



## Inside this issue:

Featured Species: 2  
Hispid false mal-  
low

Featured Species: 2  
Luna moth

Schedule of Events 3

## Purple Martin Housing

Over the summer, intern M'Shae Alderman worked on setting up a purple martin house at Floracliff. Purple martins are the largest of the North American swallows and nest exclusively in man-made houses east of the Rockies. Houses can take on various designs as long as the size of the compartments are suited for their needs, measuring at least 6"x 6" x 6". Houses can be purchased ready made or constructed out of gourds, wood, or metal. We chose to make a standard 12 room house out of wood.

Placing of purple martin houses is also crucial. They need to be 12-20 ft. high and at least 40 feet from trees or buildings. A nearby water source often helps to attract the birds, which arrive in North America in the spring. They may nest as late as June, so it is a good idea to keep the houses up through August when this year's young will be scouting for next year's nesting site.

One problem many purple martin landlords face is competition from other bird species. This can be avoided by placing other houses nearby for them to nest in. Also, crescent shaped openings instead of round ones deter starlings from using the house.

Of course erecting a house does not always guarantee that purple martins will come. Our next step will be to see what happens next spring and make any necessary modifications. More information about attracting purple martins can be found at the Purple Martin Conservation Association website: [purplemartin.org](http://purplemartin.org).

Thanks, M'Shae, for all your hard work!



Intern M'Shae Alderman next to the Purple martin house she

Help us save on printing and postage cost by receiving your newsletter via email and in color! Send an email to [Floracliff@aol.com](mailto:Floracliff@aol.com) and include your name and address so that we can make the changes. Thank you!

## Our Wish List

If you have any of the following items to donate, please contact Beverly James at 859-351-7770 or [floracliff@aol.com](mailto:floracliff@aol.com). Thank you for your support!

- Laptop
- Tools
- Printer cartridges for Lexmark Z31
- Regional field guides
- Gift certificate to hardware or office supply store
- Birding binoculars
- Toilet tank lid



M. hispidum is a threatened species in Kentucky.

**“That the sky is  
brighter than  
the earth means  
little unless the  
earth itself is  
appreciated  
and enjoyed”  
- Helen Keller**



The caterpillar of the luna moth turns red right before pupating.

## Featured Species: Hispid false mallow- *Malvastrum hispidum*

Last fall, the staff at Floracliff rediscovered the state threatened plant *Malvastrum hispidum*. Also known by its common name, hispid false mallow, this plant can be found in dry, open areas. At Floracliff it was found in a rock outcrop, alongside prickly pear cactus and false pennyroyal.

Hispid false mallow is an annual herbaceous plant that blooms from early June to late August. It has very distinctive fruits that show up from mid August to late October. Like other plants in the Malvaceae family, the flowers have five petals. This plant is one of about 1500 plants in that family, which is also comprised of hibiscus and cacao.

Its ranking as a “state threatened species” means the plant is “a taxon likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range in Kentucky (KSNPC).” To maintain healthy populations of this plant, it is important that the area it is found be kept open and exotics species removed. Disturbance should be kept to a minimum. In Kentucky, this plant is found only in the central part of the state and a few western counties. It is also found in a few surrounding states and in the Great Plains area.

---

## Featured Species: Luna Moth- *Actias luna*

**By: Althea Kleffman**

The Luna moth is a member of the Saturniidae, or Giant Silkworm, family. The moth is lime green to yellow green with wings that average 3 to 4 inches wide and 5-6 inches long, including its long graceful tail. It is found in North America from east of the Great Plains in the U.S. to northern Mexico and from Ontario eastward in Canada.

The moth flies only at night in spring and early summer. As with all Saturniidae, the adult Luna doesn't feed and has no mouth. It lives for about one week and its only purpose is to mate. The bushier, more feathery antennae of the male act as sensors to help him locate a female for mating purposes. The female Luna lays 100 to 300 eggs 4-7 eggs at a time, on the underside of leaves.

After hatching, the Luna caterpillar feeds voraciously on the leaves of birch, alder, persimmon, sweet gum, hickory, walnut and sumac trees, to prepare for its mouth-less adulthood. The caterpillar changes its skin five times before cocooning and ranges in color from bright green to red-orange. Adults emerge from their cocoons in the morning with very small wings, which they must enlarge by pumping bodily fluids through them.

Although rarely seen due to its short adult life span, the Luna moth is considered common.

# Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$4 per person or \$10.00 per family unless otherwise noted. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

## Interpretive Hikes

### **October 13th @ 1:00 p.m.: Tree Identification**

Enjoy the many colors of fall as we discuss how to identify common trees of the Bluegrass.

### **October 20th @ 10:00 a.m.: Forest Ecology at Floracliff with Rob Paratley**

How have differences in habitat helped create different plant communities in the preserve? How have past disturbance and forest history shaped the woods that we see today? Join Rob Paratley, Research Specialist and Herbarium Curator from UK as he discusses the ecology of the Kentucky River Palisades and answers these questions. This will also be a great time to catch the fall colors at their peak.

### **November 10th @ 10:00 a.m.: Long Walk**

Join us for the changes of the season on our fall long walk. This hike will cover five miles and is rated moderate to difficult.

## Volunteer Days - free

**October 6th @ 10:00 a.m.**  
**November 3rd @ 10:00 a.m.**  
**December 1st @ 10:00 a.m.**

\* Our volunteer days are on the first Saturday of each month. Volunteer activities usually involve removing exotic plants from the preserve. This is part of an ongoing effort to protect our native species and we rely on the help of volunteers. Other activities may involve trail work or general maintenance. Please call ahead to register and receive more information. Tools and snacks will be provided.

## Appointments

Private tours can be given to small groups interested in visiting Floracliff. Interested parties can call Beverly James at 859-351-7770 to schedule an appointment.

*“Autumn is a  
second spring  
when every leaf  
is a flower”  
- Albert Camus*

**THE MARY E.  
WHARTON NATURE  
SANCTUARY AT  
FLORA CLIFF**

P. O. Box 4006  
Lexington, KY 40544

Phone: 859-351-7770  
Email: [floracliff@aol.com](mailto:floracliff@aol.com)  
Web address: [www.floracliff.org](http://www.floracliff.org)

Floracliff is a non-profit organization. We rely on support from community members like you. Please support preservation in your region.

Yes! I would like to contribute a tax-deductible gift to Floracliff.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to: Floracliff**

**Mail to: Floracliff  
P.O. Box 4006  
Lexington, KY 40544**



Floracliff  
P.O. Box 4006  
Lexington, KY 40544

***Address correction requested***