

# Center for State of the Parks



## EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Nestled along the western bank of the Mississippi River in northeastern Iowa, Effigy Mounds National Monument protects an array of nationally significant cultural and natural resources while offering numerous recreational opportunities for visitors. In 2007, more than 88,000 people visited the 2,526-acre park.

American Indians built the mounds for which the park was named sometime during the Woodland Period (1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000). The park's mounds include a long line of bear effigies known as the Marching Bear Group, several bird effigies, linear mounds, large conical mounds, and compound mounds (a combination of conical and linear mounds). Together these mounds comprise one of the largest concentrations of American Indian mounds in the United States.

In addition to significant cultural resources, Effigy Mounds National Monument includes habitats ranging from wetlands to upland forests that support numerous animal and plant species, including federally and state-listed rare species. The monument's impressive natural resources can be experienced from a number of scenic overlooks and on hiking trails that meander for miles.



KRISTEN MAXFIELD

Effigy Mounds National Monument is home to a long line of bear effigies, shown here, known as the Marching Bear Group.

### CHALLENGES

- **Adjacent development detrimental to park resources:** Effigy Mounds National Monument is a sanctuary for native plants and wildlife. However, park lands are not well connected to other nearby natural areas, and the monument could become further isolated due to adjacent development, with detrimental effects on natural and cultural resources. Some archaeological resources are located on or near the park's boundary, which is undefined in areas and makes resource protection even more difficult. The park needs a boundary survey so park

staff and adjacent landowners know where the park's boundary lies.

- **Invasive non-native plants threaten native species:** Although researchers believe that the monument's non-native invasive plant species are still manageable, several species are beginning to pose a serious threat. Park managers use chemical herbicides; mowing, pulling, and cutting; and prescribed burns to combat some of the invasive plants.
- **Funding lacking for research:** The park has a number of top-priority resource projects that require funds to complete, including constructing a walking trail to the Marching Bear Group of mounds; collecting oral histories from the park's traditionally associated groups as well as past and current park staff; and surveying, controlling, and monitoring invasive non-native garlic mustard plants. Some additional projects include completing a boundary survey of the entire monument; reorganizing and expanding museum storage space; and researching lesser-known historic structures.
- **Increased staffing critical:** Effigy Mounds does not have any staff dedicated solely to cultural resources. Park resources would benefit from the addition of a full-time cultural resource manager or specialist as well as a permanent full-time museum technician. Natural resource staffing needs include an additional permanent full-time biologist, a per-



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manent subject-to-furlough biological technician, and three seasonal biological technicians. In summer 2009, the park received funds to begin filling some of these natural resource positions. Effigy Mounds does not have enough funds to support a full-time visitor and resource protection program, leaving the public and resources unprotected for up to five months per year. According to a National Park Service study, the monument's visitor and resource protection program requires an additional 1.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to bring the program up to the minimal national safety and security standards. The monument's resource education and interpretation division needs include two additional full-time rangers, one full-time park guide, and more FTE seasonal rangers.

#### WHAT'S BEING DONE

- **Landscape restoration ongoing.** Park Service staff have been restoring the monument's habitats to their native species composition and condition since the 1990s. Fifteen acres of oak savannah have been restored by removing small trees and shrubs to free the oaks from encroachment, followed by prescribed burns to spur regeneration of native savannah grasses. In the park's open fields and prairies, staff conduct prescribed burns to stimulate growth and reduce encroaching woody plants. Staff have cut down trees on mounds within the Sny Magill Unit, removed stumps, and planted native vegetation in an effort to reduce erosion and re-establish native habitat.

- **Repatriation ceremonies and oral histories connect the park to traditionally associated peoples.** Effigy Mounds staff and affiliated American Indian groups have performed three repatriation ceremonies, in which human remains and objects from the park's museum collection have been reburied within the national monument. In an effort to record the histories of the monument's associated American Indian groups, staff have interviewed members of the Ho-Chunk, Iowa, and Sac & Fox groups. Monument staff would like to interview representatives from other culturally affiliated tribes as well.
- **Archaeological resources protected.** Effigy Mounds staff have successfully enforced archaeological resource protection laws. In 2008, an adjacent landowner was charged with a civil violation of the Archeological Resource Protection Act, netting a penalty of more than \$19,000—one of the largest such penalties in Park Service history.
- **Native species reintroduced.** In 1998 and 1999, Effigy Mounds staff worked with the nonprofit Raptor Resource Project to reintroduce 18 peregrine falcons back into northern Iowa. There are 24 breeding pairs that nest and reproduce in the Upper Mississippi Valley as a result of these efforts.
- **Park educates both teachers and students.** Effigy Mounds National Monument offers teacher workshops that are popular with area educators. The workshops offer continuing education credit for the 250 teachers that take part in the program every summer. This program is particularly significant because the

State of Iowa does not currently require environmental education, and this is an opportunity for educators to expand their curriculum. The park partners with associated American Indian tribes, regional archaeological organizations, and Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area during these workshops. During the school year, ranger-guided walks and interpretive presentations educate area students about the cultural and natural resources of the region.

#### ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come. NPCA initiated the State of the Parks program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks.

#### CONTACT US

For a copy of NPCA's full report on Effigy Mounds National Monument, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit [www.npca.org/stateoftheparks](http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks) or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at [jnations@npca.org](mailto:jnations@npca.org). For more information on Effigy Mounds National Monument, visit the park online at [www.nps.gov/efmo](http://www.nps.gov/efmo).