



Elk Lick Echo

Spring 2008

Inside this issue:

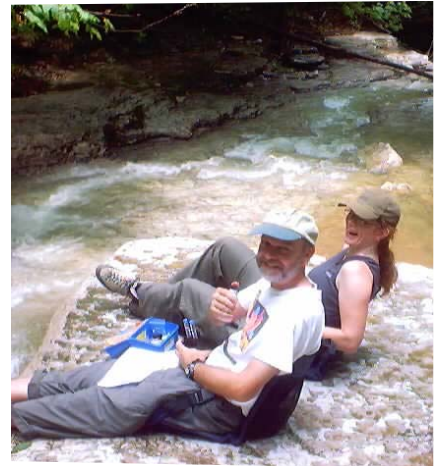
Flora Focus:	2
Fire Pink	
Fungus Focus:	2
Leafy Jelly Fungus	
Schedule of Events	3

Mary Wharton Scholars Program: A Workshop for Teachers

From June 9th-11th Floracliff will be hosting Part I of the Mary Wharton Scholars Program. This 2-½ day teachers' workshop started in 2004 as a way to provide environmental education resources and materials for teachers in the Inner Bluegrass. The workshop will also provide participants with certification in Project Learning Tree, an internationally recognized environmental education program.

The workshop will include lesson plans covering geology, water, soil, plants and how they interact. Regional professionals will be on hand to lead various activities including karst topography demonstrations, sampling the creek for macroinvertebrates, soil type comparisons, and plant identification techniques.

The cost for the workshop is only \$25 to cover expenses for the Project Learning Tree materials. All other materials and food will be provided. We will be spending most of our time outdoors and will be hiking about 2 miles each day. Interested educators should contact Beverly James at floracliff@aol.com or 859-351-7770 to get a registration form. Deadline for registration is June 1st.



A couple of participants from 2004 enjoy the program on water by Elk Lick Creek.

Help us save on printing and postage costs by receiving your newsletter via email and in color! Send an email to 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. Thank you for your support!

- Laptop
- Tools
- Regional field guides
- Work gloves
- Gift certificate to hardware or office supply store
- Birding binoculars
- Toilet tank lid



Fire pink is pollinated by hummingbirds and butterflies.

**“Look deep
into nature,
and then you
will
understand
everything
better.”
~ Albert
Einstein**

Flora Focus: Fire Pink– *Silene virginica*

By: Althea Wiggs

The Fire Pink is a common flower found mainly at the edges of wooded areas and on rocky slopes, bearing bright-red flowers 1 to 2 inches across in May and June. It is a clump-forming herbaceous perennial which grows 12-20" tall in small clusters of scarlet red flowers with five notched petals atop long, slender stems. The leaves are opposite and lanceolate to 4" long. *Silene* is in the *caryophyllaceae* (pink) family which is the same as *Lychnis* and *Dianthus*.

The Fire Pink is also called 'catchfly' because of the very sticky stems and calyx. 'Catchfly' refers to the fact that insects often stick to the fuzzy foliage. This may prevent undesirable insects (such as flies or ants) from interfering with pollination by more suitable insects and birds. The flowers are cross-pollinated by the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird and various large butterflies. The Fire Pink with its distinct red petals would be a striking addition to the garden.

Fungus Focus: Leafy Jelly Fungus– *Tremella foliacea*

By: Ciara Lockstadt

Often times found on decomposing twigs and tree trunks, the Leafy Jelly Fungus or *Tremella foliacea* is common along the trails of Floracliff on damp winter days. This jelly fungus is a member of the *Tremella* genus and is sometimes known as “Brown Witches Butter”, in reference to another member of the *Tremella* family “Witches Butter”, which is a yellow jelly fungus. The Leafy Jelly Fungus does not resemble the average mushroom with a cap and stem. Instead, it has gelatinous leaf-like lobes that are fused together. These lobes are very fragile, composed of soft and rubbery tissue. It is most commonly a cinnamon color but as the fungus ages, it's light red-brown color deepens to a dark rich chocolate-brown. It ranges in size from five to twenty-five centimeters long, but its fruiting body can grow to the size of a softball.

This fungus is found in moist areas and it is mainly composed of water. The Leafy Jelly Fungus shrivels in arid conditions, becoming hard and brittle. It fruits throughout summer, fall, and sometimes winter depending on rainfall and temperature. It is especially attracted to fallen hardwood limbs but has also been seen on coniferous limbs. It is unlike most other fungi in the fact that it does not have gills within a mushroom cap. The Leafy Jelly Fungus has spores that attach to a specialized elongated cell, called a basidia. Upon being hit by raindrops, the basidia flings the spore from the elongated cell spreading the fungus.

Leafy Jelly Fungus is edible and can be eaten raw. Most often it is used in soups and mixed mushroom sauces, however it has a very bland flavor. There are very few jelly fungi that are poisonous but one should *never* consume any fungus found unless they are absolutely certain of its identity.



Leafy jelly fungus is most often found on limbs of hardwood trees.

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

Saturday, March 29th @ 1:00 p.m.: Pollinators with Blake Newton

Join Blake Newton, UK Extension Specialist for 4-H and Youth Entomology, for a program about pollinators and their relationships with the spring wildflowers.

Saturday, April 5th @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflowers with Tara Littlefield

See the wildflowers at their peak on this hike led by botanist Tara Littlefield from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission.

Sunday, April 13th @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflower Folklore

Learn about how some of our most common wildflowers have been used for medicines, food, love charms, and more.

Saturday, May 10th @ 8:30 a.m.: Birding with Ben Albritton

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on this hike led by avid bird watcher Ben Albritton.

Saturday, May 17th @ 10:00 a.m.: Herpetology with Zeb Weese

Zeb Weese, Eastern Regional Manager from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, will lead this hike to find some herps in the ponds and Elk Lick Creek.

Garlic Mustard Pulls - free!

May 3rd @ 10:00 a.m.

June 7th @ 10:00 a.m.

Garlic mustard is an herbaceous biennial named because its leaves smell like garlic. It was brought over from Europe in the mid-1800's, most likely for food or medicinal purposes. One plant can produce hundreds of seeds, which has aided it in becoming a widespread invasive plant in Kentucky that is crowding out native plants. It's an easy plant to pull and a small group of people can cover a lot of ground in just a few hours. Help us get rid of this plant at Floracliff. Please call ahead to register at 859-351-7770. Water and snacks will be provided.



Photo credit: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org

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.

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

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Address correction requested