Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Wildlife in the Classroom

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Possessing Wildlife or Wildlife Remains in the Classroom

Has a student ever brought an animal to your classroom and asked you to keep it? Have you ever seen a feather or a bird's nest and wanted to use it to supplement your lessons? Has anyone donated an empty hornets' nest to your school? Do you know the Illinois and federal laws that apply to these situations?

Teachers often come into contact with wildlife or wildlife remains, willingly or not. It is important for you to know what to do before you are placed in these situations. The following information, while not all-encompassing, will provide you with some general guidelines. If you would like to read the entire legislation for Illinois, you can access it at http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp.

Even though it is legal to possess some species, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) does not endorse the collection of live specimens. Before agreeing to host wildlife in your classroom, ensure that you can provide it with the care that it will require to survive and also that you can keep your students safe from the creature and any diseases it may carry.

Permits are required for possessing some wildlife and wildlife remains. See the text below for more information. Teachers who are interested in obtaining a Scientific Permit for Scientific Research should contact the IDNR Division of Wildlife Resources, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702 in writing with his/her request.

Permits

A **Scientific Permit for Scientific Research** allows the salvage collection of fauna species without intent to rehabilitate. Salvage is defined as the recovery of deceased animals or parts of deceased animals (including nests and eggs). This scientific permit may also be used for live capture of species for scientific research. To be eligible for a **Scientific Permit for Scientific Research** the applicant must be:

1) 18 years of age, and
2) engaged in scientific research which may include, but not necessarily be limited to, research sponsored by universities and/or colleges.

A **Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna** may be used as a salvage permit (see definition above) as well as allowing the permit holder to rehabilitate injured, abandoned or orphaned animals. To be eligible for a **Scientific Permit for Salvage and Subsequent Rehabilitation of Crippled Fauna** the applicant must be or have:

1) 15 years of age,
2) a salvage permit the previous year or submit a reference statement from a licensed veterinarian, zoological curator, conservation police officer or a Department of Natural

Resources Wildlife Resources, Natural Heritage or Fisheries biologist as appropriate stating that the applicant has experience in treating and handling wild animals and has facilities available to treat, care for and produce self-dependent fauna for release to the wild, and
3) public or state scientific, educational or zoological institutions available which will take dead and/or permanently disabled fauna.

A **Permit for Possession of Endangered or Threatened Species** is required to collect any endangered or threatened animal or any part or product (skin, bones, eggs, nest) of an endangered or threatened animal. Details on obtaining an endangered species permit are at http://www.dnr.state.il.us/conservation/naturalheritage/END-SPEC/HTML1070.HTM.

Aquatics

A teacher must possess a valid Illinois fishing license or a valid Illinois combination sportsman's license in order to possess aquatic life taken by sport fishing devices and following season, size and creel limits. Section 870.10 of the Aquatic Life Approved Species in the Fish and Aquatic Life Code lists aquatic species that may be possessed. A copy of this list can be obtained from the following address.

Aquaculture Coordinator
IDNR Region V Office
11731 State Highway 37
Benton, IL 62812

Regulated daily and possession limits apply. The law also relates to animal parts, such as a turtle shell or an empty crayfish claw. Collecting rules vary per species. Speak with a Conservation Police Officer, read the latest *Illinois Fishing Regulations* booklet and obtain the required permits before collecting any aquatic organism.

Birds and Mammals

white-tailed deer - Inedible parts, including bones and shed antlers, may be kept if found on private property, with the landowner’s permission, and some state property (State Fish and Wildlife Areas). They may not be taken from Illinois state parks. City parks, nature preserves, forest preserve districts and other areas may have their own rules. It is imperative that you talk to site staff before removing any natural object from public land.

feathers - Feathers from migratory bird species cannot be collected without a federal permit. A state salvage permit must be obtained before a federal permit will be issued. Feathers of nonmigratory game birds (wild turkey, ring-necked pheasants, common bobwhite, etc.) cannot be collected without a permit, but if a properly licensed hunter would like to donate the inedible parts of these birds, harvested legally, to a

school, he or she may do so. If the school accepts the items, it must keep the name of the hunter on file.

nongame species – A nongame species is defined as any species for which there is not an established hunting or trapping season. These species are protected. A person cannot take any inedible parts of these birds (including nests and eggs) or mammals without a permit.

Scenarios

Aquatics

Q: A 10-year old student brings to class a turtle that she found on her uncle's farm. Can the student legally posses the turtle? Can the teacher keep the turtle in the classroom?

A: It is legal for the student to retain possession of a legally taken turtle so long as the student is under the age of 16. Once the student turns 16 years of age, he/she is required to have a current Illinois fishing license or a current Illinois combination sportsman's license in order to posses the turtle. If the turtle is to become the possession of the educator, he or she is required to have one of the licenses or permits listed above.

Q. A teacher wants to raise tadpoles in the classroom then release them in a local pond when the frogs/toads reach maturity. Is it legal to do so?

Teachers should only raise tadpoles that have been purchased from a pet store. As long as they are in possession of the tadpoles or frogs/toads, they should keep the purchase receipt. Should any of the frogs/toads reach maturity, they cannot legally be released into the wild without the permission of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. This law is important because it prevents diseased wildlife and wildlife that is not native to Illinois from being released and harming native populations. Teachers who raise tadpoles should be prepared to keep any resulting frogs or toads, and there could be many of them.

Insects and Spiders

Q: Students on a nature hike find a monarch butterfly chrysalis at their local state park and ask to collect it so they can watch the butterfly emerge in the classroom. Should the teacher let them collect the pupa?

A: No. It is unlawful to remove flora or fauna from state parks. Collection of unprotected species on private land is permissible with consent of the landowner. Protected species cannot be collected anywhere without a scientific collection permit.

Mammals and Birds

Q: A local hunter has legally harvested a turkey and her son would like to take some of the turkey's tail feathers and the beard to his class for display. Can he legally do so?

A: Yes. An educator may legally obtain inedible parts of all huntable species in Illinois from a licensed hunter who has legally harvested the animal. Inedible parts include bones and feathers for birds and bones and pelts for mammals. The educator is required to keep the name of the donating hunter on file.

Q: You are walking around your yard and find a blue jay feather. As you will be teaching about bird feathers in the next few weeks, you pick it up to take to school. Is possession of this feather legal?

A: No. You are required to have an Illinois scientific collection or salvage permit to possess nonmigratory bird feathers. Feathers from migratory birds require additional permits because they are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. An exception is noted in the Q/A prior to this one.

Q: You, the educator, have obtained a scientific salvage permit. It is mid-June, and the Canada geese in your area are molting. Near a local pond that your neighbor owns, you notice numerous flight feathers on the ground. You obtain permission from your neighbor to collect these feathers. Is it legal for you to collect these feathers?

A: No. For migratory species you are required to have a federal collection permit as well as a permit from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Q: You are a teacher and are out for a walk in the woods. You spot a shed antler that you would like to take to your classroom. Can you collect and keep it?

A: It depends on where you are taking your walk. If you are on private property, and you have permission from the landowner to collect shed antlers, there is no law to prohibit you from doing so. If you are on an Illinois Department of Natural Resources State Fish and Wildlife Area, you are also allowed to collect and keep inedible parts of deer. If you are in a state park or a nature preserve you are not allowed to collect and keep shed antlers.

Q: On a nature walk at a local nature camp, one of your students notices a small bird's nest on the ground, and she would like to bring it back to the classroom. Is it legal to do so?

A: By law, you must meet two requirements. First, it must be legal to remove the bird's nest according to the rules and regulations of the nature camp. If there is no rule prohibiting the removal of the nest from the camp, you must have a scientific collection or salvage permit to retain possession of the nest.

Q. On a walk in the woods, you find a raccoon skull. You would like to use it in your classroom to illustrate the skull shape and dentition of these mammals. Is it legal for you to take it?

A. Inedible parts, including bones, may be kept if found on private property, with the landowner's permission. They may not be taken from Illinois state parks. City parks, nature preserves, forest preserve districts and other areas may have their own rules. It is imperative that you talk to site staff before removing any natural object from public land. You must have a scientific collection or salvage permit to retain possession of the skull.