

Official State Symbols:

State Tree — White Oak: In 1907, Mrs. James C. Fessler of Rochelle suggested to state officials that Illinois school children vote for a state tree and state flower. The native oak was selected for the state tree and became law in 1908. In 1973, a special poll of some 900,000 children changed the state tree from the native oak to the white oak, and it was signed into law that year.

State Flower — Violet: When school children voted on the state tree, they selected the violet as the state flower, which also became law in 1908. State Song — “Illinois”: With music by Archibald Johnston and lyrics by Charles H. Chamberlain, “Illinois” served as the state’s unofficial song for many years before the 54th General Assembly passed a bill making it official in 1925. The bill was introduced by Sen. Florence Fifer Bohrer, the first woman to serve in the Illinois Senate. (See page 62 for lyrics.)

State Bird — Cardinal: In 1928, the Macomb branch of the National Federation of Professional Women’s Clubs suggested that Illinois school children select a state bird. The cardinal was chosen from five birds common in Illinois and designated the state bird in 1929.

State Slogan — “Land of Lincoln”: The slogan that appears on Illinois license plates was adopted by the General Assembly in 1955. That same year, Congress granted Illinois a copyright for exclusive use of the “Land of Lincoln” insignia.

State Mineral — Fluorite: A bill designating fluorite as the official state mineral was passed in 1965. Calcium fluorite is a glass-like mineral used in making steel, enamels, aluminum, glass and many chemicals. Illinois is the largest producer of fluorite in the United States.

State Insect — Monarch Butterfly: In 1974, a Dennis School third-grade class in Decatur proposed the orange and black monarch butterfly as the state insect, which became law in 1975.

State Animal — White-tailed Deer: The white-tailed deer was selected the state animal by Illinois school children in 1980 and became law in January 1982. Native to North America, the deer has a gray coat that turns reddish brown in summer and an eye-catching tail that is bright white on the underside.

State Fish — Bluegill: The state fish was selected by school children in 1986. A member of the sunfish family, the colorful bluegill reaches only about 9 inches in length and weighs an average of 14 ounces, but it has a reputation as one of the best fighting game fish.

State Prairie Grass — Big Bluestem: A law designating big bluestem as Illinois’ official prairie grass was signed into law in August 1989. Big bluestem was chosen in a poll of students conducted by the state Department of Conservation. Named for its bluish purple stem, big bluestem is the tallest prairie grass in Illinois.

State Fossil — Tully Monster: A soft-bodied marine animal that lived 280 to 340 million years ago, the Tully monster were designated the state fossil in 1989. An impression of the Tully monster was discovered in 1955 by amateur archaeologist Francis J. Tully of Joliet. Since then, more than 100 specimens have been found.

State Dance — Square Dance: In 1990, a bill designating the square dance the official state dance was signed into law. The square dance, first associated with the early American settlers, has been in recorded history since 1651.

State Soil — Drummer Silty Clay Loam: A bill designating Drummer silty clay loam the state soil became law in August 2001. Future Farmers of America members from Monticello High School and Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences lobbied for the bill's passage. Rich, dark Drummer soils are found on more than 1.5 million acres in nearly half of Illinois' counties.

State Snack Food — Popcorn: Second- and third-grade students from Cunningham Elementary School in Joliet, along with their teacher Fran Hollister, saw their class project — to make popcorn the official snack food of Illinois — become law in August 2003.

State Amphibian — Eastern Tiger Salamander: Following a statewide online voting contest, a law was passed in July 2005 making the eastern tiger salamander the state amphibian. The species is the largest Illinois terrestrial salamander and is found throughout the state.

State Reptile — Painted Turtle: Through the same voting contest, Illinois citizens selected the painted turtle as the state reptile, which also became law in July 2005. The painted turtle is among the world's most colorful aquatic turtles and is a familiar sight in lakes and ponds across the state.

State Fruit — Goldrush Apple: A fourth-grade class at Woodlawn Elementary School chose the Goldrush apple as the state fruit, and it became law in August 2007. The sweet-tart apple has a golden color with a bronze blush and is noted for its disease resistance and long storage life.