The Wabash River is the official state river of Indiana and flows 475 miles from the headwaters near Fort Recovery, Ohio, to its confluence with the Ohio River.

The Wabash runs freely for 411 miles from the dam at Roush Reservoir (Huntington County) to the Ohio River, making it the longest free-flowing stretch of any river in the United States east of the Mississippi River.

Wabash is the English spelling of “Ouabache” – the French name for the river. French traders named it after the Miami Indian name, waapaahsiiki, meaning “it shines white.”

The Wabash is the largest northern tributary of the Ohio River and has 12 major tributaries of its own – Eel, Little, Little Wabash, Mississinewa, Patoka, Salamonie, Tippecanoe and White rivers, and Sugar and Wildcat creeks in Indiana, plus the Embarras and Vermillion rivers in Illinois.

Seventy-three of Indiana’s 92 counties lie within the Wabash River watershed, which drains almost 75 percent of Indiana.

Despite losses in biodiversity, the Wabash River section around Terre Haute is home to 61 species of plants, animals, and habitats considered rare, threatened or endangered.

The Wabash contains numerous species of mollusks, including such federally endangered species as the clubshell, Eastern fanshell, tubercled blossom, rough pigtoe, ring pink, pink mucket and white wartyback.

Bald eagles, once federally endangered, now nest in the Wabash River/Sugar Creek corridor. So do Great blue herons.

Sugar Creek valley, bordered by Shades and Turkey Run state parks, contains spectacular geographic features – sandstone cliffs, waterfalls and backbones. Several are considered nationally significant and two are designated National Natural Landmarks: Pine Hills and Rocky Hollow-Falls Canyon.

Several rare aquatic species, including the federally endangered clubshell mussel and the state-endangered gilt darter thrive in Sugar Creek.

Ice age remnants such as Canada yew, Eastern hemlock and white pine are abundant along Sugar Creek.
Wabash River/Sugar Creek Corridor Restoration Project

Illustration by Rebecca Mauser/DNR Division of Communications