January 2008

Earth Day in the Parks
A new initiative of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ (IDNR) Offices of Public Services and Land Management, Earth Day in the Parks will be held in April 2008 at 26 Illinois state parks. The program offers the opportunity for students to take part in hands-on natural resources stewardship activities, such as planting native wildflowers and trees, building and installing nesting boxes and removing invasive exotic species. Students and teachers are encouraged to return to the park later to study the wildlife impacted by their actions. Application information is posted at http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education. Applications will be accepted from January 1 through February 29, 2008. Earth Day in the Parks is made possible in part by a grant from and contributions to the Illinois Conservation Foundation.

Field Trip Grant Application Deadline is January 31
Are you applying for an Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant from the IDNR Division of Education? Remember that your grant application package must be postmarked by January 31, 2008. Applicants may apply for a field trip to be taken in either spring, summer or fall semesters 2008. Awards up to $500 per teacher are made through this competitive program. Funds are administered by the Illinois Conservation Foundation. For instructions and to download the application form, visit http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/CLASSRM/grants.htm. If you have questions, contact the IDNR Division of Education at dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov or 217-524-4126.

Spring Semester Online Courses for Graduate or CPDU Credit
The IDNR's Division of Education and the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) are offering online courses for graduate credit (4 hours) or Continuing Professional Development Units (60 CPDUs) during Spring Semester 2008 through the UIS Master of Teacher Leadership program.

EDL 588 Introduction to Illinois' Prairie Ecology for Teachers will include the examination, research and practical application of Illinois prairie information with the goals of understanding location, composition, utilization, conservation and issues.

EDL 589 Introduction to Illinois' Geological Resources for Teachers will include the examination, research and practical application of Illinois’ geological resources information with the goals of understanding location, composition, utilization, conservation and issues.

To be eligible to register, students must first contact UIS admissions at 1-888-977-4847. Once students have been admitted to UIS, they may contact Rae Lynne Kynion at 1-217-206-7516 or rkyni1@uis.edu to receive permission to register for the classes.

New! IDNR Division of Education Podcasts Available through the iTunes Store ©
Download information now and listen to it later with the IDNR Division of Education podcasts available through the iTunes Store©! Subscribe to these free podcasts through iTunes, and you'll automatically receive updates. Visit [http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=268684806](http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=268684806) to listen and subscribe.

**SmartBoard™ Lessons from the IDNR**
You know how valuable a SmartBoard™ can be to getting your students actively involved in learning. Now you have new options to use from the IDNR Division of Education! Interactive SmartBoard™ lessons are available for free download on the IDNR Division of Education Web page. These lessons are based on existing IDNR educational materials and cover a variety of topics and grade levels. More lessons are being added regularly. Look for SmartBoard™ lesson information at [http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education).

**The Frog and Toad Project**
The second student research project through the IDNR Division of Education’s partnership with Northwestern University’s Collaboratory Project will begin in January. The *Frog and Toad Project* will involve students in collecting data once per month for four months this spring. Three species will be surveyed by listening for their calls. Registration information will be posted on the IDNR Division of Education Web page at [http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/](http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/).

Would you like to be among the first to know when registration opens? Join the list server! See [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/listservers.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/listservers.htm) for instructions.

**Are Your Students Working on Their Junior Duck Stamp Entries?**
The application deadline for the *Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest* is March 15, 2008. This waterfowl and wetland conservation education program is open to all students of grades K-12 in Illinois. The 2008 instruction brochures were recently mailed to all Illinois schools. Additional copies may be requested through the order form at [http://www.idnrteachkids.com](http://www.idnrteachkids.com). Please read the instructions carefully as there have been some new rules implemented for the 2008 contest.

**New Illinois Tree Trunks**
Borrow an *Illinois Tree Trunk* from the IDNR Division of Education to help you teach about many topics related to trees and forests. These lending resources “trunks” contain a variety of supplemental materials for use with students from Pre-K through grade 10. Items have been correlated to the Illinois Learning Standards and the Illinois Early Learning Standards. Trunk contents include 18 posters, seven activity kits, CD-ROMs, a video, field guides, tree cookies, DVDs, equipment, a plant cell model, a plant press, lumber samples, books and numerous activities, lessons and activity books. You can access both the complete content checklist and the list of 55 lending locations at [http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/CLASSRM/tree.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/education/CLASSRM/tree.htm). Recommended loan time is two weeks. Contact the lending location nearest to you and make your reservation today!
Emerald Ash Borer Community Monitoring Poster and Door Hanger
Visit [http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/Urban/Index.htm](http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/Urban/Index.htm) to see the new *Emerald Ash Borer Community Monitoring Poster*. You’ll find images of this destructive insect as well as signs of its presence in ash trees. The information is available in a door hanger as well. Please educate yourself and others about this threat to our ash trees.

ENTICE Professional Development Workshops Offered Online
Registration is open for the first online ENTICE workshops from the IDNR Division of Education! These two-week workshops will be completed entirely online. Participate at the time of day you have available from the convenience of your home or anywhere you have access to the Internet. The workshops will be held in cooperation with the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) and other partners. You do not need to be enrolled at UIS to participate. Continuing Professional Development Units will be offered. Look for *Mammals from Illinois’ Past, Lake Michigan Fishes and Native Americans and Nature in Illinois* as the offerings for spring semester. To register, visit [http://www.ilcf.org/Workshop/Courses.asp](http://www.ilcf.org/Workshop/Courses.asp). There is a $25 per person registration fee per workshop.

In-person ENTICE workshops are still being offered, too! Please register soon for the spring schedule that is available at [http://www.ilcf.org/Workshop/Courses.asp](http://www.ilcf.org/Workshop/Courses.asp).

Illinois Trees: Volume II Poster Now Available
The IDNR Division of Education has added another poster to the *Illinois Flora, Fauna and Culture Series* of posters. *Illinois Trees: Volume II* depicts the leaf and fruit of 20 tree species commonly found in the state. Species descriptions and other information are accessible on the back of the 24" x 36" poster. Order this item online at [www.idnrteachkids.com](http://www.idnrteachkids.com). *Illinois Trees: Volume II* was made possible in part by a grant from the Illinois Conservation Foundation.

Arbor Day Poster Contest
Instruction packets for the national Arbor Day Poster Contest have been mailed to all Illinois schools that contain fifth-grade classes. Entries are due by February 20, 2008. If you teach fifth-grade students and would like your own Arbor Day Poster Contest instructional packet, you can request it from the order form at [http://www.idnrteachkids.com](http://www.idnrteachkids.com). Should you have any questions about the contest, please contact Reinee Hildebrandt at 217-785-8771 or reinee.hildebrandt@illinois.gov.

Teachers and Students: Help Us Learn About Spiders in Illinois
Join teachers and students from throughout Illinois as they take to the outdoors (and indoors) to collect data about spiders! A cooperative project between the IDNR Division of Education, Northwestern University and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, the *IDNR Illinois Biodiversity Spider Study* is conducted through Northwestern University’s online Collaboratory Project.

Teachers and their students will learn about spiders in the state and undertake a year-long data collection study about spider species commonly found in and around schools. All
information is accessed through and posted to the Collaboratory Project. Scientists will monitor data collections, interact with classes and utilize the results in their research. There is no cost to participate, and classes will be able to communicate with students/teachers at other schools to compare results and discuss their experiences.

To enroll in the IDNR Illinois Biodiversity Spider Study, interested teachers should email the following information to Valerie Keener at valerie.keener@illinois.gov: your name; school email address; school name; school city; school phone number; and the grade(s) that you teach.

**Illinois’ Insects and Spiders Resources Trunks Now Available for Loan**

Students are fascinated by insects and spiders. Help them learn more about these creatures by borrowing one of the new Illinois’ Insects and Spiders resources trunks produced by the IDNR Division of Education. Each trunk contains books, field guides, equipment, posters, CD-ROMs, life cycle models, observation containers and much more. There’s also an Illinois-specific “Crime-Solving Insects” forensic activity. Targeted to grades K-6, the trunks can be borrowed from 30 locations throughout Illinois. For a list of lending locations, visit [http://dnr.state.il.us](http://dnr.state.il.us) then click on the “Education” button in the right side bar. On the next page, select the link to “Items for Loan.”

**Upcoming Programs at Giant City State Park**

All programs meet inside the Visitors’ Center unless otherwise noted. For more information, call the Site Interpreter at 618-457-4836 or email jenny.skufca@illinois.gov. Giant City State Park is in Makanda (Jackson County).

*Wonders of Winter Walk*
Saturday, January 5, 2008, and Friday, January 11, 2008, 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Join the site interpreter for a leisurely walking tour. On this moderate one-mile hike we’ll discover the many ways that plants and animals adjust to the winter cold.

*Friends of Giant City Work Day: Invasive Plant Removal*
Saturday, January 19, 2008, 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
This strenuous work day focuses on the removal of nonnative, invasive plants from nature trails. Bring work gloves and dress in layers for this rugged labor. No experience is necessary.

*Friends of Giant City: Bluebird Monitor Training*
Saturday, February 2, 2008, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Join experienced bluebird nest box monitors for this volunteer training. Learn how to complete the weekly data collection on boxes of your own or take over a few at Giant City. We’ll learn about the bluebird life cycle, nest identification and proper monitoring techniques.

*Winter Tree Identification Workshop*
Saturday, February 9, 2008, 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
RESERVATION REQUIRED
Giant City hosts this seventh annual winter tree identification workshop. Learn techniques for identifying trees by their shape, bark, buds and seeds. We’ll start indoors to master special hints for certain trees. Then we’ll venture outside to practice our newly learned techniques, so dress warmly. Reservations are required for this workshop, so call 618-457-4836 soon. Rain date is Saturday, February 16.

**Illinois Trapper Education Online Course**
The IDNR is offering a new online course for those interested in learning to trap. “People who are required to complete a course before purchasing a trapping license now have two choices,” said Jeff Hopkins, head of IDNR’s Division of Safety Education. “They can take a full-day course as in the past, or complete half of the requirement online and half in the classroom, where they learn hands-on skills such as setting traps and preparing pelts for sale.”

Courses are free. The IDNR encourages all trappers, regardless of age, to take a course. First-time trappers under 18 years of age must complete a course and pass a written exam before they are allowed to purchase a trapping license. Those under 16 years of age must also have written permission from a parent or guardian before purchasing a license.

**Illinois Trapper Education Online** ([www.trappered.com](http://www.trappered.com)) covers topics such as trapping equipment, laws and ethics through online film clips, reading materials, quizzes, photos and illustrations. Students can exit the course and resume work where they left off at any time. The course is accessible using a basic dial-up connection, although high speed connections work best.

At the end of the Internet course, students must successfully complete the final exam online and download a printable document of completion. Students must present the document when attending the four-hour training session with instructors. To locate an instructor-taught course, visit [http://dnr.state.il.us/safety](http://dnr.state.il.us/safety) or call 1-800-832-2599. The Ameritech Relay for the deaf and hearing impaired is 1-800-526-0844.

**Wild Illinois History Leads Students on a Journey to Learn About History and Wildlife Conservation**
The IDNR is offering a "virtual" trip for late-elementary schoolteachers, students and their parents. With a few mouse clicks, students can journey back to the earliest days of the Illinois Territory when voyageurs and Native Americans hunted the prairies, forests and rivers. **Wild Illinois History** helps students in grades three through five focus on early French exploration, along with river and settlement geography. Students can learn how wildlife helped Native Americans and early settlers survive. They also can see how wildlife is a part of our lives today. A fictional French trapper in the 18th century Illinois Territory leads students on the trip. Brief story-telling slideshows are mixed with fun, interactive activities. For teachers, **Wild Illinois History** offers lesson plans, activities, photos, posters and correlations to Illinois Learning Standards. Try it out at [http://www.wildillinois.org/](http://www.wildillinois.org/). For more information, contact Bob Bluett, IDNR Wildlife Diversity Coordinator at 217-782-7580 or bob.bluett@illinois.gov.
**Splash into the Rain Check Network**
The Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS)* sponsors a rain gauge project for schools, the Rain Check Network. The ISWS will provide you with a rain gauge and instructions to initiate the project. Students are asked to measure rainfall every day at about the same time. Student data is posted at the Rain Check Web site where you can submit your daily rainfall totals, see your entries or search the database. Check out the Web site at [http://www.sws.uiuc.edu/hilites/stfair/raingage/](http://www.sws.uiuc.edu/hilites/stfair/raingage/). An extensive listing of online resources for weather, climate, educational links and agencies is available by clicking on "Online Weather Resources for Teachers and Students" at the bottom of the home page.

Is chemistry your thing? Try the "Testing the pH of Rain Water" activity designed for students to determine if their rain water is acidic. The NADP/ISWS-sponsored Web site, [http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu/earthday/](http://nadp.sws.uiuc.edu/earthday/), provides the structure for students to report their pH results and, using zip codes, compare them to the average observed pH for rain in their area. Students can also print a certificate of completion or obtain a hydrologic cycle coloring sheet.

Let us know how we can help you, the educator. For more information, contact Mary LeFaivre at lefaivre@uiuc.edu or 217-333-5902.

(*The entire activity is sponsored by the Illinois State Water Survey, the East Central Illinois Section of the American Chemical Society and the National Atmospheric Deposition Program, NADP.)*

**Urban Fishing Program**
Coordinators for the IDNR statewide Urban Fishing Program will come to your school and conduct programs aimed at getting kids interested in fishing and the outdoors, while promoting environmental stewardship. One part of the program involves actually taking kids fishing during May and September, if a nearby lake is accessible. Teachers may continue the program on their own after the initial session, with the assistance of IDNR personnel. Contact the Urban Fishing Program Coordinator in your area. The urban fishing program is appropriate for any grade level.

Chicago: Brenda McKinney 847-294-4137  
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