



Photo; IWF 2024 Annual Meeting

Saturday, February 3 was a full house as IWF hosted our 2024 Annual Meeting. This year, the focus was on the health of our waterways. In the wake of very distressing news about wetland protections being removed, it was imperative that we gather to learn about why every component of our water systems is important and educate ourselves on what we need to do to keep them protected. Healthy waterways are vital not only for wildlife, but for us as well. We get our drinking water from reservoirs, we recreate on Indiana's many rivers and lakes, and many Hoosiers enjoy fishing, rendered nearly impossible in polluted waterways overrun by invasive species.

While it is distressing to see vital protections for our waters being removed in the name of easier development and less restrictive polluting, the message of the day was hope. We all seek to leave a clean and healthy Indiana for the generations that follow. That is only possible through collective action, something IWF has been championing for 90 years! If you weren't able to join us this year, we hope we will see you at the next one! Read a brief on our amazing speakers on page 4.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Two months into 2024 and there is already so much to report regarding wildlife in Indiana. The Legislative session, a short session, is winding down, with just days remaining before they recess for the year. Throughout our state spring ephemerals are beginning to wake from their slumber, amphibians are calling from vernal pools and trees are beginning to show their buds. Above us Sandhill Cranes bugle their prehistoric call as they move north thousands of feet above the ground. While all these signs of the ever-changing seasons meld together March weather holds surprises for us, snow looms in forecasts and North bound breeders like Dark-eyed Juncos remain searching the ground for seeds to power their imminent flight to their breeding grounds North of Indiana.



The Indiana Legislative session has been a mixed bag for wildlife. Some bills have moved forward offering promise for conserving habitats so vital to the health of humans and wildlife alike. Other bills have moved ahead that continue the slow degradation of these same habitats. Below is an accounting of some of the bills we've been closely following and where they stand.

[HB 1383](#) moved quickly through the Legislature despite a united front by environmental organizations in opposition and was signed into law by Governor Holcomb in very short order. This bill continues the weakening of wetland regulations throughout our state and shows just how insidious the recent Supreme Court decision, *Sackett v. EPA* is. On the other end, [SB 246](#) breezed through both chambers and awaits the Governor's signature. This bill allows wetlands to qualify for property tax relief when enrolled in Indiana's Classified Forest and Wildlands program. This mixed bag of wetlands legislation offers both hope and concern, and IWF and our allies will continue to work to promote sound legislation that protects vital habitats for wildlife throughout our state.

One of the most controversial bills amongst conservation groups, [SB 241](#), "Taking Bobcats," passed both houses and has been sent to the Governor. This bill bypasses the traditional rules making mechanism and instructs the Department of Natural Resources to define a season for bobcat harvest. As has always been the stance of IWF, we look to DNR to produce the scientific backing that justifies their decision, similarly to how they have managed river otters in our state with great success. [SB 189](#), "Locating and recovering wild game," has also passed out of both chambers. This bill allows the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, drones, equipped with infrared technology to recover legally taken wild game.

The final bill of highest priority to our membership was [HB 1399](#), "PFAS Chemicals," looked to redefine PFAS in our state. PFAS, are known as forever chemicals for their persistence in the environment. This bill would have redefined PFAS into two categories in an unscientific manner, putting our state out of step with the rest of the country with these harmful chemicals. IWF and our allied organizations lobbied hard to defeat this bill and it died in committee on the Senate side. With only a few days left in this session we are hopeful this bill's language will not reemerge, yet we remain vigilant watching potential vehicle bills to ensure this harmful regulatory language remains on the sideline.

February also saw our Annual Conference, "Waterways for Indiana Wildlife" exceed all expectations, selling out and delivering a wonderful day of conservation and camaraderie. If you were unable to attend, check out these wonderful lectures on our [website's video library](#). With our 2024 conference in the rear-view mirror, we are already looking ahead to our 2025 Annual Conference on Saturday February 8th.

As our days continue to get longer it is also time to start thinking about what we can do outdoors. IWF's annual native plant sale is up and running and offers a great opportunity to buy native plants for your specific needs. Now is a great time to help wildlife by giving them the food and shelter they need in your very own yard! Our Certified Wildlife Habitat program allows you to show that you are a supporter of wildlife, and native plants are the cornerstone to this program.

IWF staff are also busy planning programs and activities for our members. If you're looking for an eclipse viewing location, IWF will be hosting an eclipse viewing event at Holliday Park in Indianapolis. We are also finalizing the details around a day of service at Belmont Beach, along the banks of the White River in late March. Lastly, in just over a month Hoosiers throughout the state will be celebrating Earth Day. IWF staff will be fanning out over the state to participate in Earth Day activities and engage with our members. As always, you can stay up to date with our programmatic offering on our website, check them out and come out and say "Hi!"

Lastly, IWF is the recipient of a generous grant from the Walton Foundation to work on water quality in our state. We are currently hiring a motivated individual with an understanding of agriculture practices in Indiana. This role will work with the ag community to improve water quality throughout Indiana. If you know someone who is interested in working with our team have them check out this position and apply today!

The Indiana Wildlife Federation has been standing up for wildlife in Indiana since 1938, but without you we cannot do this important work. Thank you for your continued support and helping IWF continue to be the voice of wildlife for nearly a century!

With love of wildlife,

Dan Boritt
Executive Director

Apply for the 2024 Holt Scholarship!

The IWF Endowment awards a \$1,000 scholarship in memory of Charles Holt, a lifelong member and champion of fish and wildlife resources. Applicants must be at or above a sophomore level and studying a field related to resource conservation or environmental education. Applications are accepted until June 15.

Visit www.indianawildlife.org/Holt-Scholarship to apply.

Thank you to our speakers!

Our Annual Conference would be nothing without our amazing speakers. Every year, we are fortunate to have presenters speak to us about some of the most important issues facing conservation in Indiana. This year was no different. The informative and uplifting presentations at our conference inspire action and bring us together in the pursuit of a common goal. If you weren't able to attend, you can still view the conference in our [video library](#).

While the topic of conservation in Indiana is often heavy and sometimes even overwhelming, our speakers delivered presentations that gave us hope and ways we could have an impact.



▲ Photo: Jordan Lubetkin from NWF discusses opportunities for Ohio River restoration and protection



▲ Photo: Elizabeth Mabey from Indiana DNR breaks down the State Wildlife Action Plan and its implications



▲ Photo: Bob Barr from IUPUI's Department of Earth Sciences entertains and educates us about the continually changing



▲ Photo: Nick Burgmeier, research biologist from Purdue University talks about the fascinating life and history of the Eastern

Thank you to our 2024 Annual Conference sponsors!



We awarded Indiana State legislators Aylesworth and Glick for their efforts to fight for conservation in our state. There was a panel discussion with some of the hardest working people in water protection. Finally, we capped off the entire event with some amazing Copi appetizers!



▲ Photo; (left to right) Bob Sawtelle, Scott Pelath, and Jill Hoffman delivered a panel hosted by IWF Board President Rick Cockrum



▲ Photo; (above) Representative Aylesworth and (below) Senator Glick were recognized for championing wildlife conservation in our



▲ Photo; We'd be remiss if we didn't mention the amazing Copi (invasive carp) appetizers we enjoyed after hearing Carp Czar John Goss talk about the efforts to curb this destructive species'



Think Spring: Native Plant Sale 2024!

Our Native Plant Sale is back for 2024! We are currently taking orders for spring delivery. Plants will be shipped in early June and all orders must be submitted by April 1st.

For more info on some of the plants, don't forget to check out our [Native Plant Finder](#)!

Thanks to our partnership with Stantec (formerly Cardno) Native Plant Nursery to provide a selection of native plant kits. Each plant kit contains 50 native plants that will be delivered to your door. Every purchase supports IWF and Indiana's wildlife.



▲ Photo; Example of a typical kit

For more information visit indianawildlife.org/take-action/native-plant-sale

Conner Prairie's Certified Sustainable Trail

Earlier this year, on one of the most frigid and blustery days imaginable, we got to tour the site of Conner Prairie's new restoration and trail project. Though it may not look it from these winter pictures, the site is home to an abundance of wildlife and native plants. It also offers fantastic opportunities to easily access fun and educational natural spaces!

Check out their [Earth Day event](#) for a chance to take a guided tour on the trail!



▲ Photo: The field around which the trail runs



▲ Photo: Touring the project site with Conner Prairie staff

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ADVERTISE HERE!

Does your business share the IWF vision of sustainable wildlife and wildlife habitats for Indiana? If your business would like to show its commitment to conservation and be highlighted for doing so through our communications and website, please contact us by e-mail at info@indianawildlife.org.

Habitat Programs Updates

Do you belong to or manage a group looking for educational workshops? IWF offers several presentations from our Wildlife Habitat Workshop, which covers the basics of creating habitat at home to our Indiana's Wild Climate Workshop where we discuss the impact of the climate crisis on Indiana and our wildlife. If you would like more information or want to schedule a workshop, please visit our [Workshops Page](#) or contact Aaron Stump at stump@indianawildlife.org.



▲ Photo: presenting to Teter Retreat and Organic Farm



▲ Photo: Wildlife Friendly Habitat Workshop at Wild Birds Unlimited, Schererville