



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame to induct five new members**

SPRINGFIELD – Five Illinoisans – Deanna Bazan, David Monk, Peter M. Murphy, Ed Pfaff and Gretchen Steele – will be inducted into the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame in the spring, the Illinois Conservation Foundation board of directors announced today.

“A passion for nature and the outdoors runs deep in these five individuals, and it is my privilege and honor to welcome them to the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame,” said **Natalie Phelps Finnie, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources**. “We are grateful for their commitment to improving outdoor spaces, educating children about nature, and promoting the importance of conservation. Illinois is better because of each of them.”

Since 2002, the Illinois Conservation Foundation has recognized Illinoisans for their significant contributions and unparalleled dedication in preserving, promoting, enhancing, or supporting natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities with induction into the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame.

Formal inductions will occur during the annual Illinois Conservation Foundation Gala in the spring of 2024. The inductees include:

### **Deanna Bazan**

For more than 30 years Bazan has shared her passion for responsible stewardship of Illinois’ natural resources with adults and children. An educator affectionately known as “the Outdoor Ed. Lady,” she has highlighted environmental awareness and been an active participant in organizations whose goals align with local conservation and preservation.

Bazan, of Plano, has served as director of the Kendall County Outdoor Education Center, where she engaged with students daily about the natural beauty of the world around them and the importance of caring for the habitat. She finds great joy in making nature accessible to children of all ages and firmly believes it’s fun to play in the dirt.

### **David Monk (posthumous)**

David Monk of Champaign, who died in December 2022, devoted his life to educating the public about the importance of prairie conservation.

Through his impactful public access radio show on WEFT 90.1 FM, ecological landscape art classes at the Chicago Art Institute, and creative outreach endeavors like towing native prairie plants in the Champaign-Urbana Fourth of July parade, Monk’s passion for environmental education and stewardship resonated deeply. His instrumental

roles in saving Busey Woods, advocating for interagency cooperation, restoring urban prairie pockets, and spearheading the Kickapoo Rail Trail exemplify his commitment to preserving endangered prairie habitats. His kindness, humility and enduring contributions have left an indelible mark on the conservation landscape, making his induction a fitting tribute to his legacy.

### **Peter M. Murphy**

Peter M. Murphy of Springfield has dedicated his career to preserving, promoting, enhancing, and supporting natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities. His career with the Illinois Association of Park Districts spans more than 43 years, and his work has catapulted Illinois parks, recreation, and conservation to new heights of success.

His enthusiasm for leading the charge to protect open spaces and enhance recreational opportunities is contagious. He motivates park district, forest preserve, and conservation agency leaders to get involved by educating policymakers, citizens, local leaders, and the media about the tremendous benefits of parks, recreation, and conservation. He also writes and presents about outdoor recreation and the value and importance of parks, recreation, and conservation.

### **Ed Pfaff**

Ed Pfaff is the Montgomery village forestry supervisor. Since he joined the department in 2006, he has worked tirelessly to create a forestry department dedicated to maintaining the urban tree collection, native basins, conservation education, preservation of the native species indicative of the region, and more. His vision has enhanced the quality of life for residents, improved the ecosystem, and ensured a better tomorrow for future generations.

Pfaff's passion for conservation and nature spans beyond work. He farms, landscapes for elderly friends, and walks the many natural areas of Illinois. His favorite locations include Wildlife Prairie Park in Peoria and Matthiessen State Park in LaSalle County. His vision and commitment have led to monumental conservation and community education changes in the Village of Montgomery, in Kane and Kendall counties, and in Illinois.

### **Gretchen Steele**

Gretchen Steele of Coulterville has made it her mission to inform, educate, and communicate with as many people and different outdoor groups as she can reach. She is an award-winning outdoors photographer, a bowfishing expert, and a volunteer. In her work, she strives to understand and explain to others any pending legislation that would be important to outdoorsmen and women.

Said her nominator: "The engaging and delightful personality that is Gretchen Steele is widely knowledgeable about outdoor Illinois and has spent a lifetime sharing that knowledge with all of us in her humble, gentle way. Gretchen guides us quietly on an outdoor journey that we may have been lucky enough to experience with her by our side."

*The Illinois Conservation Foundation is an IRS 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation established in 1995 to support the programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. For more information on the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame and the ICF, check the ICF website at [www.ilconservation.org](http://www.ilconservation.org).*

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