaints from people has gone "up, up and away," doubling in the past 10 years, according to state wildlife biologist Bob Bluett. In 1999, the department received reports of 67,057 complaints (most of which involved extermination efforts by permit-holding individuals and agencies), 86 percent in the nine counties of the greater Chicago region, most of those involving raccoons, squirrels, skunks and opossums. Further, Chicago-area forest preserve districts and municipalities have had to resort to sharpshooters to take down hundreds of surplus deer each year, a highly controversial policy, but one that naturalists generally advocate on grounds that the lack of natural predators for the resurgent species can lead to overpopulation and threaten native ecosystems through overgrazing.

Although deer and coyote controversies in particular tend to polarize neighbors who find wildlife in the backyard — pitting sentiment against fear — Bluett, Anderson and others dealing regularly with human reactions to wildlife say they also are witnessing the emergence of a more mature attitude toward wild animals among a growing portion of the public. This emerging ethic is shaped in part by greater emphasis on ecological education in schools and ubiquitous TV nature programs and by the increasing number of volunteer restoration and monitoring projects that touch suburban and city neighborhoods. There is, they say, a better understanding of ecosystems as wholes in which the balanced health of wildlife populations is part of the potential riches of the region.



For more information

*Here's how to get details about programs for wildlife and wildlife habitats in urbanized areas of Illinois:*

**UrbanWatch.** This Illinois Department of Natural Resources project trains volunteers in collecting data that can be used by land managers and scientists to nurture healthier urban ecosystems for wildlife. [www.fmnh.org/urbanwatch](http://www.fmnh.org/urbanwatch), or (888) 428-0362.

**The Habitat Project of the National Audubon Society.** This privately funded program can provide information on frog, bird and butterfly monitoring projects that use volunteers in metropolitan areas. (847) 965-1150 ext. 12; [rwhite@audubon.org](mailto:rwhite@audubon.org); or Habitat Project c/o National Audubon Society, 5225 Old Orchard Rd., Suite 37, Skokie 60077.

**Chicago Wilderness Magazine.** This is a quarterly clearinghouse of information on wildlife and habitat activities and issues in northeastern Illinois. A one-year subscription costs \$14. P.O. Box 5054, Skokie 60076. [www.chicagowildernessmag.org](http://www.chicagowildernessmag.org). See [www.chicagowilderness.org](http://www.chicagowilderness.org) for information on the Chicago Wilderness project as a whole.

**Protecting Nature in Your Community.** This is a new Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission guidebook designed to help local officials protect regional biodiversity. \$15 plus \$6 shipping and handling. (312) 454-0400, or NIPC, 222 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1800, Chicago 60606.

**There are actual riches** to be made, too. Realtors, and politicians, have taken note. That trend is reflected nowhere better than in Chicago's wildlife and ecosystem policies. Under Mayor Daley's administration, nature — and, of course, good schools — is now seen as the ticket for keeping the middle class in the city. The postwar suburban boom proved people like to live near nature, or at least their definition of it, and in the postindustrial era, the city sees an opportunity to best the suburbs at their own game.

"It's a new kind of ecotourism, really," explains Chicago Environmental Commissioner Bill Abolt, former director of the suburban Northwest Municipal Conference. Among other projects, the city is developing a new network of neighborhood nature centers and working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore urban riverbanks.

City Hall's new sense that wildlife are members of a metropolitan ecological polity is reflected in two recent acts: the creation of a mayoral wildlife advisory committee, and Chicago's ratification this year of the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, making the city only the second one nationwide (after New Orleans) to do so. Chicago and the federal agency each pledged \$100,000 to improve urban bird habitats; the agreement was signed along the lakefront, where in recent years skyscrapers have become nesting grounds for peregrine falcons (elected the official city bird). During the ceremony, Jamie Rappaport Clark, director of the federal wildlife service, hailed Chicago as "the O'Hare of migratory birds."

More symbolic, perhaps, of the political importance of urban wildlife, the city also is encouraging downtown building owners to dim Chicago's skyline during

migratory seasons to avoid luring birds into lethal window crashes.

And that brings us back to Lake Calumet. An important flyway stop, the region is a repository of state endangered or threatened avian species. Formerly, only a few bird enthusiasts and community activists

*Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke*



*Barred owl*

*Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke*



*Great horned owl*

such as University of Illinois at Chicago geographer emeritus Jim Landing knew about it. Today, a sophisticated and accelerating coalition of agencies and community groups is taking action to help clean and preserve the wetlands that provide wildlife for nocturnal human audiences in the Hegewisch Little League bleachers.

With property available and increasing interest in natural habitats and wildlife, Anderson says effective community leadership is working with city, county and state leaders on a number of initiatives. The Paxton landfill has been cleaned up, a comprehensive study of other sites in need of preservation is moving forward, the Burnham greenway trail from Chicago to the Lansing-Indiana border is falling into place, Illinois-Indiana meetings are revving up on the future of restoring Wolf Lake, a coalition is working to found a national heritage corridor for the Calumet River system (like the one along the Illinois & Michigan Canal), and the Department of Natural Resources has designated the area one of its key "eco-partnerships" of local groups and agencies.

Much work, especially toxic cleanup, remains to be done, and the future of delicate habitats, including a heron rookery, remains uncertain.

But Anderson argues that all of this activity in the Calumet region would have been unheard of 10 years ago.

Such efforts are under way elsewhere, too. Through the state natural resources department's EcoWatch programs, volunteers, community (often schools) and environmental groups are monitoring key species in rivers, forests, wetlands and prairies so that scientists and land managers can track the health of local ecosystems. About 2,000 volunteers and 13 AmeriCorps field trainers are involved statewide. In recent

years, the lion's share of these volunteer efforts (about a quarter to a third) have occurred in heavily developed northeastern Illinois.

A new component of the project, UrbanWatch, run by the Field Museum in the Chicago area, is the first program in the nation specifically designed to monitor city wildlife. It systematically melds volunteers with scientifically designed methods of data collection.

It also will use a CD-rom and Web site to train what is expected to become a much larger pool of urban wildlife and plant monitors.

About 60 "citizen scientists" were trained for the new program in the past year; a second class of some 100 more completed training recently. They are assigned such sites as golf courses, cemeteries, vacant lots, parks and preserves, where they periodically walk a route, noting the presence or absence of certain species of animals and plants.

Much of the wildlife monitored through this program consists of smaller organisms, including snails, slugs, butterflies and beetles, important indicators of habitat health.

Nor is this the only effort involving volunteers in habitat projects that stress the interrelation of humans and biodiverse wildlife in urban areas. Since the late 1980s, thousands of volunteers in northeastern Illinois have been involved in prairie and savannah ecosystem restoration spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy, a private nonprofit group. A key sign of the success of that effort has been the return of butterflies and Cooper's hawks in area preserves.

In addition, the Chicago Wilderness eco-partnership in northeastern Illinois, which now involves 107 agencies and organizations, and publishes a magazine with 7,000

subscribers, is spotlighting and marketing formerly diverse and isolated efforts to renew wildlife habitats. A regional biodiversity recovery plan and a new Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission book, *Protecting Nature in Your Community*, are among the early

*Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke*



*Killdeer*

*Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke*



*Killdeer nest*

fruits.

One of the region's latest biodiversity efforts is the Audubon Society's Habitat Project. Using private and public funds, the project launched a volunteer frog monitoring program, in coordination with similar existing bird and butterfly monitoring networks in the Chicago area. The goal is to develop data that scientists and land managers can use to nourish better bird-related ecosystems in built-up areas.

Marcy Andersen, a hospital worker in St. Charles, signed up with her daughter to listen to frogs for the Audubon program. It's become part

of their family routine. "We get to sites a half hour after dark — moist warm weather conditions are best — and go give it a listen. And then we record what the sky color is, the wind speed, general weather conditions, temperature," Andersen recounts.

"Then we sit quietly and listen for a while, and try to discern all the different frogs that we can, and keep them separate from the birds and ducks and cars."

Trained through the program to identify specific frog calls, Andersen takes with her into the night in her neighborhood's suburban "wilds" a cell phone, thermometer, journal, flashlight, and a chart of frog sounds and names. She had no previous experience in such volunteer or scientific work, but since she joined the program, she has identified one frog species that was thought to have been extinct in Kane County.

Illinois, which experienced some of the quickest human changes to ecosystems of any region in world history during the 19th and early 20th centuries, also became an important early nursery for the new science of ecology.

Jens Jensen, the Danish-born landscape architect whose influence shaped many of Chicago's parks, as well as the region's forest preserves and the Indiana Dunes park-

land, saw healthy wildlife ecosystems as also healthy human ecosystems.

In a 1920s plan, he envisioned preserving and renewing a patchwork of farmland and natural habitats on Chicago's West Side that would build a communitarian ethic among the residents. "Some day," he wrote prophetically, "the West Side will feel betrayed, and will feel the loss of park and playground, which it needs for a healthful development of hundreds of thousands of workers who have found their homes there."

This century's plans for the Calumet region are every bit as ambitious. The



### Editor's choice

***A Birder's Guide to the Chicago Region***  
by Lynne Carpenter and Joel Greenberg  
Introduction by Kenn Kaufman  
Northern Illinois University Press, 1999

Want to know where and when to spot a common loon or a snowy owl? This guide details the best sites for getting a look at the full range of resident and transient bird species in the Chicago region, and in nearby counties in Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana.

area's wetlands were once an "icebox" for native peoples, an integral part of their way of life, Potawatomi Indian historian Jerry Lewis of Crete notes. Today, their remnant wildlife offers some hope for a Grail-like renewal of an industrial wasteland, a better balance between humans and nature.

Still, Thomas Anton, a Winnetka-based environmental consultant, recognizes that any children of his will likely not be able to observe in the wilds of the Chicago area, as he did in high school, such species as the Massasauga rattlesnake, teetering on

the edge of extinction in Illinois.

On the one hand, Anton says, "in Cook County's forest preserves, we've lost only five of the presettlement reptile and amphibian species. To still have 33 of them left, let alone the adaptable mammals, in such an urbanized county, I think that's cause for hope. But if I get married some day and want to show my son a Massasauga, I will never be sure I would be able to do that. The generation we're handing nature off to is going to be vastly more enlightened, but will remember less to enjoy."

The loss will be greater than a few species. J.R.R. Tolkien wrote that the wildness of fairy tales is more important to adults than to children because it reminds us of a universe larger than ourselves. Likewise, urban encounters with wildlife offer that possibility to Illinoisans. Nature connects us to our past, as well as our future. □

*Alf Siewers studies and writes about landscape and culture at the University of Illinois in the wilds of Champaign-Urbana.*

## CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

*Ordinary people doing extraordinary work. For free*

by Beverley Scobell

Courtesy of the Illinois EcoWatch Network

On a warm and sunny day last May, a team of volunteers met in a parking lot next to a bridge over Case Creek, a tributary of the Rock River near the Quad Cities airport. Mike, Mitch and Jim pulled on chest-high wading boots, checked their equipment and headed for the creek bottom, which was already overgrown with tall plants and vines, some of those poison ivy.

Mike and Mitch have been wading through this bottom for five years — it's Jim's first year — to survey the stream's health. They've given up four hours of one weekend in each of those years to gather data for RiverWatch, a Department of Natural Resources program that uses their surveys and information gathered by other volun-



*These RiverWatch volunteers are recording the stream depth, one of the three measurements taken to determine how much water is flowing in Geneseo Creek in Henry County.*

teer teams to help professional scientists keep tabs on the status of the state's environment.

On last spring's outing, this trio of citizen scientists followed a RiverWatch instruction manual to the letter. After measuring water and air temperature, creek depth and flow,

water appearance and odor, the team used nets and buckets provided by RiverWatch to scoop samples of rocks and other material from the creek's bottom and bank. Finding a level place on a sandbar, they spread their trays, tweezers and magnifying glasses to get ready to "count critters," or macroinvertebrates to biologists. When the sample was thoroughly gleaned of all insect larvae (some barely

visible to the naked eye) and other small creatures that live in streams, they transferred the collection to a jar of alcohol, which was later turned over to their RiverWatch field office.

"This is the fewest number and least diversity we've seen coming out of this creek," says Mike Diamond, an



*Most of Illinois' forests look like this patchwork of trees. This fragmented forest would not be large enough for ForestWatch volunteers to monitor. It takes an area 150 meters by 150 meters to collect usable data.*

anthropologist who has worked in most of the nation's premier natural history museums and now teaches at the local college.

Mitch White, a civil and environmental engineer who runs his own hydroelectric plant and works as an environmental consultant, agrees. "It's been a steady decline each year," he adds.

But Jim King, a benthic ecologist (someone who studies macroinvertebrates on the bottoms of rivers, lakes and oceans) was surprised to find so few animals in the sample. "Yet there is still life to be found," he says, noting though that siltation inhibits oxygen.

This degradation of stream life is just one piece of the environmental puzzle citizen scientists provide for professional scientists. And for the first time in this or any state's history, an assessment of Illinois' environmental health will include volunteer monitoring data, weighted equally with that of the natural resources department's scientists. Their report is due out this summer.

The Quad Cities team's sample was

added to hundreds of others collected from rivers and streams statewide and then entered into a database maintained by EcoWatch, the state organization that also coordinates ForestWatch, PrairieWatch, WetlandWatch and UrbanWatch.

Through those programs, more than 2,000 adults and 16,000 high school science students have helped monitor the state's environmental health since RiverWatch was launched in 1994, followed by ForestWatch in 1996 and a pilot WetlandWatch last year. PrairieWatch and UrbanWatch, a program aimed at monitoring plants and animals that live in city environments, are gearing up. SoilWatch, which will look at the health of

agricultural soils, then other ecosystem soils, is still in the planning stages.

All of these programs, though, will get off the ground more slowly than expected because the General Assembly turned down Gov. George Ryan's request for permanent funding for EcoWatch. Ryan asked for \$500,000 for the program in the natural resources department's 2001 budget beginning this month.

PrairieWatch, which will survey native grassland plants and animals, was to have started statewide this fall, but will be restricted to the northern region for now. WetlandWatch will be curtailed even more, says Dana Curtiss, coordinator for the EcoWatch network.

**Though the RiverWatch** trio might be called the Dream Team of Citizen Scientists, Mitch, Mike and Jim, like all the program's volunteers, spent six to eight hours in classroom preparation learning to identify their specific "indicator" species. (The decline or loss of these more fragile plants and animals is an early warning



For more information

Go to the EcoWatch Web site at [dnr.state.il.us/orep/inrin/ecowatch](http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/inrin/ecowatch)

that an ecosystem is under threat.) They then spent a full day of field study guided by one of the 13 regional EcoWatch trainers.

For all volunteers, follow-up practice and review sessions are offered periodically. Trainers are available to answer questions and provide technical support. Further, the department provides equipment and a step-by-step procedure outlined in a monitoring manual. Citizen scientists also receive on-site help during their first monitoring season, and can attend supervised open-lab sessions to help them identify specimens and fill out data sheets.

Program requirements differ. ForestWatch volunteers, for instance, monitor their sites twice a year, a spring survey of ground cover and a fall survey of trees, shrubs and vines. During spring monitoring, those volunteers are asked to estimate how much of the ground is covered by plants and, using equipment provided by ForestWatch, measure tree canopy height as well as observe downed woody debris and signs of human use or disturbance. In the fall, they identify and measure the diameter of trees, survey the shrub layer and monitor the density of the tree canopy foliage. They are to take note of the presence of gypsy moths and dogwood anthracnose, a fungal disease that kills dogwood trees. And they are asked to look for such regional exotic species as the Asian long-horned beetle.

The need for volunteer help in monitoring the state's environment was spotlighted by professional scientists who completed the first comprehensive assessment of Illinois'

environment in 1992. In a 1994 report, they warned that the condition of the state's natural ecosystems is rapidly declining. They concluded the decline is due to fragmentation of habitats, a result of farming and other development, pollution and the spread of exotic species that crowd out native plants and animals.

They also concluded that, despite amassing one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of environmental data anywhere in the world, there were still too many gaps in knowledge to accurately assess trends in the health of the state's ecosystem. For example, the exact impact of barge traffic on river ecosystems is not well understood. Nor is the amount of fertilizers and pesticides applied to croplands or to urban areas known.

In short, researchers would need an "army of biologists" to survey all the areas that should be monitored.

So they got that army by enlisting the help of such volunteers as Mitch, Mike and Jim. As a result, they've been able to cover more ground. The state's biologists conduct detailed biodiversity surveys on 30 randomly selected sites in each of the four ecosystem types (forest, stream, grassland and wetland), which results in 150 sites being monitored for each habitat once every five years. Citizen scientists, on the other hand, collect data from nearly 500 sites each year.

And the data is solid. In the first year of a three-year comparative analysis, Ed DeWalt, an aquatic entomologist, found that data collected by RiverWatch volunteers was close to that of natural resources department scientists. "In many cases

the data was interchangeable," says Curtiss of EcoWatch.

Still, the state verifies that data on three levels. Citizen scientist data sheets are reviewed for completeness and accuracy by group leaders and again by EcoWatch trainers. Next, all data are entered through an online system that includes automated quality control checks. Finally, about one-third of all citizen scientists are randomly selected to submit macroinvertebrate specimens (what they put in the jars of alcohol at the stream site) or leaf collections for accuracy checks by staff scientists.

**As an extra check,** EcoWatch trainers conduct "shadow studies." They go to a site that has been monitored by volunteers and replicate the data collection using the same procedures. State scientists then compare their data to that collected by the volunteers. To date, the results are encouraging. Accuracy rates of citizen scientist data exceed 80 percent. One-half of RiverWatch data exceeds 90 percent. Other comparison studies have confirmed high levels of precision and correlation between citizen scientist and EcoWatch scientist data.

That's surprising, given that citizen scientists begin the program with such different levels of expertise. "Our volunteers range from people trained in the natural sciences to those who haven't had a science course since high school. They are teachers, business owners, homemakers, hourly workers and retirees," says Curtiss.

What all the volunteers have in common, she says, is an interest in the outdoors, a hunger for information and a willingness to get involved in local issues that affect their quality of life.

Whatever their background, citizen scientists bring qualities to the program that allow the state's professional scientists to trust the data they collect. "Illinois is leading the nation with its citizen scientist program," says Curtiss. "This is not on the fringe. This is mainstream biological data collection." □

## NO ROOMS, NO INNS

*Southern Illinois could lure visitors to lush forests, rolling hills and stunning waterfalls. But that region is unlikely to become a tourist mecca anytime soon. There are too few places to spend the night*

by Heather Nickel

The drive down Route 127 from Murphysboro to Anna in deep southern Illinois is only about 25 miles long, but stopping to see some of the sights along the way could easily stretch the trip into several hours.

The state highway winds up and down gently rolling hills dotted with old-fashioned barns and country houses. As travelers descend into

the Shawnee National Forest, lush pastures give way to thousands of acres of towering native oak hardwoods interspersed with non-native pines. Signs direct drivers off the beaten path to such natural wonders as Little Grand Canyon, with its cliffs, waterfalls and breathtaking views of the Big Muddy River bottoms.

Farther down is one of southern

Illinois' most photographed landmarks, the quaint Pomona General Store. A right turn on a narrow gravel road leads to the 90-foot-long Pomona Natural Bridge. A left turn leads to the brand new Von Jakob Vineyard, where guests sip homemade wines while marveling at the beauty of the surrounding Shawnee.

Unless travelers want to sleep under the stars, though, what they're likely

Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy, Illinois Chapter ©Kim Harris



*Cypress and tupelo swamp in the Cache River Wetlands in far southern Illinois*



### Editor's choice

#### ***The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants***

by Charles S. Elton

Forward by Daniel Simberloff

The University of Chicago Press, 1958 and 2000

Want to know the history of the gypsy moth? This study on the worldwide distribution of non-native species by the "founder of ecology" provides a good resource for understanding the damage such invaders can cause.



Wood duck



Mallard



## Editor's choice

### ***Southern Illinois Birds:***

#### ***An Annotated List and Site Guide***

W. Douglas Robinson  
Southern Illinois University Press  
1996

Want to know what species of birds John James Audubon found when he traveled through southern Illinois in the early 19th century? And which ones are no longer around? Or how the fragmentation of the region's forests in the late 20th century is affecting the song-bird population?

Southern Illinois' wooded tracts, hills and floodplains still provide a rich habitat for birds of all sorts. This guide details area species and identifies the best birding sites in the state's bottom 17 counties.

not to find south of the St. Louis Metro East area is a place to spend the night.

Here's a southern Illinois Catch-22: Fewer accommodations mean tourists are less willing to tarry in that part of the state. And fewer overnight room rentals means less money to promote southern Illinois to visitors. That's because the primary funding for such marketing comes from taxes on hotels and motels, which, again, southern Illinois is short on.

Certainly, this area draws those who are ready to rough it. "We have as many campsites as hotel rooms,"

notes Debbie Moore, director of the Carbondale Convention and Tourism Bureau. That ratio reflects the wide range of outdoor attractions, but it fails to fully exploit this impoverished region's economic potential. By one official's estimate, tourism accounts for about a fifth of the region's economy, but without the marketing revenue to attract a broader cross-section of overnight tourists, that base is unlikely to grow.

And for southern Illinois, tourism is more than a matter of pride: It may be a necessity. The counties from Jackson on the western edge of the region and Gallatin on the east down to Alexander at the very tip of the state are home to some of the poorest communities in Illinois. The coal mines that were once the economic lifeblood of southern Illinois have closed or slowed production over the last decade because the high sulfur content of that coal violates federal clean air standards.

Increasingly, the region depends on Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, small businesses and such state facilities as prisons to provide desperately needed jobs. But that hasn't been enough. The April unemployment rate for Illinois' 11 southernmost counties was 5.7 percent, compared to 4 percent statewide. In Pope and Pulaski counties, 8.4 percent of the labor force was jobless in April.

Some see the expansion of the fledgling tourism industry as the region's best hope for economic improvement. And with a little development, the area could become a tourist mecca on a par with nearby hotspots Branson, Mo., and

Gatlinburg, Tenn. But — and here's that catch — even if southern Illinois invested in such Branson- and Gatlinburg-like attractions as theme parks and country music stages, it would lack the lodging needed to accommodate new visitors. And without the rooms, there's little money to finance any projects that might boost tourism.

The eight most populous of the state's southernmost counties have just 2,000 rooms spread among hotels, motels, bed and breakfast establishments and state park cabins. Cindy Benefield, bureau director for six of the southernmost counties, says no more than two communities in her region have the facilities to accommodate a motor coach tour, which requires a minimum of 22 rooms per night.

Moore, of the Carbondale visitor's bureau, notes that her region draws thousands of visitors during SIUC's graduation and parents' weekends. But she has to direct many of those visitors to neighboring communities to find a place to spend the night.

Though there are some bed and breakfast establishments in southern Illinois, they aren't able to meet the demand. Frances Walker owns Sassafras Ridge Bed and Breakfast in Carbondale. She says she had to turn away more than twice as many customers as she could accommodate last Memorial Day weekend.

Walker, who is also the marketing director for the Illinois Bed and Breakfast Association, notes there are fewer than 1,000 rooms in Jackson County. But, she suggests, some of Carbondale's local ordinances may discourage prospective

hostelers. Bed and breakfast operations aren't allowed to sell or serve alcohol. And it's difficult to put historic homes into compliance with the city's handicapped accessibility requirements.

***There's more at stake*** than the lost room rental fees. "Little lodging creates little taxes," Benefield says.

Local tourism bureaus are funded through a 5 percent state hotel/motel tax. Those dollars are funneled through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs. County or municipal governments have the authority to levy another 5 percent on room rentals. Still, that doesn't add up to much. "We survive on a little more than \$100,000 per year," says Benefield, whose agency serves some of the poorest areas of Illinois.

She believes marketing efforts would be helped if the structure of the hotel/motel tax was changed so that all of the locally collected money would be directed to tourism bureaus. Instead, she says, several counties in her area keep a portion of the local tax.

The city of Metropolis in Massac County, for one, collected about \$90,000 from the municipal hotel/motel tax in the 1999 fiscal year. The visitor and convention bureau received about \$25,000 and the city kept the rest for such events as the annual Superman Celebration and the German Fest, according to Metropolis city bookkeeper Deborah Beal.

There are geographical obstacles to tourism development, as well. Moore notes that building lodging is difficult in an area that encompasses so much

public land. The Shawnee alone accounts for 12.6 percent of the total square miles in the southernmost 11 counties.

Robert Winchester, deputy chief of staff in southern Illinois for Gov. George Ryan, has suggested developing a public-private partnership to build rustic overnight lodging in the Shawnee. But he's not optimistic on that score, what with the already-heated disputes over land use in the federal forest.

Geographic pride can also conflict with a desire to welcome outsiders. Some locals, Moore says, don't want to expand tourism for fear of damaging the area's beauty. "This is ours," they say. "We love it and we don't want anyone coming in and messing it up." For that reason, Moore aims to promote low-impact activities, perhaps hiking from Pomona to Hickory Ridge along a river-to-river trail, or viewing wild turkeys and Cooper's hawks in Giant City State Park.

Southern Illinois' value as a tourist attraction is that it is relatively pristine, says Glenn Poshard, a former U.S. representative and Democratic gubernatorial candidate who is now vice chancellor for administration at SIUC. "For years, some people have said we need to build a theme park. But I don't think our people want that."

Though it lacks such surefire draws as theme parks, tourism commands a relatively large share of the southern Illinois economy. Winchester estimates that tourism may account for as much as 20 percent of the southern Illinois economy and believes this figure could be boosted

with proper marketing. He suggests that a regional approach is the future for tourism in the southern 35 counties. "I am a personal supporter of a group of counties promoting each other, not just themselves."

This strategy is already taking shape. Walker says, for example, her bed and breakfast operation in Jackson County has been included in a Union County promotional effort. And Moore says she collaborates with Benefield and other local tourism directors on ways to bring in more visitors.

Winchester hopes to extend that kind of cooperation to neighboring states. He's working with politicians on the Mississippi Delta Initiative, an idea spurred by President Bill Clinton when he was governor of Arkansas. The plan would grant federal funds to a seven-state area to improve tourism, recreational opportunities and mass transit. Sixteen southern Illinois counties would be included in the program.

U.S. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald, an Illinois Republican, is sponsoring the proposal in his chamber, and U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, also an Illinois Republican, is backing the measure, which has gained bipartisan support. Ultimately, Winchester says, he would like to see the Mississippi Delta states coordinate special events to entice travelers to vacation in several states.

Despite the difficulties in developing tourism, southern Illinois has much to offer. "It is a hidden treasure for the state of Illinois," Winchester argues. Still, it would be wise to pack a sleeping bag on that trip down Route 127. □

## INVISIBLE ENEMY

*The latest focus in the nation's campaign for clean water is on the sources of pollution that cannot be easily seen. In Illinois and other farm states, that's likely to put the spotlight on agriculture*

by Burney Simpson

*Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation*



Vermilion River

Water gets dirty. We can see that. We bathe in it, wash our clothes in it, pour our wastes into it. But what used to be obvious has now become an invisible danger.

Looked at one way, this is good news. Nearly 30 years after the passage of federal clean water standards put the onus on factories to clean the nation's waterways, we are no longer faced with the spectre of burning rivers.

But our expectations are higher. A recent federal study found that 20,000 bodies of water in the United States remain polluted, though overt sources of contamination have been reduced considerably. So environ-

mental officials throughout the country are gearing up to monitor limits on the amount of "invisible" pollutants that enter our streams and lakes.

And this time, the onus for dirty water is likely to fall largely on farmers.

The contaminants to be monitored more closely are technically known as "nonpoint source" pollution. The counterpart, "point source" pollution, got its name because observers can literally point to a source, such as an industrial pipe dumping waste into a river. The nonpoint source, or unseen pollution, occurs through less obvious means, such as farm field runoff carried by precipitation to rivers, lakes and groundwater.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has hired two consultants to research and analyze six of this state's watersheds in an effort to determine the level of these so-called invisible discharges and the safety of the state's water supply. Watersheds are those areas where water, including storm runoff, drains into a river or lake. Over the next 15 years, the agency plans to examine 338 of them. During that time, it will devise plans to reduce pollution in all of those watersheds.

In Illinois' urban areas, the culprits behind invisible source contaminants include parking lots with oil, gas and asphalt tainted runoff. Elsewhere, contaminants include runoff from

fertilizers, pesticides and livestock wastes. Soil erosion also contributes to the problem. Thus, agriculture will face new pressures under the scrutiny of these continuing studies. If research finds that pollution in a watershed comes from existing and newly regulated sources, polluters who have invested time and money in meeting previous standards could be hard-pressed to take additional, and costly, steps. Instead, says Albert Ettinger, water issues coordinator for the Sierra Club, those interests will join environmentalists to lean on the agricultural industry to reduce its pollution.

A common chemical in fertilizer is nitrogen, which encourages plant growth. When nitrogen and its derivatives — nitrates and nitrites — drain into a body of water, the plants consume all of the oxygen, killing fish and other aquatic life. Further, when it enters drinking water, it poses a danger to infants because it blocks oxygen from being circulated through the body, causing "blue baby," a potentially life-threatening condition. Though the syndrome is rare in Illinois, it is monitored by water regulators. The source of pollution may be invisible, but nitrate and phosphate runoff can be visible in the water in the form of excessive algae, plant growth that can turn the water dark green.

The Illinois Farm Bureau argues there's a voluntary approach in place that is already working to cut agricultural pollution, particularly in the case of erosion. "We've reduced soil erosion by 30 percent," says Nancy Erickson, the bureau's director of natural and environmental resources. "We're concerned there will be a one-size-fits-all mandatory approach. That's not going to work for agriculture. The weather, for example, doesn't cooperate."

Nonetheless, according to state environmental officials, voluntary efforts have not eliminated the problem. And environmentalists are pushing to enhance regulations.

Even some farmers agree. "A voluntary system for the average farmer won't be able to cut it," says Jane Johnson, a family farmer in

Gilson since 1947. "If you don't have to do it, some won't even do it for their own safety."

Meanwhile, the state hired Harza Engineering Co. of Chicago and CH2MHILL of St. Louis to analyze pollutants and their sources on the initial six watersheds. Harza will study the Kaskaskia River in Clinton and Marion counties, the Cache River in Union County, the Big Muddy River in Franklin County and Rayse Creek in Jefferson County. CH2MHILL will analyze the East Branch of the DuPage River, and Salt Creek in DuPage and Cook counties.

The research and analysis will take about 18 months and will include public hearings, says Gary Eicken, head of the watershed management planning unit at Illinois' Bureau of Water. The bureau is searching for firms to study another 13 watersheds.

Even when plans have been written for all 338 watersheds, the state will need assistance from the federal government and other states, says Eicken. Illinois' two largest watersheds, for instance, are Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Finding and cleaning the hidden discharges in those two bodies of water will be a massive job.

Further, the problems will vary in the state's numerous watersheds. For example, central Illinois' Lake Decatur, which draws on water from five counties, has already been closely monitored for nitrites. "Of all the water bodies polluted by nitrogen, Lake Decatur has had the biggest impact on humans because it is used for drinking water," says Robert Moore, executive director of the Prairie Rivers Network, a 30-year-old statewide water quality watchdog group.

*It's too early* to determine the final cost of the project, says Eicken. For now, the two firms conducting the six surveys will be paid about \$800,000. And the state's water bureau continues to sort the next batch of watersheds to study. But this emphasis on invisible sources of pollution indicates how far the nation has come in its struggle for clean water. The fight against water pollution originated in the 1972 federal Clean Water Act. The tenor of those

times was expressed by Randy Newman in his song "Burn On," a sarcastic tribute to the Cuyahoga River in Ohio. It had become so clogged with debris and spillover from oil tankers that it caught fire. Public demand forced regulators to focus on these egregious sources of discharge that could be seen with the naked eye. The 1972 act set tougher limits on discharge levels, forcing polluters to clean up their emissions or face fines or other penalties. States also required permits for those discharging waste into a watershed.

Since then, activists and regulators have declared victory in this part of the battle. And in Illinois, a combination of the act's reforms and changes in farm tilling practices has improved the Illinois River, according to Derek Winstanley, chief of the Illinois State Water Survey. He's finishing a study of the Illinois River that goes back to presettlement days, and he's found that nitrate levels in the river are back to the levels they were in the 1800s, prior to massive use of fertilizers by farmers.

The possibility of federal standards for nitrogen in drinking water looms despite these improvements. But Winstanley cautions against rushing to add regulations. He notes that the river was never as pristine as some believe. Once it had a high nitrogen content due to buffalo waste and the sediment from burning prairie grass. In that context, the 15-year life of the state analysis seems short. A long-term view may be necessary when the enemy is an invisible one. □



Editor's choice

### **Fresh Water**

by E.C. Pielou  
The University of Chicago Press  
1998

Want to know how water moves from vapor to land to sea to vapor again? As a natural history of fresh water, this book provides a technical grounding for readers interested in the water crisis.

# SAVE THE PLANET, MAKE MONEY

*Natural capitalism's four-part solution promises profit, not sacrifice*

Review by Harold Henderson

## NATURAL CAPITALISM: CREATING THE NEXT INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

*Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins, 1999*

*Little, Brown and Co.*

Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins believe our environmental problems stem not from the greed of capitalists, but from their failure to be greedy about the right things. In other words, they see pollution, extinction, resource depletion and global warming as mainly the fault of — bad accounting.

If we kept track of what nature is really worth, they say, we'd take better care of it. And taking care is more important now than it was, say, 250 years ago.

"At the beginning of the industrial revolution, labor was overworked and relatively scarce (the population was about one-tenth of current totals), while global stocks of natural capital were abundant and unexploited," they write in *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. In those days, manufacturers could take nature for granted. Of course the river would cleanse their effluent, and the next cold front would disperse their smoke. But no longer. "After two centuries of rises in labor productivity, the liquidation of natural resources at their extraction cost rather than their

replacement value, and the exploitation of living systems as if they were free, infinite, and in perpetual renewal, it is people who have become an abundant resource, while *nature* is becoming disturbingly scarce."

*Natural capitalism's* four-part solution promises profit, not sacrifice: (1) Use natural resources at least 10 times more efficiently. Then use even less (2) by redesigning industrial processes so as to reuse all waste, and (3) by redesigning business plans to sell services rather than products. Businesses that do these things first will get an edge on the competition, and as they take over the economy they will (4) lobby to end government subsidies for misuse of resources and allow nature to restore and replenish itself.

"As each of those multiplying savings turns less green land into brown wasteland, less fossil fuel into climate change, less stuff into waste, [they] will accelerate the restoration and increase the abundance of natural capital." In the long run, we can prosper and live on "a net flow of

very nearly nothing at all — but ideas."

Consider your office carpeting. Every decade or so it's ripped up, landfilled and replaced by different carpeting, disrupting work and exposing people to carpet-glue fumes. Nor is time all that's wasted. Chances are, only the carpeting in high-traffic areas is even close to being worn out. And "it takes two pounds of fossil fuel to turn one pound of mainly petro-based feedstock into carpet, plus an additional amount to transport it to the customer and back to the landfill, where it resides for the next 20,000 years or so."

Natural capitalism to the rescue. Step one, resource productivity, would be to recycle the old carpet by "downcycling" it into carpet backing, as some companies are already doing. But eco-efficiency is not enough by itself, maybe even counterproductive. If all a company is doing is downcycling old carpets, it will still have to landfill the backing eventually. And being able to make carpet more efficiently might just encourage us to carpet more surfaces with cheap stuff that has to be

landfilled sooner.

The necessary additional natural-capitalist steps have been taken by the Atlanta-based company Interface. Step two, closing the production loop, is represented by Solenium, that company's new polymer product that can be "completely manufactured back into itself" and provides a better surface as well. Step three, moving from product to service, is Interface's changeover from selling carpet to leasing floor-covering services. As the authors say, "Whenever indicated by monthly inspections, Interface replaces overnight the 10-20 percent of the carpet tiles that show 80-90 percent of the wear. This reduces the amount of carpet material required by about 80 percent because the unworn part of the carpet is left in place.

"It also provides better service at reduced life-cycle cost, increases net employment (less manufacturing, but more upkeep) and eliminates disruption, since worn tiles are seldom under furniture. Because the carpet is laid in the form of tiles, glue fumes are also significantly reduced or possibly eliminated."

Note that, as a service provider, the company now profits from reducing waste and making more durable carpet, rather than from making and disposing of ever-larger amounts of carpeting. By following this strategy, we are told, between 1994 and 1998 Interface doubled its revenues, nearly doubled its employment and tripled

its profits.

As long as Interface thought of itself as being in the business of "selling carpet," it could only reduce its resource consumption and waste by so much before running into the so-called law of diminishing returns. That "law" shows up all the time in environmental disputes.

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Environmentalists call for stricter emission controls; manufacturers complain they've already made their plants 90 percent cleaner than they were 20 years ago. Getting them up to 95 percent cleaner will cost a lot more, and reaching 100 percent (zero emissions) would be absurd. It might

even bankrupt the company.

These authors bypass both sides of this tired debate. Instead of trying to solve the same problem in the same way, and getting stuck, they encourage what they call "whole-system engineering" and what most people might call "stepping back and looking at the big picture," all the while keeping in mind that it would be a good idea to reduce waste, consume fewer resources and imitate natural processes. In other words, they reconceive the problem by asking a different and (usually) larger question.

The plodders are correct in the short run. If you confine yourself to thinking of ways to recycle existing carpeting, you will find that after a while you are left with carpet backing that is so broken-down it would cost an absurd amount to try to refashion it into anything. That sort of dead end is a sign that it's time to try rethinking the business of floor covering from first principles. By looking at the whole system (instead of griping about environmentalists who know nothing of carpet backing chemistry), Interface was able to find ways to provide floor-covering services, drawing on fewer natural resources and emitting much less waste. And they were able to do so profitably,

instead of spending money trying to refine an outdated design.

To jump-start the process of invention, it helps if we want to restore natural capital. (Interface's CEO was reportedly inspired by reading Paul Hawken's *The Ecology of Commerce*.) It helps to reflect on

how nature works and to consider what services we really want from products — from carpets to cars. It helps to know the book's cautionary tales about waste. But the ultimate resource, as the late economist Julian Simon pointed out, is human ingenuity. And that

*Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation*



*Illinois River bluffs in Pike County*

resource, too, needs to be fostered. In a command economy like that of the former Soviet Union's, most ingenuity goes to waste, leading to environmental horrors worse than capitalism has brought about.

***Carpeting is one*** of dozens of examples. The authors ran out of room in the book and packed more into a Web site ([www.natcap.org](http://www.natcap.org)). Their enthusiastic and lovingly detailed descriptions of ultra-light hybrid cars, superwindows and ink that floats off paper almost conceal the holes in the book's intellectual fabric.

The book's argument devolves through three stages. At first, Hawken, Lovins and Lovins say capitalism is in danger of destroying itself because industries do not pay the full cost of resources or pollution. But then, they acknowledge that they don't know how to properly price these things (and that maybe some of them are priceless), so as a practical matter, businesses should just proceed *as if* natural resources and services are worth something more than zero, even though we can't say exactly how much. Finally, in their examples (such as the one about Interface), they describe how companies can prosper on entirely conventional terms by eliminating waste and redesigning processes and rethinking their businesses. No particular worry about nature is required. The plain ordinary profits to be made by eliminating waste of energy and materials are so great that even CEOs with anti-environmentalist convictions should rush to embrace them, simply as a matter of business self-preservation.

The result is a fascinating book that takes us on a tour of American businesses' fantastic and environmentally damaging wastefulness. But it is a bit odd that the authors display no interest in grappling with the hard accounting questions — figuring out how natural resources and services *should* be priced.

As it happens, market-oriented environmental groups are working on this very problem. Environmental Defense, for instance, is pioneering a

project that would give fishermen a direct economic interest in the sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery by assigning individual transferable quotas to each boat, in effect creating property rights in the fish catch. This approach would place an appropriate monetary value on a newly scarce natural resource, but it goes unmentioned.

A similar confusion beclouds the book's relatively brief discussion of the big policy picture. On one hand, the authors say in their preface that public interest legislation is unnecessary. Going green makes so much money "companies that ignore the message of natural capitalism do so at their peril" — the train will leave the station without them. Likewise, we don't have to convince business-people of the danger of global warming, they argue in a later chapter, because the needed countermeasures are so profitable. "Those who worry about climate can see the threats to it ameliorated. Those who don't can still make money."

This is great news if true, because it seems unlikely that we can save the environment by piling regulation upon regulation. Not only is that process cumbersome, at some point it risks stifling the ingenuity that is the mainspring of both economic and environmental progress.

But toward the book's end, the authors take back their good news in a most peculiar way. They suggest that progressive carpeting companies should try to get a law passed banning old carpets from landfills.

This is exactly what they said up front would not be necessary. And indeed, what would be the point, if the progressive companies were already expanding and profiting by bypassing landfills? Why wouldn't their competitors be avidly imitating them? Why do Hawken, Lovins and Lovins suggest that Interface should use time, money and ingenuity to lobby Congress for a special favor? Couldn't that same time, money and ingenuity be better employed to make the business more profitably earth-friendly? Where along the way did the authors lose their faith that

natural capitalism can get the job done? Inquiring minds want to know, and they won't find out from this inspiring, but flawed, book. □

*Harold Henderson is a writer for the Chicago Reader.*

*Courtesy of Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center*



*Black-eyed susans*

# MAKE WAY

*Illinois is spreading out. In the meantime, marsh hawks, bobcats, even bobwhite quail are on the way to becoming mythological creatures*

Review essay by Robert Kuhn McGregor

## FOR THE HEALTH OF THE LAND

*Edited by J. Baird Callicott and Eric T. Freyfogle, 1999*

*Island Press*

The commercial types have opened another superstore up the road a piece. A couple of miles south, the rattle of hammers announces the raising of roofs for a new subdivision. At the end of our block, road scrapers prepare to double the lanes at the intersection, a dirty process that covers my house and trees with a thick patina of gritty brown dust.

Progress, so they say, is everywhere.

That new intersection accelerates the process of urbanizing our little village neighborhood. The new subdivision occupies a hollow where a tiny rivulet used to run; they installed a big drainage pipe to take

care of that. And the superstore, that's another hundred acres or so buried under tons of concrete — the finest soil in the world, sentenced to mercantile sterility. As if we need more shopping venues. As if the field mice, the foxes, the hawks, the owls need fewer homes. As if we need less peace and quiet.

For reasons personal and maddening, I have suffered a fair number of occasions to travel in central Illinois recently, eastward toward Champaign, southward as well. Everywhere the story is the same: commerce imposing ever more gaudy emporia on rural neighborhoods, surrounding them with upscale

homes on tiny lots. Streams are disappearing, odd groves of ancient trees are becoming piles of smoldering slash, windbreaks painfully planted during dustbowl days are being plowed under. Make way. Illinois is spreading out. In the meantime, marsh hawks, bobcats, even bobwhite quail are on the way to becoming mythological creatures. I have not seen a fox in my part of town in 10 years. Once, Reynard was a common fellow in my neighborhood, and he is supposed to be adept at dealing with urban sprawl.

How I wish I could tell myself this is just a bad dream, an aberration, a product of the moment. That's the

Courtesy of Lincoln Memorial Garden and Nature Center



Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation



*Nachusa Grasslands, Lee County*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Bobwhite*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



*Male and female bobwhites*

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke

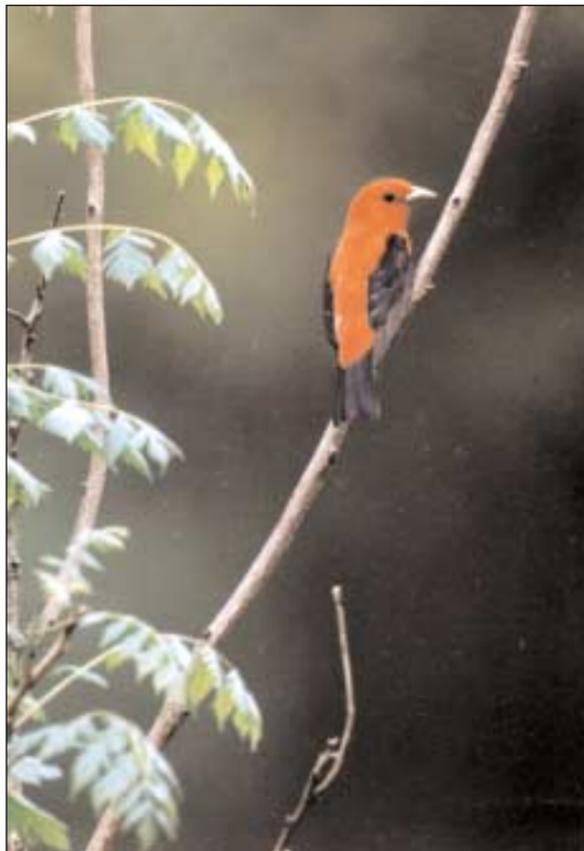


*Carolina wren*



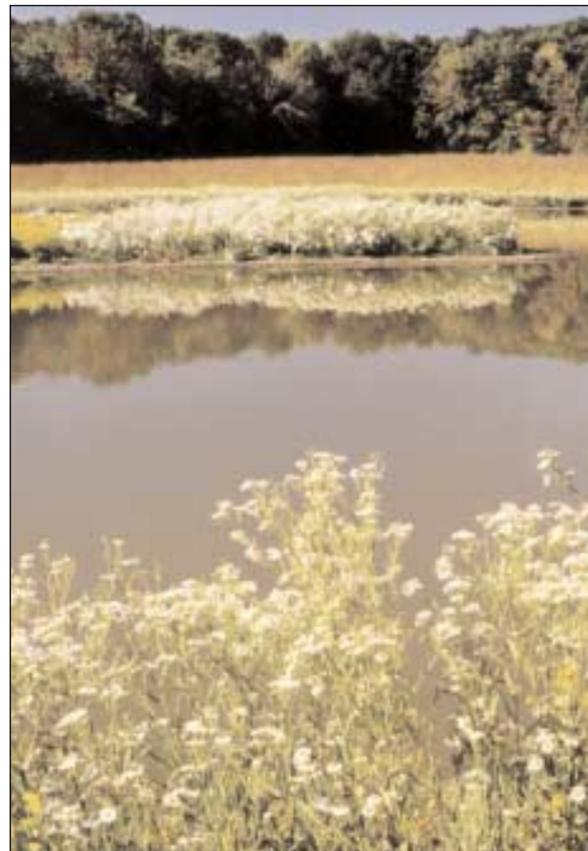
Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, Monroe County

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



Scarlet tanager

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation



Rock River and prairie restoration, Castle Rock State Park

problem with being a historian. I cannot lie to myself. We may have become more efficient, more grandiose in our desires to turn nature into one huge suburb, but we are not doing anything new. The urge to stamp out wilderness, to make nature say money, is older than America. What is worse, the destruction of the wilds is just as often a product of those who love the natural world. That we destroy for profit is readily understandable, if hard to accept. That we destroy out of love is harder to swallow.

After five centuries of tampering, we have no choice but to continue, generally with conflicting goals and little comprehension of nature's own ways.

This sobering dilemma has come home in a rather odd way over the past couple of weeks. I've been reading *For the Health of the Land*, a new collection of "lost" works written by the great conservationist Aldo Leopold (1886-1948). Leopold was a pioneer in wildlife management, working for the U.S. Forest Service before going on to an academic career at the University of Wisconsin. His most famous work, *A Sand County Almanac*, a collection of essays first published in 1949, is regarded as a fundamental volume in the library of the environmental movement. This new selection of essays, rescued from obscurity and assembled by J. Baird Callicott of the University of Wisconsin and Eric Freyfogle of the University of Illinois, is a record of Leopold's formative years, when he struggled to achieve an ecological vision. Reading the volume, I am intrigued by the awkward, at times dubious, nature of his journey. The roots of environmentalism are many, varied, and not always pretty.

Aldo Leopold spent the early portions of his career doing considerable harm to the thing he loved. He is quite honest about this in *A Sand County Almanac*, confessing to an unremitting determination to eliminate such predators as wolves to promote the population of deer. By the last year of his life, Leopold

was prepared to admit the flaws in this pursuit. For the deer to flourish, he concluded, an entire ecosystem has to be protected, and that includes the wolves, coyotes and mountain lions. But that was in 1948. What this new collection makes transparently clear is how much Leopold's initial devotion to the natural world was grounded in his fervent desire to hunt game animals.

This is not especially surprising. The early history of nature enthusiasm in our culture is peppered with such images. English naturalist

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Transportation



Gilbert White, author of what many regard as the first comprehensive modern natural history, regularly shot specimens for inspection. John James Audubon, our most celebrated nature artist, captured those vivid colors and arresting features by the simple expedient of shooting several examples of each species and nailing them to perches as models. But our greatest ecological voice, Henry David Thoreau, came to his most profound appreciation of nature after giving up his gun. And his intellectual descendant, John Muir, lectured Theodore Roosevelt on the "childish habit" of hunting. Yet, while the nature lover with gun in hand is a paradoxical image, it has been a commanding one.

Several of Leopold's earliest essays

***The destruction of the wilds is often a product of those who love the natural world. That we destroy for profit is readily understandable. That we destroy out of love is harder to swallow.***

make plain that his wildlife management initiatives are intended to promote game production. Despairing of the destructive, ground-clearing habits of Wisconsin farmers, Leopold chronicles his efforts to encourage cooperation between farmers and hunters. Leaving bottomland in cover, selectively cutting woodlands, leaving brush: These measures are not intended to protect or assist wild nature, but to produce large coveys of quail. Any benefit to the larger ecological community is, at this stage of Leopold's career, absolutely incidental. Hunting is the "highest use" of any wild land.

Standing at the brink of the 21st century, this seems an anomalous heritage. That hunters need nature, that they prefer woods to subdivisions and superstores, I have no doubt. And hunting does serve important functions. Along with fishing, it represents a vestige of the ancient, sacred concept of the public commons, where all share equally in the means of living. Where I grew up, for example, a poor family's success in deer season meant the difference between a bounteous Thanksgiving and a helping of beans. And many wealthier hunters contributed their prey to orphanages.

It is also true that after four centuries of "wildlife management" that meant the destruction of cougars, timber wolves, grizzlies and other beasts with sharp teeth,

hunting is an ecological necessity. Without the hunters, we would be up to our clavicles in deer. The deer population in Illinois is too large as it stands; to do away with hunting would prove disastrous — for the deer especially.

Hunting can and does nurture an appreciation for the wilds, too. Peter Fitzgerald, Illinois's new and maverick Republican senator, attributes his surprisingly "green" voting record in Congress to a regard for nature instilled during childhood hunting expeditions with his family. Throughout the 20th century, "sport" hunters have pushed for legislation protecting birds and animals, preserving wilderness. No animals, no sport: That much is obvious.

Whether hunting is the "highest use" of wilderness, I have sincere doubts. Leopold's essays do nothing to assuage them. In an essay written in 1938, he quotes with evident approval the sentiments of Edward, Duke of York, from the 15th century. Edward was one of those sporting guys; to him, nothing was more wholesome than hunting with his buddies. The idea of staying home with his wife and family was an invitation to the seven deadly sins. Far better to get up early in the morning, join his pals and go shoot something. Not for the food, mind. Edward clearly knew where his next meal was coming from. For Edward — and for Aldo Leopold — the essence of hunting is the growth of proper virtue. But that virtue derives from killing living things. Small wonder we say nothing when another fox den is buried beneath the asphalt.

As much as I respect Aldo Leopold's intellectual gifts to environmentalism, I have to go with Henry Thoreau. Even before moving to Walden Pond in 1845, he had given up the youthful practice of shooting. What good is a spectacular hawk, a crafty owl, dead in the hand? Better to watch the squirrel frisking among the corn cobs outside the cabin, play tag with a living, laughing loon on Walden Pond. There's the same outdoor experience, but so

much more is learned. Eventually, as in Thoreau's case, there might even come a recognition that nature operates as a completed whole.

Aldo Leopold did arrive at something resembling a holistic point of view, but his attitude shifted slowly, and never changed altogether. The

Courtesy of Dennis Oehmke



Red-bellied woodpecker

heart of the essays collected in *For the Health of the Land* is a series of short pieces published as "A Landowner's Conservation Almanac." These essays, written between 1938 and 1942, were mostly published in the *Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer*, a popular farm newspaper. Devotees will recognize in the pieces, arranged sequentially according to season, the prototype for much of *A Sand County Almanac*. Here, in the guise of advice to farmers, are the poetic observations of nature at work, the plea for a deeper understanding and respect for nature's subtle ways. Each is written as one enthusiast to another. Leopold was a scientist, but in these essays he made clear his connection to farming folk: the love of the land, the curiosity about animals, the desire to hunt. The *Almanac* was to establish common ground between those who used the land and the scientist who would advise and direct them.

As expressed in this collection, Leopold's chief concern during the Depression era was to address and enhance the values of private landowners, especially the farmers. From his own experiences, he understood both the powers and limitations of federal conservation efforts. While the national government could and did manage millions of acres of wilderness, the fact remained that 99 percent of America's lands remained in private hands. If wild nature were to survive, if there were to be game to hunt, resource managers were going to have to speak the language of the actual landowners.

Certainly Aldo Leopold grew intellectually in the years after writing most of these essays. The defense of nature expressed in *A Sand County Almanac* rests on an ethical concept: Nature has rights that no human being may deny. People are citizens of the landscape, as are the flowers, the pheasants and the foxes. Our rights do not extend to the denial of the rights of other species. Studying *For the Health of the Land*, the reader comes to understand that this land ethic originated in a desire to create a democratic community of responsible landholders, a community where men and women would work to protect and support nature because it is the moral thing to do. Whatever the foundations of the love of nature might be, that love holds the key to nature's survival.

Half a century later, I put down these essays to listen to the determined grind of a road grader, the persistent tapping of hammers. Aldo Leopold's utopian world of democratic, moral, nature-loving farmers seems like a dream. It is a dream. The ruthless, ongoing destruction of habitat in the name of unheeding consumerism is the reality. What values do these developers have, that we might appeal to them to spare a hawk's nest or a fox's den? □

Robert Kuhn McGregor, an environmental historian at the University of Illinois at Springfield, is a regular contributor to the magazine.

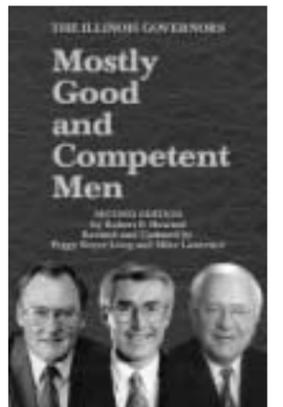
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## PEOPLE

Edited by Rodd Whelpley

### BIG PEOPLE ON CAMPUS

University of Illinois President **James Stukel** will recommend to the board of trustees that Chicago campus interim chancellor **Sylvia Manning** get the post permanently. But Stukel's decision has raised concerns among some members of the faculty on that campus.

Professors **Donald Marshall** and **William Bridges** called on the faculty senate to examine whether Stukel bypassed the search committee.

Nevertheless, the board of trustees is expected to approve the hiring at its July meeting.

Manning has served as chancellor since 1999, when **David Broski** left. She holds a doctorate in English language and literature and has been a professor and an administrator at the University of Southern California and the University of Illinois. She came to the U of I in 1994.

### Feds review bench appointment process

Federal authorities are investigating the way the Illinois Supreme Court has made appointments to fill vacancies on the Cook County Circuit Court bench. Justice **Charles Freeman** said last spring that federal officials interviewed him and Justices **Michael Bilandic** and **Mary Ann McMorrow** as part of a grand jury investigation into judicial appointments.

Officially, the entire seven-member high court appoints judges to vacant circuit court seats. It's generally accepted, though, that Supreme Court justices pick replacements for their own judicial districts.

Freeman said the federal agents asked how the three Cook County justices picked judges in their districts and wanted to know which justice recommended each of the lawyers appointed to temporary judgeships over the past 10 years.

Shortly after the justices were questioned, a federal grand jury indicted Cook County Circuit Judge **George Smith** on charges that he evaded currency transaction reporting requirements. The charges apparently stem from the federal investigation into judicial appointments.

The U.S. attorney's office alleged Smith structured the withdrawal of \$20,100 in such a way that his bank failed to file required reports. Smith's ex-wife reportedly claimed that he withdrew the money to pay a politician to assure his appointment to the bench. Smith pleaded not guilty.

Freeman was the Supreme Court justice who backed Smith's first appointment to the bench. It also was disclosed that Freeman had business ties with the family of another Cook County judge, **Marvin Leavitt**. Freeman also backed Leavitt's bench appointment.

Both Freeman and Leavitt have denied improprieties related to the business ties.

Aaron Chambers  
Statehouse reporter,  
Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

### QUOTABLE

“There were 33 Death Row inmates that had been represented by trial attorneys that had either been disbarred or suspended. And it happened here in Illinois.”

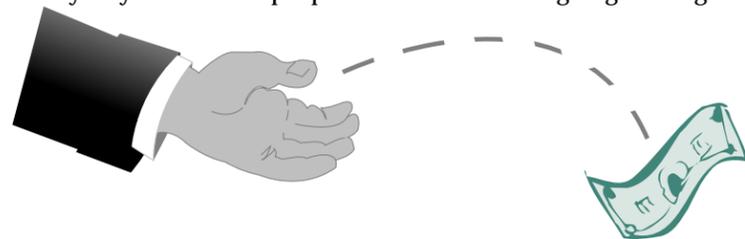
Gov. **George Ryan** to National Public Radio on his decision to place a moratorium on death penalty executions. In June, a study by Columbia University found that between 1973 and 1996 two-thirds of the nation's death sentences had been overturned on appeal due to errors in the process. Illinois matched that error rate.

### Scandal by the number

Federal authorities won a conviction in the first Operation Safe Road truck-licenses-for-bribes case to be contested in court.

Last month, a jury convicted former truck driving school instructor **Alex McLeczynsky** of helping to rig written exams for truck license applicants. Secretary of state staffers used the bribe money to purchase fundraising tickets to benefit **George Ryan**.

McLeczynsky is one of 28 people convicted in the ongoing investigation.



Number of people charged in Operation Safe Road: . . . . .	<b>32*</b>
Number of people who have pleaded guilty: . . . . .	<b>27</b>
Number of people convicted in contested cases: . . . . .	<b>1</b>
Number of people sentenced: . . . . .	<b>17</b>

\*All figures as of mid-June

## SPRINGFIELD TO SOWETO

Illinois explores trade with South Africa

Last spring Gov. **George Ryan** opened the state's eighth trade office, this one in South Africa. He and 100 other Illinois officials and business representatives spent a week on that continent, visiting Johannesburg, where the office will be located, as well as Cape Town, Pretoria and Soweto. Some members of the delegation, including state Senate Democratic leader Emil Jones of Chicago, also met with former South African President Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for nearly three decades under apartheid. Illinois, which tallies \$33 billion in exports each year, already has offices in Brussels, Budapest, Hong Kong, Mexico City, Tokyo, Toronto and Warsaw.

Chicago Tribune reporter Ray Long traveled with the Ryan delegation. While riding on the press bus through Johannesburg, he spoke by cell phone with Rich Bradley, news director at public radio station WUIS/WIPA of the University of Illinois at Springfield. This is an edited version of that conversation.

### Q. What will be the purpose of this office?

What they hope to do is bring together Illinois companies and South African companies. They want to increase trade both ways. Illinois hopes that it can increase exports and bring more jobs to the state through more sales of

goods. The same thing is happening here. There are some places where poverty is terribly high — it's 40 percent in Soweto — and these are places where public officials are begging the governor to come and bring anything that can help them.

### Q. Tell us about some of the businesspeople who are traveling with this trade mission. What kinds of industry do they represent?

It's everything from big to small. There are pharmaceuticals. There is manufacturing. There's even clothing stores. And they all are exploring what the opportunities might be over here.

### Q. What criteria would the governor use to measure success or failure on this trip?

That's a tough one because not every deal is going to go through the office. But if they see a big spike in exports, they can point to the office, whether that was the reason or not.

Illinois is one of a handful of states with posts in South Africa. The office will be headed by former state Rep. **Monica Faith Stewart**, a Chicago Democrat.

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## Tippler may topple liquor tax increase

One man's dissatisfaction over a 90 cent jump in the price of a bottle of Smirnoff vodka could lead to cramped classrooms and rutted roads. **Saul Wexler** of Evanston sued the state, claiming last year's liquor tax hike is unconstitutional. The tax was enacted to pay a portion of Gov. George Ryan's \$12 billion Illinois First infrastructure program. Wexler argues the legislature didn't follow all the steps needed to approve the tax proposal and that the measure included unrelated matters. The state counters proper procedures were followed and that dropping the tax would take money from needed Illinois First projects. Cook County Circuit Judge **Alexander White** ruled Wexler hadn't proved that the measure is unconstitutional. But the judge decided the 90 cents would be held in a special fund while the case moves forward. Meanwhile, Attorney General **Jim Ryan** asked the state Supreme Court to overturn Judge White's decision. At presstime, the new liquor taxes are being collected and funneled into the state's general revenues. Except for the 90 cents. Loss of liquor tax revenues could have a crippling effect on Illinois First. According to the revenue department, about \$80 million in liquor-related taxes could be collected annually in the next five years.

## State Supreme Court gives mother her day in court

**Sheila Jones**, a Chicago Heights woman who blames a health maintenance organization for her daughter's brain damage, should be allowed to proceed with her lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court, says the Illinois Supreme Court.

In a May 18 ruling in *Jones v. Chicago HMO Ltd. of Illinois*, the high court said an HMO may be held legally liable under the theory of "institutional negligence."

Jones asserts that Chicago HMO negligently overloaded physician **Robert Jordan** with more patients than he could handle. Evidence shows he had been assigned between 4,500 and 6,000 patients, says the court's majority opinion.

Jones' lawsuit dates to January 1991, when her then-3-month-old daughter **Shawndale** got sick. The child had medical coverage through the Illinois Department of Public Aid and its contract with Chicago HMO.

When Jones called Jordan's office to report her daughter's ailments, an assistant advised giving the girl castor oil. Later, the physician said the same thing. The next day, Shawndale went to a hospital emergency room and was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis.

The high court said: "We can easily infer from this record that Dr. Jordan's failure to see Shawndale resulted from an inability to serve an overloaded patient population."

Chicago HMO's attorney **Joshua Vincent** calls the ruling "an unfortunate decision for people." Vincent says, "It may, in the short term, help Sheila Jones in the sense that she gets her shot, her day in court, but it really does a disservice to society at large."

According to Vincent, the ruling, while likely to affect only "a very small segment" of the HMO patient population, could alter the way HMOs do business. "It may have a tendency to drive private HMOs out of the business of working with state government to provide [health] care in the Medicaid context."

The result could be less health care for the indigent, who then might not obtain treatment until they are seriously ill.

*Adriana Colindres  
Statehouse reporter,  
Copley Illinois Newspapers*

## O BIT

### Luellen Laurenti

Longtime lobbyist on women's issues Luellen Laurenti died June 17 of complications from cancer. She was 60. Her clients included the Illinois chapters of the National Organization for Women and the American Association of University Women. "She was a stalwart at the Capitol," says fellow lobbyist Pamela Sutherland, president of Illinois Planned Parenthood. "And she was a very involved Democrat."

## ENVIRO UPDATE

### Governor unveils smart growth initiatives

Opting to reward good behavior rather than punish bad, Gov. **George Ryan** announced the state will encourage communities to limit sprawl by offering a smorgasbord of state incentives.

Calling the program "Illinois Tomorrow," Ryan also created a balanced growth sub-cabinet made up of officials from the departments of transportation, natural resources, agriculture and commerce and community affairs to coordinate efforts on metropolitan growth and development. **Renee Cipriano**, a senior adviser to the governor on environmental issues, will chair the group.

The sub-cabinet will focus on five major areas: traffic congestion, open spaces, urban reinvestment, potential state and local government partnerships and quality of life. But Cipriano also would like to shine a light on some less visible plans, such as the \$32 million Prime Sites program designed to bridge infrastructure projects with job creation and the \$6 million Linked Development program intended to encourage two potentially complementary projects. Some programs are already under way. In Arlington Heights, the state contributed about 10 percent of the \$4.5 million needed to relocate a Metra commuter train station near a new high-rise development.

### A Daley takes the reins of the Dems' presidential bid

Vice President **Al Gore** named soon-to-be-former U.S. commerce Secretary **William Daley** as his presidential campaign manager.

Daley, who is Chicago Mayor **Richard M. Daley's** brother, has served as special counsel to President **Bill Clinton**, coordinating the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Clinton tapped him as commerce secretary in 1997. In that post, Daley has presided over the effort to admit China into the World Trade Organization and the administration of the 2000 census.

Daley takes the campaign reins from **Tony Coelho**.



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## LETTERS

### Look at over-reliance on property taxes in funding schools

I write in response to the article titled "Illinois has a new spending plan" (see *Illinois Issues*, May 2000, page 10). The fact that the General Assembly has to use revenues from the tobacco settlement to provide property tax relief shows how bad this problem has become.

Relying on property wealth (or lack thereof) creates numerous problems. First, property ownership today has a much smaller relationship to one's net worth than in Colonial times. Today, with several ways of earning tax-deferred income, such as IRAs and 401(k)s, there are several methods to increase one's personal portfolio. However, they do nothing to educate children in public schools. How net worth is determined has changed over the past 200 years, but the reliance on property



taxes in Illinois to fund the costs of local school districts has not.

Second, most other states have made efforts to alter the way their public schools are funded. Most of the Midwestern states, which are comparable to Illinois in diversity and economic background, have passed legislation to change the way their schools are funded.

Poll results demonstrate Illinois' taxpayers are willing to accept a modest increase in the personal income tax to provide new revenues to public schools, as long as there is property tax relief.

The issue was not addressed in the early 1990s because the state had severe financial problems. Now that the state is in better fiscal shape, when is the appropriate time to fix the problem?

**James T. Durkin**  
*Woodridge*

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### Why do we neglect our children's education?

Why do the citizens of the United States not provide financial equality for our high school students?

Money spent per student in 1998-99 varied in Illinois from \$4,051 in Dallas City in Hancock County to \$13,527 in New Trier High School near Chicago. The Dallas City high school is closing because there is not enough money to make repairs to meet safety standards required by the state. Whereas, New Trier offers 240 courses, including art and music, for its students.

Is this fair?

**Lillian M. Snyder**  
*Professor emeritus*  
*Western Illinois University*

### U of I enigma

Why should undergraduate students pay exorbitant tuition and expenses to attend the University of Illinois to be taught by other students when they can attend Illinois junior colleges for one-fifth of the cost and be taught by experienced professors with doctorates and master's degrees?

**George E. Brazitis**  
*Champaign*

### Correction

The Juvenile Justice Commission advises the Department of Human Services, not Children and Family Services as reported in the June issue (see page 34).

## A VIEW FROM CHICAGO

### In with a bang, out with a whimper: Chicago's racial integration is over

by James Ylisela Jr.

Later this summer, perhaps early this fall, Chicago will mark a historic moment. And chances are no one will notice. That's when The Habitat Co., a private developer appointed by a federal judge, will turn the last scattered-site public housing unit over to the Chicago Housing Authority.

Don't expect a parade. With no federal cash, and no stomach for a fight, the CHA will end its inglorious 34-year struggle to desegregate public housing by moving African-American tenants to units in white neighborhoods.

As chronicled in the June issue of *The Chicago Reporter*, the CHA and Mayor Richard Daley are giving up on the scattered-site program, citing high property and construction costs, and the lack of land and money.

That's all true, but the unspoken reason for throwing in the towel on scattered-site housing has never changed: Middle-class white people just don't want poor black people living in their neighborhoods. They didn't want them 30 years ago, and they don't want them now. This makes everyone uncomfortable, because Chicago no longer thinks of itself as racially insensitive — at least not so blatantly.

And we have come a long way. Twenty years ago, as a young reporter working on the city's Northwest Side, I remember hearing the term "scattered site" and wondering what the hell everyone was talking about. Homeowners spoke those words in hushed

### ***With no federal cash, and no stomach for a fight, the city's housing authority will end its inglorious struggle to desegregate public housing.***

tones, and at community meetings their aldermen would fire up the crowd with a veiled reference or two. To these folks, scattered-site housing was insidious, like communism. Open the door a crack, and it would creep in overnight.

That was in 1980, 14 years after a group of public housing residents led by Dorothy Gautreaux filed a class-action lawsuit against the CHA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, charging them with discrimination because public housing was concentrated in black neighborhoods. In 1969, a federal judge ordered the CHA to end that isolation by scattering public housing in neighborhoods that were decidedly not black.

Nothing happened. The CHA dragged its feet. By 1980, as I watched Northwest Siders working themselves into a lather, the agency had built but a handful of units — and most of those were in black neighborhoods. In 1987, an exasperated federal judge, concluding the CHA could not be trusted, appointed The Habitat Co. to get the job done.

Habitat tried, and even managed to

build a few units in white neighborhoods. But residents and politicians remained adamantly opposed to the program, forcing the developer to get creative. Over the years, Habitat built most of its scattered-site units in Latino areas, a solution that complied with the letter, if not the spirit, of the Gautreaux judgment. Latino neighborhoods weren't exactly white, but then they weren't black, either.

Now, property values have made it too expensive to acquire the few parcels still available in white communities. And in the coming year, the CHA plans to tear down about one in six existing scattered-site units, unless the city beats them to it. *The Reporter* found that some of the buildings, though protected by the Gautreaux judgment, already are on the city's fast-track demolition list.

No one should care about this, the politicians tell us, because the Daley Administration has come up with a better solution. Instead of moving black people into established white neighborhoods, the city is creating new neighborhoods, where lots of poor black people used to live. The idea is simple: Tear down those old public housing developments and build "mixed-income" units, everything from fancy townhomes to working-class bungalows, with a smattering (or should I say scattering?) of public housing.

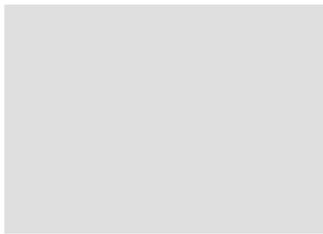
Many of these new communities might attract whites or Latinos, but that's not the point. The goal is no longer racial integration. So if we tear down the Robert Taylor Homes and build a nice neighborhood, maybe some middle-class black folks will settle there.

The CHA estimates about 6,000 public housing residents will be displaced by this plan. They will be given federal Section 8 rent subsidies and sent into the private marketplace, where, the officials tell us, they will be much happier than living in public housing.

Hey, it just might work. But if it doesn't, don't expect another federal court order. Chicago's attempt at racial integration just ended. □

*James Ylisela Jr. teaches urban reporting at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. He's the acting editor of The Chicago Reporter.*

Charles N. Wheeler III



## Despite a flush bank balance, now is the time for fiscal caution

by Charles N. Wheeler III

In classical legend, Cassandra was a daughter of the last king of Troy, a woman gifted with the ability to foretell the future but cursed by the fact that no one would believe her.

As Illinois embarks upon a new fiscal year with its economy purring and bank balances at near-record levels, state Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes shouldn't be faulted if he feels a certain kinship with the mythical Trojan princess.

Hynes is trying to preach a message of fiscal caution, alerting other public officials and taxpayers alike to what he believes may be the early warning signs of potential trouble. At first blush, his theme seems quite at odds with the boom-time spirit of the FY 2001 budget Gov. George Ryan signed into law a few weeks ago. After all, aren't the economic indicators continuing to suggest that the good times will keep on rolling? Didn't the rating agencies give Illinois good marks in preparation for last month's \$300 million bond offering? And isn't the state beginning the new fiscal year with close to \$1.4 billion in the bank? So what's to worry about?

Well, all that is true, but there are several elements Hynes believes merit close watching. Perhaps the most serious is the potential for a cash crunch this fall, when the state's current hefty balances might not be enough to cover all of the checks that will need to be written.

***State bill paying is always more dicey in the first half of the fiscal year because of seasonal deviations in the state's revenue collections. Largely due to income tax deadlines, most tax receipts arrive in the second half of the fiscal year.***

Bill paying is always more dicey in the first half of a fiscal year because of seasonal deviations in the state's revenue collections. Largely due to income tax deadlines, most tax receipts arrive in the second half of the fiscal year — 53 percent on average over the last five years. Spending, on the other hand, is more uniformly spread throughout the fiscal year. Thus, the general funds balance can be expected to decline from July to December, as it has for 16 consecutive years before rebounding in the second half of the fiscal year. So the state needs a cushion going into each fiscal year to avoid cash flow problems.

Hynes' concern is that the FY 2001 cushion is not deep enough. Even though the state is starting with a

general funds available balance of some \$1.4 billion, almost \$900 million is needed to pay outstanding FY 2000 bills within the two-month budget lapse period that ends August 31.

Moreover, in mid-July, some \$260 million will be shifted into a special fund intended to pay for a host of Illinois First projects that don't qualify for bonding, further draining the balance.

Finally, while the overall general funds balance has been the traditional barometer of the state's fiscal health, what's really critical is how much is available in one component fund, the general revenue fund (GRF), which pays for most day-to-day operations. On three occasions last year, the GRF daily balance dipped below \$200 million, causing Hynes' office to consult with the Department of Revenue to make sure each day's bills could be paid.

Now, as FY 2001 gets underway, the general revenue fund is likely to be some \$300 million below its level of a year ago, and that, Hynes says, could present a problem. "If you apply this same pattern and overlay it for next year [FY 2001] and if you start \$300 million below where we were last year, then we could hit a zero point sometime in those same months, if not sooner," he says.

At that point, the state would have to either delay payments or borrow funds to cover its checks.

"I've talked to a lot of average citizens who were impacted by the cash crunch in the early 1990s," Hynes says. "I've talked to pharmacy owners who had to wait months and months to be paid. ... If they have direct dealings with government, then they know all too well what happens when revenues don't come in as we expect them to — they wait for their money." Even folks who don't do business with the state can appreciate the problem, he adds. "It's just common sense."

As Hynes notes, Illinois is no stranger to delayed payments. In fact, the FY 2001 budget plan lawmakers

approved and Ryan signed already provides for lengthening the Medicaid payment cycle to free up some \$70 million for other spending. Moreover, the budget also taps tobacco settlement money to provide tax relief and pay for \$27 million in capital projects, filling holes in the spending plan from an off-budget, non-GRF source.

Hynes questions such creative budgeting. "I think that's bad enough when you're in a kind of crisis mode, when your revenues are short and you're trying to make things work," he says. "But when revenues are booming and the economy is growing, why do we need to do that?"

Another worrisome indicator is more subtle. While Illinois traditionally has operated on a cash basis — money in, money out — the state also keeps a set of books according to GAAP, generally accepted accounting practices, under which revenues accrue to the period in which they are earned

***Illinois Comptroller Daniel Hynes is concerned by the rapid growth in state spending the last two years, during which time, he notes, the overall budget has grown about 10 percent annually.***

and expenditures are counted against the period in which the liability was obligated. By this count, the state's fiscal position declined last year after five years of improvement. The downturn was largely due to an increase in the amount of deferred Medicaid and group health insurance payments and a cash outflow to help jump-start Illinois First. Growing health care costs are particularly troubling, given the role runaway Medicaid spending

played in submerging the state in red ink in the early 1990s.

More generally, Hynes is concerned by the rapid growth in state spending the last two years, during which time, he notes, the overall budget has grown about 10 percent annually, roughly twice the annual average from FY 1992 through FY 1999.

"Basically, I think there's a mentality that the economy is so great that we can accomplish everything and spend all we can and not worry about tomorrow," he says. "I don't think that is wise. I don't think it's good fiscal policy."

Let's hope the governor and lawmakers pay closer heed to the comptroller than did the citizens of Troy to Cassandra's misgivings about that huge wooden horse. □

*Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.*



# Thanks

from our staff  
for your support  
during our  
25th anniversary  
celebration!



Front row: Peggy Boyer Long, Maureen F. McKinney.  
Second row: Charlene Lambert, Rodd Whelpley, Laura Hogan.  
Third row: Jill Barfield, Beverley Scobell, Chris Ryan, Heather Nickel.  
Fourth row: Josh Bluhm, Ed Wojcicki.  
Not pictured: Diana Nelson, Burney Simpson.

# FOUNDERS CIRCLE



Sam Witwer • Samuel K. Gove • Paul Simon

## RECOGNIZING THE FOUNDERS OF *Illinois Issues*

The new Founders Circle honors the magazine's three founders: Samuel K. Gove, Paul Simon and the late Samuel Witwer Sr. Those three men put together the initial package that led to the launching of *Illinois Issues* in January 1975.

Published continuously since then, by Sangamon State University and since 1995 by the University of Illinois at Springfield, the magazine has gained a reputation as the state's leading public affairs magazine. It has a small staff and uses free-lance writers extensively every month.

Money raised through the Founders Circle will be used for the magazine's Writers Fund — 100% of which is used to pay writers and artists for the editorial content of the magazine. The minimum contribution for joining the Founders Circle is \$500. Contributions are tax-deductible as a charitable contribution to the extent allowed by individuals' situations.

This is a way for the magazine to permanently honor and recognize the three men who are responsible for getting the magazine going a quarter century ago.

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