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## 89th Annual Meeting Illinois State Academy of Science to Hold Conference

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October 2, 1996

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**89th Annual Meeting**  
**Illinois State Academy of Science to Hold Conference**  
**at Illinois Wesleyan University, Oct. 18-19**

■  
**Theme: Importance, Value of Biological Diversity**

■  
**Smithsonian Scientist Keynote Speaker**

■  
**Endangered Species, Private Lands**  
**Target of Public Symposium**

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*"Since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, the United States has forever lost more than 500 species, subspecies, and varieties of plants and animals. By contrast, only about 3 species every 100 years became extinct in all of North America during the 3,000 years of the Ice Age."*

--U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Department of the Interior

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--About 150 scientists from Illinois campuses will probe the importance and value of biological diversity at Illinois Wesleyan University, Oct. 18-19, when they convene for the 89th annual meeting of the Illinois State Academy of Science (ISAS).

Smithsonian Institution scientist Jim Thomas will keynote the annual meeting with an address, "Using Marine Biodiversity Research to Establish Conservation Priorities in Coral Reef Ecosystems," Oct. 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington. His speech is open to the public, free-of-charge.

**Symposium on Endangered Species and Private Lands**

A special Symposium on Endangered Species and Private Lands will be convened Oct. 19, as part of the ISAS conference.

"The purpose of the symposium," explained Given Harper, IWU assistant professor of biology and conference organizer, "is to publicly address the contentious issue of endangered species on private lands, and to consider whether the current Endangered Species Act is a threat to private landowners.

"This symposium," Harper added, "will educate the general public about the important role of the ESA in protecting endangered species and biodiversity."

The symposium, which will take place in Room C-101 (Anderson Auditorium) of

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## **IWU to Host Science Meeting/2**

IWU's Center for Natural Sciences, will feature speakers from state and federal government, private interest groups, and the academic world. The Center for Natural Sciences is located at 201 E. Beecher St., Bloomington.

### **Symposium Speakers**

Among speakers slated to speak at the symposium are:

- Angelo Capparella, Department of Biological Sciences, Illinois State University; **Topic:** *The value and importance of biological diversity (including endangered species)*, 9:15 a.m. Capparella conducts research in conservation biology and avian (bird) systematics. He is collaborating with Harper and IWU students on a bird-pesticide project.
- Mary Kay Solecki, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission; **Topic:** *Landowner concerns involving endangered species and how the state of Illinois addresses them*, 9:30 a.m. Solecki is involved with protecting and managing Illinois' 230 nature preserves.
- Jerry Bade, Endangered Species Coordinator (Rock Island Office), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; **Topic:** *Landowner concerns involving endangered species and how the federal government addresses them*, 9:45 a.m. Bade is involved in the listing and recovery of federally designated endangered species.
- Mike Retzer, Aquatic Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy; **Topic:** *Landowner involvement in the Central Illinois Mackinaw River Initiative*, 10 a.m. Retzer inventories biodiversity in Illinois streams and helps determine management plans for them. The Nature Conservancy is a private, non-profit organization with about 31,000 members in Illinois and more than 818,000 members worldwide.
- Roger Anderson, ParkLands Foundation; **Topic:** *Private efforts in the restoration of an endangered ecosystem, the Oak Savanna, in Central Illinois*, 10:15 a.m. Anderson, a plant ecologist at ISU, is involved with prairie restoration. He also is president of the ParkLands Foundation, a non-profit group that purchases and preserves local wildlife habitats.

The symposium will wrap up with a panel discussion--Why should the current Endangered Species Act be reauthorized?--from 10:45-11:30 a.m.

The symposium is sponsored by ISAS, IWU, the Department of Biological Sciences at Illinois State University, ISU, and ISU/IWU Chapter of Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society.

The ISAS annual meeting--which is not open to the public--will feature presentation of papers, poster sessions, and other activities.

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## **IWU to Host Science Meeting/3**

### **Endangered Species**

Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, a far-reaching conservation law, recognizing that endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants "are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people."

The legislation provides means for conserving ecosystems upon which endangered species depend, as well as conserving endangered species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers the Endangered Species Act to protect and conserve wildlife, fish, and plants. The National Marine Fisheries Services has similar responsibilities for marine life.

The U.S. Interior Department reports 955 plant and animal species native to the United States--and 563 species living in other parts of the world--have been placed on the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, as of February, 1994. These species receive protection under the 23-year-old federal statute.

An endangered species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

A threatened species is one likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service points out that a disappearing plant can take with it up to 30 other species, including insects, higher animals, and even other plants.

Biodiversity has many benefits, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service:

- **Medicine**--Penicillin was developed from a fungus and certain plants have yielded substances used in drugs to treat heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses. At least a quarter of all prescriptions annually written in the United States contain chemicals discovered in plants and animals. Of the 250,000 known species of plants, only 5 percent have been tested for medicinal needs.

- **Agriculture**--It has been estimated that there are almost 80,000 species of edible plants, of which fewer than 20 produce 90 percent of the world's food. If under-utilized species are conserved, they could help feed growing populations. Industry also makes use of wild plants.

- **Environmental Monitors**--Many species are important as gauges of environmental quality. Declines in bald eagle and peregrine falcon populations, for example, were warnings of the danger of DDT, a once widely used pesticide. Under protection of the Endangered Species Act, the symbol of the United States--the bald eagle--has rebounded from a low of 417 pairs in 1963 to almost 4,500 pairs by 1994. It is now listed as a threatened species. Wildlife experts believe there may have been 25,000 to as many as

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## **IWU to Host Science Meeting/4**

75,000 nesting bald eagles in the lower 48 states when the bird was adopted as our national symbol in 1782.

### **Jim Thomas Profiled**

Keynote speaker Thomas is a research zoologist and curator of crustaceans at the National Museum of Natural History, which is part of the Smithsonian complex in Washington, D.C.

Thomas completed his undergraduate studies at Southern Illinois University. In 1991, he received a doctorate in biological oceanography from the Florida Institute of Technology. His primary research interest is determining evolutionary relationships among amphipods, small crustaceans that live in reefs. Crustaceans are animals with external skeletons and segmented legs. Shrimp and lobsters are examples of these type of creatures. Thomas has undertaken numerous expeditions around the world to collect specimens.

Thomas has published more than 65 peer-reviewed papers and has been involved in coral reef ecosystems studies since the early 1970s.

Thomas has co-lead numerous marine field trips with Bruce Criley, IWU's George C. and Ella Beach Lewis professor and chairperson of biology, to the Florida Keys. For the past few years, he has co-taught the marine biology trip with IWU students to Australia. Criley and Harper alternate years co-teaching the Australia-trip class. Harper will teach it in May, 1997.

### **Illinois State Academy of Science**

ISAS was founded in 1907. It is affiliated with the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. ISAS is the successor to two 19th-century state societies devoted to natural history studies. ISAS has 16 divisions dealing with various scientific fields, including agriculture, biology, chemistry, computer science, Earth science, environmental science, health sciences, mathematics, and zoology.

### **IWU**

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$4.6 million Center for Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities

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## **IWU to Host Science Meeting/5**

business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty--is slated to open next August. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.