Appendix U: Critical Wildlife Species in Oak Ecosystems

Chicago Wilderness, a regional conservation alliance, is championing animal species in the metropolitan area. These priority species represent globally rare ecosystems in parts of Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan.

Key Chicago Wilderness organizations stepped forward to drive efforts for each species:

**Blanding’s Turtle** (*Emydoidea blandingii*)

Lead Partners: Lake County Forest Preserves, Illinois Natural History Survey, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources

This regionally endangered yellow-chinned turtle spends a lot of its time in water, but is known to travel long distances over land. It matures slowly, not until age 14 to 20, and can live up to 80 years or more.

**Blue-spotted Salamander** (*Ambystoma laterale*)

Lead Partner: Illinois Natural History Survey and National Great Rivers Research and Education Center

Distinguished by its pale blue specks, this salamander spends much of its time underground in woodlands and benefits from restoration of small wetlands.
Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*)

Lead Partner: Lincoln Park Zoo

Weighing less than a few nickels, this brown/gray bat roosts in old trees, snags, and buildings. Once common throughout the United States, the little brown bat has declined in recent years due to white nose syndrome, an emerging fungal disease.

Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

Lead Partners: The Field Museum, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The monarch butterfly ventures through Chicago Wilderness on its multi-generation migration from Mexico to Canada and depends on milkweed plants in backyards, parks, and other open spaces for food.

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephala*)

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy, Illinois Chapter

This distinctly red-headed bird inhabits oak woodlands and savannas. Its drastic decline is the result of oak ecosystems loss across the region.
**Rusty Patched Bumble Bee** (*Bombus affinis*)

Lead Partner: Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

Easily recognizable by its orange markings, this important pollinator has experienced rapid declines in range and abundance.

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**Smooth Green Snake** (*Opheodrys vernalis*)

Lead Partner: Lincoln Park Zoo

This friendly snake depends on tall grass prairie, sedge meadows, prairie ponds, and oak savannas. It is an Illinois Species in Greatest Need of Conservation and is State Endangered in Indiana.