



# Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Spring 2012

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Our annual herpetology program is scheduled for May 19th. Please see page 3 for more details. Pictured above is a Northern ringneck snake.

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

Thank you!

## New Programs for 2012

By: Beverly James, Preserve Manager

In our winter newsletter, we introduced the Floracliff Field Studies, a new in-depth workshop series. We are now happy to announce the Floracliff Lecture Series. These programs will be held on a weeknight during the summer months in our nature center. They will highlight natural history of the region and cover topics that may not be suited for our regular hikes. This year, we'll have guest speakers discussing flora, ecology, archaeology, and more. All programs will be offered for free, but pre-registration is required. You can call 859-351-7770 or email [flora-cliff@aol.com](mailto:flora-cliff@aol.com) to register and get directions to the site. Here are the programs we currently have scheduled. More will be added soon.

- **June 12th, 7 pm: Rob Paratley, University of Kentucky**  
“Eastern Deciduous Forests Through the Eyes of Lucy Braun” - The deciduous forests of eastern North America cover a vast area and many different forest types. In this talk, we will explore the contributions of E. Lucy Braun, early to mid-20th century ecologist and botanist. Braun, through extensive field work and her great capacity to synthesize the studies of others, created a framework for understanding regional differences in forest types, as well as an overarching conceptual framework for the process and history of deciduous forests. While the latter concepts are largely outdated, her characterization of regional eastern forests remains the foundation for plant geographers and ecologists today.
- **June 26th, 7 pm: Brian Yahn, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission**  
“Plant Communities of the Bluegrass” - The Bluegrass region is home to various plant communities including forests, woodlands, barrens and prairies. Each community has certain environmental factors that influence what species are found there. Brian Yahn will give us a tour of the region, from the more common community types to some that are quite rare and unique.
- **July 10th, 6:30 pm: Roberta Burnes, Kentucky Division for Air Quality**  
“Plants as Bioindicators” - Like canaries in the coal mine, plants can give us clues about the health of our environment. Join us as we explore the use of plants as “bioindicators” - nature's early warning system. You'll learn how to identify some of Kentucky's most sensitive native plants and see the damage caused by air pollution. You'll also learn how lichens are being used as sentinels for air quality in America's National Parks. Weather permitting, we'll wander outdoors to identify some of the best bioindicators among Kentucky's native plants.

**Save the Date:** On Saturday, October 13th, we will be co-hosting an event with the Kentucky Native Plant Society (KNPS) for a celebration of Mary Wharton's 100th birthday and the KNPS fall meeting. Various hikes and programs will be offered throughout the day. We will send out more details in our fall newsletter.

We still have spaces available in our Floracliff Field Studies workshops, although some are filling up quickly. Please see our website, [www.floracliff.org](http://www.floracliff.org), for more details about the workshops and up to date information about all the programs mentioned above.

## Flora Focus: Rusty blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*)

By: Nathan Strange



Flowers of the rusty blackhaw viburnum

Rusty black-haw is an attractive large shrub reaching heights of 15 to 20 feet. It is very frequent in limestone regions of the southeastern US, such as the Inner Bluegrass. Its thick, lustrous leaves, which are simple, opposite, and serrulate, turn a charming burgundy color in the autumn months. One defining characteristic in identifying the rusty blackhaw from other native viburnums is its reddish-brown hairs which appear on the foliage and petioles. This is also referenced by its Latin name *rufidulum*, meaning "reddish". In May, the small white flowers bloom in flattened clusters up to 4 inches wide. These are followed by dark blue, waxy fruits called drupes forming sometime around September or October.

The rusty blackhaw serves as a valuable food source for many types of wildlife. The flowers are attractive to nectar seeking insects, such as bees and butterflies. The foliage are eaten by caterpillars of the spring azure butterfly. The fruits are a healthy food source for many birds including cardinals, cedar waxwings, and mockingbirds. While small mammals such as squirrels and chipmunks also make good use of the desirable fruits, deer generally avoid feeding on the plant except for the leaves when food is scarce.

Since rusty blackhaw easily adapts to a wide range of soils, it does very well in urban environments for formal or natural landscaping. It has very few problems with pest infestations, drought, or disease, making it virtually maintenance free. Being in the plant family *Caprifoliaceae*, rusty blackhaw is closely related to Amur honeysuckle and has similar ornamental attributes, making it a good native alternative to one of Kentucky's worst invasive species.

## Flora Focus: Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

By: Laura Baird



Wild geranium flowers have five petals and 10 stamens.

Wild geranium is a showy spring flower usually blooming in late April or May. It has 5 rosy-purple petals and 10 stamens with unusual, bright blue pollen visible under microscope. Its leaves are toothed and palmately divided into 5 to 7 segments, giving it a roughly hand-like shape. The species name *maculatum* means "spotted" and refers to the somewhat mottled appearance of the leaves. The entire plant stands at about 2 feet tall and is common in moist, open woods. Its nectar and pollen are attractive to a variety of bees, flies, and small butterflies.

Wild geranium is also known by the name "cranesbill". The genus name *Geranium* is derived from a Greek word meaning "crane". Both names refer to the plant's seedcase, which is long, narrow and beak-like. This case pops open when it's ripe and catapults its seed, much like jewelweed. The seed can then move even farther by use of its tail-like awn. The awn curls when wet and straightens as it dries, allowing the seed to creep farther and farther away until it becomes wedged into a crack or buried into the soil where it can germinate in safety.

## Many thanks to those who donated in the last quarter:

### **Volunteers**

Colin Goggin  
Hugh Huffman  
Claudia Marin  
Montessori Middle School of KY  
Jacob Moody  
Peggy Moody  
Grant Phelps  
Terese Pierskalla  
Leigh Anne Robertson  
Bill Rodgers

Charles Sither

### **Donors**

#### **Acorn:**

Luther Caldwell  
Clare Carpenter  
Vicki Holmberg  
Gabriel Popkin  
Sonya Reed  
Susan Sither  
Kay Wright

### **Shooting Star:**

Peter Brown  
Tatsiana McGee (in memory of Vladimir Shuk)

### **Spicebush:**

William Elwood  
McReynolds Family Foundation  
Clare Sipple  
Clara Wieland

### **Old Oak Tree:**

Crutcher Family Foundation

# 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

All hikes are rated moderate in difficulty due to narrow trails, uneven terrain, and change in elevation.

### **Saturday, April 7th @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflower Hike w/ Tara Littlefield**

Botanist Tara Littlefield of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission will lead this hike during the peak of our wildflower season.

### **Saturday, April 14th @ 9:30 p.m.: Shades of Spring w/ Nathan Strange**

Floracliff's showy floral displays are what make springtime in the forest so special. Come and introduce yourself to dozens of native species as nature puts on a multicolored display of flowers lighting up the forest floor. This hike will be led by Floracliff field technician, Nathan Strange.

### **Saturday, April 14th @ 1:00 p.m.: Pollinators w/ Dr. James Wagner**

Join James Wagner, Professor of Biology at Transylvania University, and Preserve Manager Beverly James for a program about pollinators and their relationships with the spring wildflowers. This hike will also feature Elk Lick Falls.

### **Saturday, April 21st @ 10:00 a.m.: Wildflower Hike**

Preserve Manager Beverly James will lead the last spring wildflower hike discussing identification, ecological roles, and fun facts of the wildflowers.

### **Saturday, May 12th @ 8:30 a.m.: Birding Hike w/ Hank Yacek**

Hank Yacek will lead this hike to find and observe spring migrants and year-round resident birds. He will cover identification, songs, and what birds to expect in different habitats. If you have binoculars, bring them with you!

### **Saturday, May 19th @ 9:00 a.m.: Herpetology w/ Zeb Weese**

Zeb Weese, biologist for the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund, will lead this program to find some of our native frogs, snakes, salamanders, and turtles in the pond and Elk Lick Creek. This program is one the entire family will enjoy. It's also very popular, so early registration is encouraged.

## Weed Warrior Days - free!

**Saturday, April 7th, 10 am – 1 pm**

**Saturday, May 5th, 10 am – 1 pm**

**Saturday, June 2nd, 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!

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

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Lexington, KY 40522

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

- \$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*