

Birds:



Blue Jay

Study the exquisite colorations of this bird, common to central and eastern North America. The Blue Jay usually grows up to a foot long, and feeds chiefly on large insects, seeds, and nuts.



Bunting, Snow

Check out how the nearly all-white coloration of this bird rendered it nicknames like “snowflake” and “snowbird.”



Cardinal

Witness the romantic nature of the male cardinal, who sings and attends to his mate. These bright red birds do not migrate outside of the central and southern United States.



Coloration, Seasonal

Discover the different molting patterns of several Chicago-area birds, and see how brightly colored birds change hues in winter.



Duck, Mallard

Discover the gender differences in this well known duck found all over North America—males with bright green features and females of a monotonous brown.



Duck, Wood

Witness the dynamic colorations of this, the only pond duck to make its nest in a tree.



Flicker, Northern

Step into the woodlands and orchards that house this woodpecker, a common summer resident of Illinois.



Goldfinch

Marvel at the bright yellow plumage and black tails of this pair of Goldfinches. Found most often in flocks, these birds spend autumn searching for their favorite food - seeds from thistles and sunflowers.



Killdeer, Plover

Consider the falcon-like characteristics of this common summer resident of Illinois, a member of the Plover family. Often found in pastures and cultivated fields, a pair of Killdeers are shown here with their nest.



Nests, Birds'

Deconstruct the diverse workings of six different birds' nest, from the Killdeer's hollow in the ground to the elaborate basket-like structure of the Oriole.



Oriole, Baltimore or Northern

Discover why the Northern Oriole is so popular in the eastern United States. The vibrant coloring, interesting nesting habits, and fondness for humans of this bird all contribute to its likeability.



Owl, Screech

Discover the loyalty this noisy bird has to Illinois—as the most abundant owl in our area, the Screech Owl never migrates from its Midwestern home. Found anywhere from remote wooded areas to the shade trees of city parks, this owl takes an important place in the food chain with its diet of small rodents.



Sparrows

Discover the territorial and rather haphazard methods the male sparrows use in nesting season. Sparrows breed mostly in the months from March through August, remaining loosely monogamous. Sixteen different sparrow specimens are shown here, demonstrating Chicago's most abundant types.



Starling, Feather Changes of

Explore the extraordinary changes this bird undergoes between summer and winter. A resident of Eurasia and North Africa, the Starling uses light coloration in the summer and dark in the winter to best adapt to his surroundings.



Swallow, Barn

Nestle down with a family of these birds, who only make their homes in the rafters of barns in more populated areas. Barn swallows are excellent hunters, often seen skimming low over fields to gobble up insects.



Tanager and Cowbird

Discover the crafty, parasitic methods this bird uses to feed and raise its young. The Cowbird, usually seen on the backs of or at the feet of pasture cattle, lays her eggs in the nest of a smaller bird who dutifully raises it as her own.



Waxwing, Cedar

Listen in on the conversations of the Cedar Waxwing, found in flocks of up to 50. A common summer resident of Illinois, this bird communicates with a “lisping” sound that can be heard for several hundreds of yards.



Woodpeckers

Examine the capable bodies of these abundant Midwestern birds. Six common species of Woodpecker are shown here, highlighting the foot structure, stiff feathers, chisel-like beak and barbed tongue that allow these birds to be so versatile.

Botany:



Anemone, Rue

This early blooming flower prefers a shady location and good soil. Good for gardening, the Rue Anemone returns year after year, ever increasing in size.



Bluets

Find these tiny flowers growing in dense mats across the Chicago region. Bluets are small perennials, and are a member of the Madder Family—which grows pervasively throughout Chicago. These flowers are also known as Innocence, Quaker Ladies, and Quaker Bonnets



Carnivorous Plants

Discover the methods by which these unique plants derive a fraction of their nourishment from the capture and digestion of small animals. The Pitcher Plant, Venus Flytrap, Sundew and Bladderwort all use specialized techniques to carry out their carnivorous diet.



Dwarf Wild Rose

Transport yourself back in time to the origin of common domestic roses. The Dwarf Wild Rose is but one of 50 wild roses still growing in the United States, and can be found over much of the eastern half of the country.



Jack In the Pulpit

As a perennial, this plant will grow for many successive years on the same rootstock. The flowers of the Jack-in-the Pulpit are small, hidden, and petal-less, growing in a preferred environment of rich, moist woods. This case features flowers growing against tree trunks.



Marigold, Marsh

This wild flower only grows in marshes. Also known as "Little Frog" because it only lives in water, blooms late spring and early and summer. Related to the Buttercup this large flower has no true petals.



May Apple

Don't confuse this fruit with a relative of the apple—it's actually a seed-filled berry. Examples of flowering, almost ripe, apples during the early spring show how these plants grow close together, emerging each year.



Mushrooms

Did you know that mushrooms belong to the fungi division of the plant kingdom, which also includes mildews, molds, rusts, and yeasts? Lacking a true root system, as well as chlorophyll, these fungi are dependent on other organisms for sustenance, and are therefore parasites. A number of specimens are shown here, including the Gemmed Puffball, Morel, Field or Horse mushroom, and Pear-shaped Puffball.



Oak, Black

With over eighty kinds of oaks native to North America, the most common oak in Chicago is a giant. The Black Oak can soar to well over one hundred feet, with a trunk diameter stretching seven feet across. This tree grows best in clay or on dry, sandy hillsides and can live to almost two hundred years. This display examines the different aspects of the Oak tree with specimens from both the male and female flowers, as well as a flowering tree.



Purple Trillium

Check out this enchanting flower, native to North America and East Asia. The leaves, petals, and sepals of these Trillium are characteristically in three forms, with single white or purple flowers. Both Native Americans and early colonists used the Trillium's rootstock medicinally.



Ragwort, Golden

Get to know the Golden Ragwort, a common spring sight in Illinois. Three main types grow here, and are best identified by the form of their leaves, growing alongside a brilliant yellow flower on a low, herbaceous plant.



Spring Beauty

Don't miss the short blooming period of these abundant flowers. Opening only during sunny weather, the spring beauty grows in carpet-like smatterings amidst sparsely wooded forests around the United States.



Story of Chocolate

Dive in the fascinating world of chocolate! Experience the ecological, biological and commercial importance of this treat—with a history dating back to the ancient Maya. Note: This box weighs approximately fifty pounds, and should be handled by two people.



Sugar Maple Tree

Discover the beautiful sugar maple tree, found in the northeastern United States. Not only does the processed sap of the tree produce three quarters of the maple sugar crop, but the lumber is used in making fine floors and furniture.



Yellow Lady Slipper

Prance into the world of the deer, one of our most frequent connections to the natural world. Urban expansion has created the need, however, for drastic measures to keep the numbers of these abundant animals in check. Witness a few of the ways we protect our land when deer run rampant.

Geology



Fossils From Rocks Near Chicago

Unearth the life forms that lived in Chicago millions of years ago. Limestone forms the underlayer of the earth around Chicago, and contains an amazing array of fossils like corals, crinoids and trilobites, among others

Herps and Fish:



Amphibians: Frog, Leopard, and Common Toad

Examine the extraordinary coloration of these amphibians, then take a quiz about frog and toad facts. The Common Toad and Leopard Frog are excellent examples of how well skin can camouflage an animal.



Fish, Crawfish, Burrowing

Tunnel into the muddy riverbanks that form the homes of these lobster-like animals. The Burrowing Crawfish (or Crayfish) is common to the lowland rivers of Illinois.

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE

Fish, Eel

Investigate the curious history and mysterious migratory habits of the Eel. Scientists have long wondered about this fish, whose long, snake-like form is shown here.



Fish, Shark

Take a dip in the cool waters off southern California and you might come across one of these sharks. The Hammerhead is just one member of the group Chondrichthyes, all of whom have jaws, paired fins, paired nostrils and a skeleton made of cartilage in common.

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE

Frogs and Toads

Snakes

Investigate the characteristics that all snakes have in common: a long, flexible body covered with overlapping scales, forked tongues, and a lack of external ears. Specimens exhibited here will help you learn to identify some common snakes from Illinois.

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE

Insects:



Asian Longhorn Beetle

Take a closer look at this harmful insect, an immigrant from China that has wreaked havoc on the trees of the United States. Adult Asian Longhorn beetles lay their eggs inside a tree, and the hatched larvae are forced to eat their way out—damaging the host tree in the process.



Butterflies, Common

Flutter into the enchanting world of the butterfly. Sixteen specimens from the Chicago area exhibit the breath-taking structure and color found in butterflies of this region.



Butterfly, Viceroy

Don't confuse this butterfly with the Monarch—they may look similar, but they don't smell the same. The Viceroy employs protective mimicry to fool predators into believing it releases the same unpleasant odor as the Monarch.



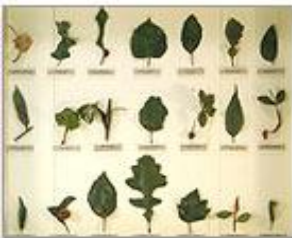
Bees

Study the useful physical characteristics that make this insect a valuable one. Belonging to the same order as ants and wasps, bees gather pollen with baskets of stiff hairs, and suck nectar and pollen with a special long tube, which is then converted to honey in the bee's digestive tract.



Beetles

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Galls

Ever notice strange bumps on the trunk of a tree? They're probably insect galls, an outgrowth of the plant's cells that encase and protect the insect larvae within. Investigate a variety of sizes, structures, and functions in the galls shown here



Insect: Beneficial

Investigate the essential place insects hold in the food chain, especially in relation to humans. An up-close look at some twenty insect specimens will reveal the diversity—and importance—of their functions, as pollinators, decomposers, predators, etc.



Insect: Harmful

Learn how to identify insects found in Illinois that can be harmful—like stinging humans or destroying crops—and examine the ecosystem’s need for these creatures.



Insect: Protective Coloration

Examine the fascinating color patterns of insects who rely on camouflage. Protective coloration helps insects hide from predators, or conversely, from unsuspecting prey they are stealthily waiting for.



Insects: Winter Forms

Did you ever wonder where insects go during frigid Chicago winters? Find out here, as the winter homes of a variety of insects—including cocoons, pods, and plants—are exhibited and explained.



Moths, Common

Discover the dazzling characteristics that classify these familiar four-winged insects. Moths, while not as colorful as their butterfly counterparts, are found in nearly every part of the world.



Walking Stick

You’ll have to look closely to discern the unique coloration and body structure of the Walking Stick. This insect’s twig-like appearance camouflages it well against the branches where it spends the majority of its life, and remains its best defense.

Mammals:



Mammal, Flying Squirrel

Glide into the fascinating world of the Midwestern flying squirrel. Numerous poses display what’s rarely seen of this nocturnal animal.



Mammal, Prairie Gopher

Burrow into an underground gopher’s nest and learn about the intricate tunneling system it uses to find and store food.



Mammal, Snowshoe Rabbit

See how this animal uses its white coat to hide itself in the snow, and its big feet to get around in it!



Mammal, Bat, Little Brown

Hunker down with a family of brown bats and learn about their important roles as pollinators and seed distributors.



Mammal, Chipmunk

Delve deep into the forest to spot this mostly ground-dwelling chipmunk.



Mammal, Common Mole

Crawl into the underground realm of the mole, whose dark habitat requires a keen sense of smell and touch



Mammal, Porcupine

Join this quilled creature in his trek into the treetops, where he spends his time feasting on bark, twigs, and leaves.



Mammal, Red Fox

Check out this prairie-dwelling red fox cub. As a member of the dog family, he eats small rodents and rabbits, and is known for his craftiness.



Mink

Learn about the aquatic nature of these excellent swimmers, who hunt for food on both land and water.



Skunk

Enjoy the beauty of this colorful little creature without the smell!



Woodchuck

Notice the similarities between the woodchuck and its close relative the squirrel. Find out how civilization has moved its habitat from woods to open fields.