Illinois Native Plant Society

The Harbinger

Newsletter *of the* Illinois Native Plant Society

WINTER 2025
VOL. 42, NO. 4

"...dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois."

Rhus typhina (Staghorn Sumac). Photo by Brian Charles.

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Message from the President

Dear INPS members,

I have enjoyed serving as the President of INPS for the last two years. I will continue on the board as Past President, and am confident we will continue to have a strong board. Please vote in the current state board election if you haven't yet!

I want to extend a huge thank-you to Susanne Masi, who is stepping down as vice president. Susanne led the grants program and expanded it to fund many projects that serve the INPS mission while supporting students and other researchers. She was on the board for 11 years and has helped steer INPS in many ways. She will continue to be involved in Illinois' community of plant lovers, but next time you see her, please say thank you for her service. Carolyn Villa, who is currently a state board at-large member, will serve as VP for the remainder of Susanne's term (through 2026).

Important membership update: there are some technical issues preventing some renewals. We are looking to update the member registration and renewal again to work better. Thank you for your patience. If you are eager to renew and having trouble due to login or credit card updates, you can send a check to the Springfield PO Box but please include your membership information (chapter affiliations and mailing preferences for *Erigenia* and the Harbinger). We hope to have an updated system in early 2026.

The by-laws update passed, so the board will work to consolidate the numbers and types of membership levels, which has caused some headaches for our membership team.

Counting the days until the next growing season!

Sincerely,
Emily Dangremond

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Message from the Editor

As we close out the year 2025, I have some news to share with the INPS membership. After nearly 15 years as chief editor of The Harbinger, I am resigning from the position. The newsletter is in great hands with the existing team of Brian Charles and Katie Kucera and will be joined by Grant Fessler. I will continue to work with them to ensure a smooth transition and will also continue to produce content for the newsletter.

I would like to thank everyone who has assisted me in this effort over the years, particularly Marta Witt and Victor Cassidy, as well as Brian Charles and Katie Kucera, and all the past presidents and board members. I wish everyone a joyous 2026.
–Chris Benda, Co-Editor

Left: *Platanthera psycodes* (Lesser Purple Fringed Orchid)
Above: Chris Benda and *Lilium michiganense* (Michigan Lily)
Right: *Platanthera ciliaris* (Orange-Fringed Orchid)

Submissions to the newsletter are always welcome!

Please contact editor Brian Charles (brianmc4@illinois.edu). Deadlines are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1 for the spring, summer, fall, and winter issues respectively.

Chapter News

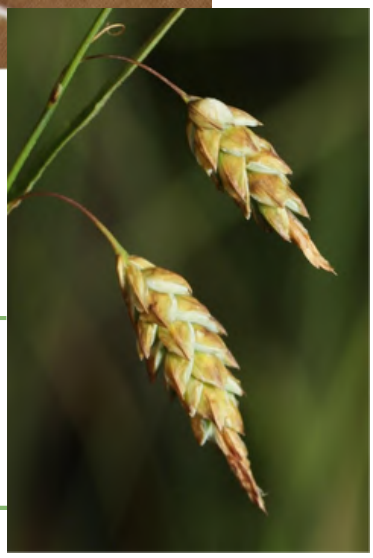
For information about each chapter, visit our website at illinoisplants.org/chapter-locations

New plant additions to the Illinois Endangered and Threatened Species List

By Brian Charles

Every five years, the Illinois Endangered and Threatened Species List is updated. Anyone can petition for a species to be added to or removed from the list, and the petition is then either approved or denied by the Endangered Species Protection Board. The new list was recently updated in October 2025, with 338 plant species currently listed. Three species were removed from the list: *Cystopteris laurentiana* (Laurentian Fragile Fern), *Rubus odoratus* (Flowering Raspberry), and *Valerianella chenopodiifolia* (Goosefoot Corn-Salad). Twelve new plant species were added to the list. Let's meet the new list members!

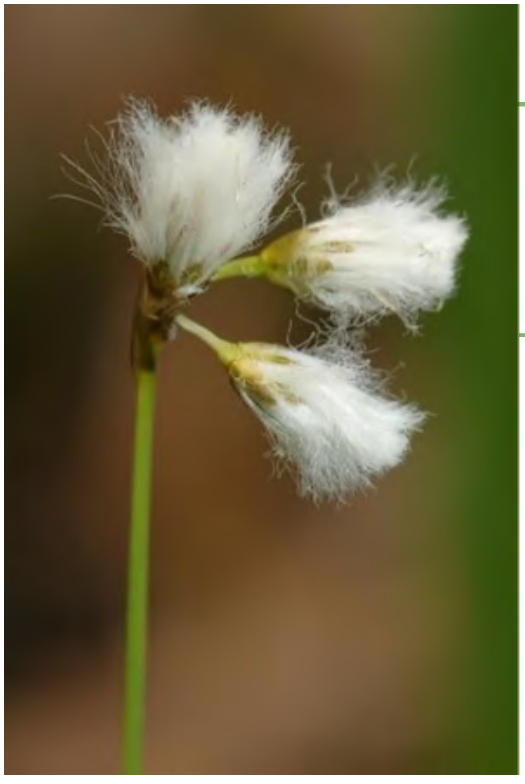
Three species of *Carex* were added to the list as endangered. *Carex albolutescens* (Green-White Sedge), below, is currently limited to southern Illinois but was historically found in more locations throughout the state. This species is part of the notoriously difficult to ID sect. *Ovales*, so it is possible that more locations have been overlooked. Photo credit Abel Kinser.



Carex limosa (Mud Sedge) has recently been rediscovered in Lake County, where it occurs in fens and on calcareous floating mats. It has an enchanting blue-green hue to its perigynia. Photo credit Paul Marcum.

Carex pallescens (Pale Sedge) was recently rediscovered after being considered extirpated in the state. It is currently only known from two locations in northeastern Illinois. Photo credit Mark Kluge.

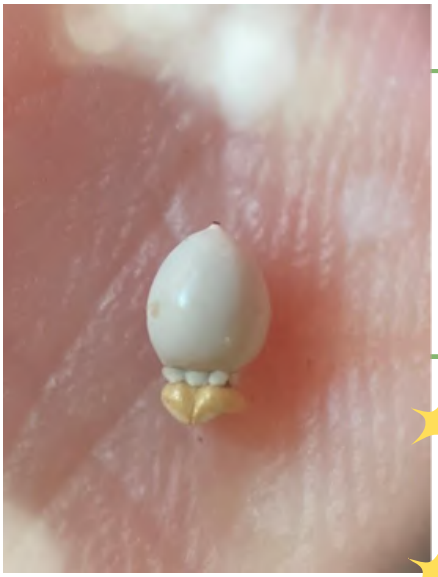
Corylus cornuta (Beaked Hazelnut) was added to the list as endangered. This species reaches the edge of its range here in the driftless region. It is far more common out west, where it is one of the dominant understory shrubs in the pacific northwest and northern California. Compared to *Corylus americana* (American Hazelnut), *C. cornuta* lacks glandular hairs on the twigs and has a much longer beaked husk on the fruit. Photo Credit Paul Marcum.



Eriophorum gracile (Slender Cotton Sedge) was rediscovered by Katie Kucera in a calcareous floating mat in Lake County. It had not been seen in the state since 1978! It has since been found in two other locations. Photo credit Paul Marcum.

Hypericum swinkianum (Swink's St. John's Wort) was added to the list as endangered. This species is named after Floyd Swink, the legendary Chicagoland botanist who published the original Flora of the Chicago Region. It was split in 2016 from a closely related species, *Hypericum kalmianum* (Kalm's St. John's Wort). *H. swinkianum* can be distinguished by its larger leaves and more numerous flowers. It occurs only in acidic, often sandy habitats in northern Illinois. Photo credit Mark Kluge.

Ludwigia sphaerocarpa (Round-fruited Loosestrife) was added to the list as endangered after Paul Marcum rediscovered it. This species was last collected in 1860 and had not been documented since. It occurs in the coastal plain, and so far has only been found in one cypress swamp in Illinois. Photo credit Paul Marcum.



Scleria oligantha (Littlehead Nutrush) was added to the list as endangered. It is found in southern Illinois, where it mainly occurs in woodlands. Photo credit Chris Benda.

Uvularia floridana (Florida Bellwort), left, was added to the list as threatened. This incredible disjunct species was identified after years of being considered its congener, *Uvularia sessilifolia* (Sessile-leaf Bellwort). The main difference between them is that *U. floridana* has a large bract which subtends the flower. The next closest location for this species is Alabama! It is currently only found at one location in Illinois. Genetic analysis is needed to confirm if this is indeed *Uvularia floridana* or if it may be its own distinct Illinois endemic. Photo credit Chris Benda.

Vicia caroliniana (Wood Vetch) was added to the list as endangered. This charismatic member of the pea family (Fabaceae) is more common across the eastern U.S. but only occurs in the northeast corner of Illinois. Photo credit Mark Kluge.

Two violets were added to the list as endangered. One, *Viola rugulosa* (Western Tall White Violet; bottom left), represents a split from *Viola canadensis* (Canada Violet), which is already listed as endangered. One way to distinguish them is that *V. rugulosa* has hairier leaves and stems than *V. canadensis*. *Viola viarum* (Limestone Riverbank Violet; bottom right) was listed as three new populations were discovered. This species has characteristic leaves primarily occurs on the rocky shores of rivers and lakes. Photo credit Grant Fessler.

The species list is now searchable on the Endangered Species Protection Board Website.

You can also find it as a printable PDF here.

Native Bees, and Tidbits on Their Winter Slumber

By Sami Dolan, University of Minnesota Bee Lab

Insects are an extremely important group of pollinators as many plants are reliant on an insect pollinator to complete their reproductive lifecycle. Some plants have even evolved strategies to attract a single, specific insect for their pollination (looking at you, tropical orchids). Among all the orders of insects that visit flowers for pollen and nectar, bees are likely the first to come to your mind when you hear the title “pollinator.”

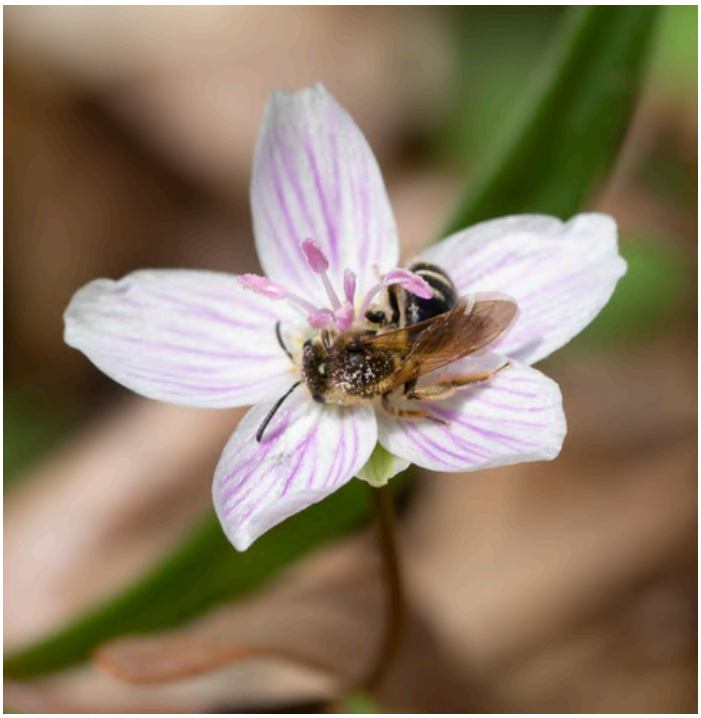
North America is home to over 4,000 species of native bees, all with unique biologies including plant specialization and parasitism. The state of Illinois is home to at least 490 species of native bees, with room for this number to grow. Historically, Illinois was largely covered in tallgrass prairie, hosting a diverse array of flowering plants. This rich community has provided a buffet of summer blooms to our hairy insect friends for years, from early season *Baptisia* and *Zizia*, to the humidly seasoned *Monarda fistulosa*, to the plethora of fall asters.

Native bees are special in the various relationships they have created with our native plants. Some species have evolved a generalist approach to collecting pollen and nectar, visiting a variety of different plant families to feed themselves and their young. On the contrary, some bees have created specialized relationships to a select group of plants. Some bee species may only visit a SINGLE plant species, centering the flowers blooms around its entire lifecycle. Native bees host an inspiring range of adaptations and relationships with the plants around them.

Bumble bees (*Bombus* sp.) are among the most iconic of bee species with their large size, bold colors, and loud stature. Bumble bees have evolved a generalist strategy, with the ability to fly long distances to visit a diversity of flowering species through-out the entire growing season. Illinois is home to 15 species of bumble bees, including the rare and endangered rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*). Bumble bees are generalist by nature, although they do have some favorite foods, including *Monarda*, *Veronicastrum*, *Eutrochium*, and *Baptisia* to name a few. One of my personal favorite associations I have observed in Illinois, is bumble bees visiting Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*) in early summer.

Bombus fervidus (Golden Northern Bumble Bee) pollinating *Aureolaria pedicularia* var. *ambigens* (Fernleaf False Foxglove) in Northern Illinois. Photo credit Brian Charles.

The other approximately 475 species of bees who reside in Illinois are primarily the solitary bees, who don't create hives or colonies like honey bees or bumble bees. These bees may live in close proximity to each other, but are fending for themselves, creating their own underground nests, and caring for their young as individuals. As foreshadowed earlier, many solitary bees are specialists, relying on a few or even a single species of flowering plant to complete their life cycle. One of my favorite examples of a specialist is the spring beauty mining bee, *Andrena erigeniae*. As the common name suggests, this species of bee only emerges when Spring Beauties (*Claytonia* sp.) are starting their bloom, collecting only its pink pollen to feed their young for the following year. This also means this species is only active around the times when the spring beauties are blooming, making the active part of its life cycle relatively short.



A mining bee (*Andrena* sp.) foraging from Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) in central Illinois. Photo credit Brian Charles.

To complete their lifecycle, bees generally need three different kinds of habitat. They need a place to forage and collect pollen, a place to construct their nest and care for their young, and a place to spend the winter months until the next season. As winter rolls over the Midwest, bees disappear from our view entirely. How do these insects adapt to what can be such a harsh season?

For social bees like *Bombus*, newly born queens emerge in the fall from their natal nest, mate, and prepare for a winter of hibernation. The queen will build up her fat reserves on fall plants like *Cirsium discolor* and *Solidago* before finding a spot to hunker down for the winter. What that spot looks like is yet to be well understood, as these habitats are cryptic and difficult for us to find and study. However, we do know that bumble bees generally like loose substrates they can easily tuck themselves into. This could include leaf litter or in loamy soil they can easily dig in. Most species start looking for overwintering places in the fall, but some species like the two-spotted bumble bee (*Bombus bimaculatus*) can be seen searching for a place to overwinter as early as June.

Instead of searching for a new place to hibernate, solitary bees will overwinter within the nest they were born in (their natal nest). Solitary specialists create their nests in close proximity to their host plants, and thus are overwintering close by as well. After hatching from their egg, the newly born bee will eat the preserved pollen store left by their mother and begin their development into an adult. However, the newly born bees are not to emerge until the following year, especially if they are a specialist who are

reliant on a specific host plant's bloom. In this case, many bees will enter a state of "diapause" to pause their development while they are a prepupa. There are also some bees that overwinter as adults. Many of these are bees that emerge in early spring (e.g., some *Andrena*, *Colletes*, and *Osmia* spp. to name a few). Going into diapause essentially allows bees to time exactly when they want to emerge from the nest. In the case of *Andrena erigenae*, they will enter diapause until the *Claytonia* bloom once again the following season. It's kinda like those spaceship cryochambers in sci-fi movies that allow people to live hundreds of years into the future without aging.

A rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) queen fueling up on *Cirsium discolor* nectar in the fall.

The winter months are now in full swing, with snow and cold settling throughout the Midwest. As we yearn for the first blooms of spring, consider the bees under the snow and soil—or in aboveground cavities—who are bracing winter in their own way. Visit a snowy spot of your favorite flower this winter imagining the spring blooms, and consider who is also waiting patiently for those blooms to burst.

A newly emerged two-spotted bumble bee (*Bombus bimaculatus*) investigates potential overwintering habitat in forest leaf litter.

Andrena sp. peering from its underground nest entrance.

Journal Article Roundup & Other News

Check out these recently published **journal and news articles:**

A national policy with local consequences: Quantifying the downstream effects of *Sackett* on Illinois wetlands and communities by Chelsea Peterson et al. in the *Journal of Environmental Management*.
🔗 sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S030147972502907X

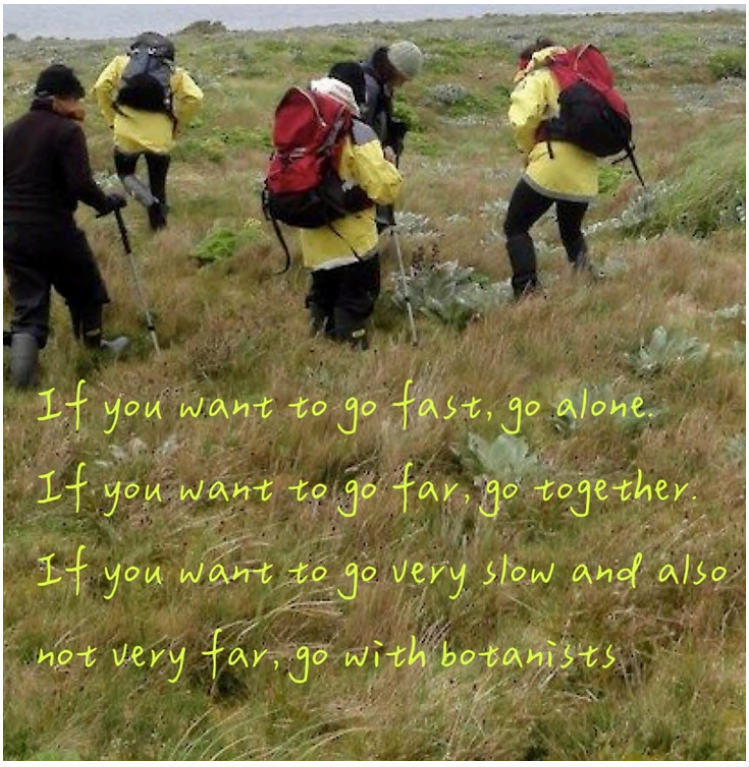
"Illinois has its latest list of endangered species — the end result of many difficult choices" by Christopher Borrelli for the *Chicago Tribune*.
🔗 chicagotribune.com/2025/12/09/illinois-has-its-latest-list-of-endangered-species-the-end-result-of-many-difficult-choices/

"What's Killing These Oak Trees in the Midwest? Conservationists Believe Drifting Herbicides Are to Blame" by Christian Elliott for *Smithsonian Magazine*.
🔗 smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/whats-killing-these-oak-trees-in-the-midwest-conservationists-believe-drifting-herbicides-are-to-blame-180987817/

"Chicago's Dunning Read Natural Area is Expanding" by Molly DeVore for *Block Club Chicago*.
🔗 blockclubchicago.org/2025/11/25/neighbors-fought-to-save-nw-side-green-space-now-the-dunning-read-natural-area-is-growing/

"Asian Copperleaf identified in Illinois" by Aaron Hager for Farmdoc from the University of Illinois.
🔗 farmdoc.illinois.edu/field-crop-production/weeds/asian-copperleaf-identified-in-illinois.html

Botany Humor



ILLINOIS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
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Springfield, IL 62791

illinoisplants@gmail.com
www.illinoisplants.org

The Harbinger Winter 2025

You can renew/join by filling out the form below or online at illinoisplants.org/online-membership-form/.
Please become a member and support this local non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and study of the native plants and vegetation of Illinois!

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- ☐ *Erigenia* (1, Life).....$5,000^{00}

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Erigenia, our scientific journal, is now available digitally as well as in print. Please indicate your preference for receiving the journal.
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- ☐ Grand Prairie (Bloomington)
- ☐ Kankakee Torrent
- ☐ Northeast (Chicago)
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