



Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Fall 2011

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Supporting Biodiversity: The gift that gives back

By: Beverly James, Preserve Manager

The removal of invasive, exotic species can often seem like a grueling, endless task, but we have found that it is not without reward. Over the summer we found one of our rarest plants, *Malvastrum hispidum*, or hispid false mallow, in two additional locations where invasive species have been removed. It's a diminutive plant that is difficult to catch in bloom and easily overlooked. It certainly doesn't seem like an attention seeker, but it's a State Threatened plant, which to me makes it more intriguing. The protection status "threatened" means it is "likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range in Kentucky". Plants and other species that are even more rare and vulnerable are classified as "endangered". Other rare species that have not been given one of these two distinctions, but are vulnerable to decline are ranked as "special concern". These rankings are given based on the geographic range, habitat, specialization, and the total number of populations of a particular species. With that in mind, I can't help but wonder where else the hispid false mallow could be on the preserve and what we can do to help its population.

In Kentucky, there are 275 plants listed as Endangered or Threatened and 57 listed as Special Concern. This adds up to about 15 percent of the state's flora. An additional 38 plants are listed Historical and 4 have become Extinct in the state. The staff at the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission has worked tirelessly for the past 35 years to monitor the state's native flora and fauna, identify rare species and communities, and manage the preserves to keep encroaching invasive species and other threats from destroying sensitive habitats. It is their work that has guided us at Floracliff in prioritizing management concerns and recognizing rare species, such as the hispid false mallow.



Malvastrum hispidum, or hispid false mallow, is a state threatened plant found at Floracliff.

The Palisades region is considered a hotspot for rare species in the state and has the highest concentration of rare plants in the Bluegrass region. Within the 100 mile stretch along the Kentucky River between Madison and Franklin counties, there is a diverse array of plant communities providing habitat for state and federally listed plants such as Braun's rock-cress, starry cleft phlox, softleaf arrow-wood viburnum, globe bladderpod, and Walter's violet. There are also 4 species of endangered bats documented in the region. While none of these plants or bats have been documented at Floracliff, we do have white walnut (special concern in KY), downy arrow-wood

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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

Please contact Beverly James at 859-351-7770 or floracliff@aol.com if you wish to donate any of the following items. All donations are tax deductible.

- Handheld GPS
- Projector
- Tools (hand tools or power tools)
- Regional field guides
- Gift certificate to hardware or office supply store
- Work gloves
- Spray bottles
- Birding binoculars

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viburnum (threatened in KY), and the hispid false mallow, which is found in only 11 counties. The hispid false mallow is considered a glade species that prefers thin soils and a lot of sunlight. While true cedar glades are found in other regions of Kentucky, there are limestone outcrops and openings in the Palisades with exposed bedrock, thin soils and very few trees, which is just the type of habitat where hispid false mallow and other rare plants could be found. At Floracliff, the hispid false mallow was found five years ago in one of these outcrops among prickly pear cactus, false pennyroyal, widow's-cross, red cedar, and stunted, gnarly dwarf hackberries. At the time, it seem restricted to that small area. After all, it's on an upland that was extensively farmed in the mid-1900s, then heavily invaded by bush honeysuckle.

For the past 11 years, we've been on a mission to remove bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) and other exotic invasive plants in an effort to restore the preserve to a healthier ecosystem. We still have our work cut out for us, but in monitoring areas we have worked, we have seen the release of native plants that were suppressed by the dense infestation of the bush honeysuckle. The bush honeysuckle was outcompeting the native plants for space, light, nutrients, and other resources. In areas we have cleared over the last two years, we have found the hispid false mallow in two separate locations. It's a glimmer of hope that our efforts are paying off and we can help the population of the hispid false mallow by continuing our efforts in these areas. One area will be the focus of our upcoming volunteer days, on October 1st, November 5th, and December 3rd. We invite you to come out and help with a rewarding project.

We also invite you to commend the work of our partners at the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, which just celebrated their 35th anniversary. You can now become a Friend of the Kentucky Nature Preserves and contribute to the protection of rare species and natural communities. More information can be found at www.friendsofkynaturepreserves.org.



Fauna Focus: Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

By: Laura Baird



A monarch that has just emerged from its chrysalis. Photo by Mary Carol Cooper.

The Monarch is easily the most widely recognized and perhaps best-loved butterfly in North America. It was named for its size and large "domain," as it is found in all three North American countries. To further support its regal name, the genus name *Danaus* refers to a mythical Egyptian king and descendent of Zeus.

This pretty butterfly is easily recognized with its tawny orange color and bold black stripes. Males and females can be told apart fairly easily: females are slightly smaller with thicker black veins while males are larger with small spots in the center of their hind wings. These spots actually disperse pheromones to attract females. As a caterpillar, it is banded in yellow, black, and white. Its chrysalis is bluish-green with a few small golden spots. It is distasteful to predators because of the cardiac glycosides in the milkweed it consumes.

Monarchs are famous for being the only butterfly to migrate north and south, overwintering in the same locations every year. Those that are found east of the Rocky Mountains spend their winters in the mountaintops of Central Mexico. Monarchs living west of the Rocky Mountains travel to forest groves in California. They wake in spring to start the long journey north. The total lifespan of each butterfly is only about two months, so the monarchs that migrate south are separated by a few generations from those that migrate north. Exactly how monarchs can return to the exact same overwintering spot their great-great grandparents used isn't yet understood, but flight patterns seem to be inherited and they are capable of using the Earth's magnetic field for orientation.

Many thanks to those who donated in the last quarter:

Volunteers

Emma Anderson
Pavan Podapati
Charles Sither

Hike Leaders

James Wagner

Donors

Acorn:

Sandra C. Young

Shooting star:

Dennis and Elizabeth Chambers
Joel DiGirolamo

Carl and Billye Haslett

Spicebush:

Luther B. Caldwell
Down to Earth Garden Club
William Elwood

Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$5 per person or \$12 per family unless otherwise noted. Most programs last 2-3 hours. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

Interpretive Hikes

Saturday, October 15th @ 10:00 a.m.: Tree Identification and Natural History

Join Preserve Manager Beverly James on this leisurely hike to Elk Lick Falls and Elk Lick Creek with stops along the way to discuss the natural history of our native trees as well as how to identify them by their leaves, bark, and fruit. Hiking level is moderate.

Saturday, October 22nd @ 10:00 a.m.: The Fascinating Forest

Undisturbed woodlands offer strange and mysterious sights. Join Field Technician Nathan Strange as he seeks out the often overlooked aspects of the forest discussing natural history, tree resiliency, and plant folklore. Hiking level is moderate.

Saturday, November 12th @ 10:00 a.m.: Long Hike

This hike has no particular theme, just a goal of seeing more of the preserve than we cover on our other hikes. It's the only one that features a stop along the Kentucky River. The hiking level is rated difficult due to the length, which is about 4 miles, but there will be an opportunity to only do half the hike.

Saturday, December 3rd @ 1:00 p.m.: Winter Tree Identification

Preserve Manager Beverly James will cover how to identify common trees of the Bluegrass by their bark, buds, leaf scars, and other characteristics. Hiking level is moderate.

Weed Warrior Days - free!

Saturday, October 1st, 10 am – 1 pm
Saturday, November 5th, 10 am – 1 pm
Saturday, December 3rd, 10 am – 1 pm

Volunteer activities will involve assisting with the removal of 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. Please call ahead to register and receive more information at 859-351-7770. If you are interested in helping out on any other day, give us a call and we can work something out!

Private Appointments

Private tours can be scheduled for small groups interested in visiting Floracliff. Interested parties can contact Beverly James by calling 859-351-7770 or email floracliff@aol.com to schedule an appointment.

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

P. O. Box 21723
Lexington, KY 40522

Phone: 859-351-7770
Email: floracliff@aol.com
Web address: 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 _____

- \$25 - \$49 acorn
- \$50 - \$99 shooting star
- \$100 - \$299 spicebush
- \$300 - \$499 dogwood
- \$500 - \$999 hickory
- \$1000+ old oak tree
- other

Please make checks payable to Floracliff and mail to:
Floracliff, P. O. Box 21723, Lexington, KY 40522.



**P.O. Box 21723
Lexington, KY 40522**

Address correction requested