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In Lake County, finding shrimp is a big deal

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I like to keep an eye out for news about new species being discovered, or species being discovered where they used to be but had disappeared usually because of mankind's actions, then make a comeback. **WildlifeExtra.com** is one with lots of news on Africa and around the world.

Well, on Thursday, the Lake County Forest Preserve announced a really cool discovery right here in our backyard: freshwater shrimp in the Des Plaines River.

Let that sink in for a second.

"During stream monitoring this past summer, Nick Huber and other ecologists of the Lake County Forest Preserves discovered several dozen Mississippi grass shrimp, *Palaemonetes kadiakensis*, in a forest preserve along the Des Plaines River in southern Lake County. Due to the fact that you can see right through them, this species is also commonly referred to as glass shrimp," said the press release.

Did Huber feel like Prince Charming finding Cinderella's glass slipper?

The district says this is a rare find for northeastern Illinois. The only other known locations are in the Kankakee River and Otter Creek in Kane County.

"*Palaemonetes kadiakensis* almost always is associated with, and is most abundant in, living aquatic vegetation. Its reduction in distribution and abundance in Illinois is probably attributable to increased turbidity and sedimentation and the resultant loss of vegetation," according to Lawrence M. Page of the Illinois Natural History Survey.

The forest preserve sees this as being very encouraging, as Mississippi grass shrimp are indicative of cleaner water systems. Their presence holds promise for the improvement of aquatic habitats within and surrounding the Des Plaines River. I would also add that it also holds that the Des Plaines River is benefitting from all the work done to the surrounding wetlands and streams that feed into it.

Huber and other ecologists for the district were doing stream monitoring this past summer when they discovered several dozen of the glass shrimp. At first they didn't recognize inch-long crustaceans, which meant they had found something rare and exciting. They removed two specimens for identification in the laboratory.

"Aquatic insect identification requires equipment with high-powered magnification to count tiny body parts nearly invisible to the naked eye. It wasn't until last week that the shrimp were officially identified and documented. This is the first documentation of the species in Lake County, Illinois," said the district announcement.

Starving fo common sense

Speaking of mankind ruining something, the Sierra Club, Prairie Rivers Network, and Openlands issued a joint statement criticizing the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for granting a permit to Mississippi Sand, LLC for permission to discharge wastewater, up to 5.1 million gallons a day, from its planned mining operation adjacent to Starved Rock State Park, into Horseshoe Creek, which flows through the park.

They are mining sand for the fracking industry that injects sand and other chemicals into the ground that then releases natural gas.

"We are deeply disappointed by IEPA's decision. In particular, IEPA's granting the permit without holding a public hearing to listen and to respond directly to numerous public concerns By any standard, Starved Rock State Park is emblematic of Illinois tourism and is one of premiere state parks in Illinois. This decision enables the degradation of the irreplaceable natural and recreational value of the park."

Beat winter blues

If the cold is getting to you, this weekend marks the beginning of the Bass Pro Shops Great American Boat Show that runs through Feb. 10 at the mega store in Gurnee. Seminars include "Movement of Fish" Saturdays at 1 p.m., "Using the Latest Electronics" Saturdays at 2 p.m. and "Local Fishing Tips" Saturdays at 3 p.m. Sundays at 1 p.m. learn "How to Properly Fish a Structure", "Fishing Techniques, Presentations and Retrieve Speeds" at 2 p.m. and get "Local Fishing Tips" at 3 p.m. at the store.

Kids can sign up for a bobber fishing and Casting Challenge where they can test their aim and win a prize. Adults will want to put their prop changing skills to the test where they can win prizes. Other free stuff and raffles as well.

One Grand Prize winner will win the Boat of Your Dreams Sweepstakes. Winner selects boat package of their choice up to \$30,000 value.