



Winter 2005  
No. 382

INSIDE

Evaluation of Growth, Survival, and Thermal Selection Differences among Genetic Stocks of Muskellunge  
2

SPOIL: The Springs of Illinois  
4

Soybean Virus Transmission by Rootworms  
5

Species Spotlight: Least Weasel  
6

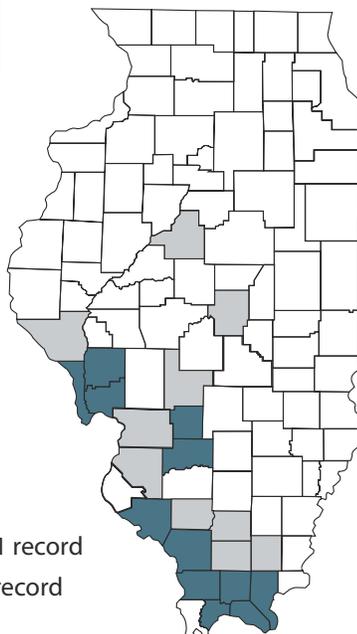
Naturalist's Apprentice: Scientific Illustration—Draw a Least Weasel  
7

## Was That an Armadillo I Just Saw?

Illinois has a new animal immigrant—the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypos novemcinctus*). This quirky, armor-plated mammal actually is native to the New World tropics. It first was documented in the U.S. in the Rio Grande Valley of southern Texas in 1849. At the beginning of the twentieth century the armadillo was restricted to Texas, but it has been steadily moving northward and eastward. Escaped animals established a population in Florida that also has spread. Natural dispersal has been augmented by people intentionally and inadvertently transporting armadillos to new places. Overall, the species has expanded its



The nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypos novemcinctus*), a recent Illinois immigrant. Photo by Michael Jeffords, INHS Office of the Chief



■ = > 1 record  
■ = 1 record

Armadillo sitings records, 1999–2003.

range 4–10 km/year, which is considered rapid for mammals.

By 1954 the armadillo's range included southern Oklahoma, all of Louisiana, and southern Arkansas. In 1972 the armadillo also occupied parts of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia and there were outlying records in Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Tennessee. By 1995 it was established in most of Oklahoma, southern Kansas, Arkansas, southern Missouri, western Tennessee, Mississippi, much of Alabama and Georgia, and southern South Carolina, and individuals occurred as far north as Nebraska. The species' northward expansion will be limited by the severity of winter weather since armadillos can't hibernate. Its predicted range covers areas with mean January temperatures greater than  $-2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and includes

southern Illinois to about  $39^{\circ}\text{N}$  latitude (running across the state just north of Alton and south of Effingham).

There had been sporadic occurrences of armadillos in Illinois since the 1970s, but a flurry of recent sightings prompted us to begin a survey (supported by the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund) in 2003. We mailed a questionnaire to 135 individuals knowledgeable about southern Illinois' fauna, including Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) district heritage biologists, wildlife biologists, and foresters; conservation police officers; Nature Preserves Commission field staff; and state park superintendents. Surveys were also addressed to the person or agency responsible for animal control in 22 southern Illinois

*Continued on back page*