



Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Spring 2014

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New Programs for Spring

The Kentucky River Palisades region encompasses the highest quality natural areas in central Kentucky. For those living in Lexington and surrounding areas, the Palisades offer the closest opportunity to experience some of Kentucky's native biodiversity in areas that haven't seen major development. The forested river corridor provides a migratory route for birds, prime habitat for spring wildflowers, host plants for moths, butterflies, and other insects, and higher stream quality for amphibians, macroinvertebrates, and fish. The cliffs and caves provide shelter for a few different species of bats, some of them endangered.

It's easy to miss all this diversity when it's tucked away in steep ravines. At Floracliff, we're continually working to protect and highlight the various flora and fauna that call the preserve and region home. We have a number of new programs coming up this spring and hope you will find at least one to attend to learn more about the region's biota. Program topics include wildflowers, birds, herpetology, aquatic diversity (fish and macroinvertebrates), dragonflies and damselflies, and moths and bats.

Not only do these programs provide a fun opportunity for you to learn, they also provide a chance for us to learn more about Floracliff and find new or unusual species. On numerous occasions, we have added new species to our list during programs. For that reason, we consider all of our visitors to be potential citizen scientists who can contribute observations here and at other natural areas in the region, while fostering a deeper connection to the area. A full list of programs can be found on page 3.



Antheraea polyphemus - Polyphemus moth



Libellula semifasciata - Painted Skimmer

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 and include your name and address so that we can make the changes. Thank you!

Kentucky Gives Day - April 9th

Kentucky Gives Day is a 24-hour online fundraising event to encourage support of Kentucky's non-profit organizations. Last year you helped us raise over \$500! We hope to raise even more this year. Bonus prizes will be awarded to non-profits that do well during the event, so if you're thinking of contributing this year, April 9th will be a great time to give. We encourage you to help us with our conservation efforts by scheduling your donation today. Please visit our site at kygives.razoo.com/story/Floracliff



Flora Focus: Large-flowered bellwort - *Uvularia grandiflora*

By: Josie Miller



A bee pollinates a large-flowered bellwort.

Whether it is named for "a small grape" (from Latin) or the dangling tissue at the back of one's throat (uvula), *Uvularia grandiflora*, or large-flowered bellwort, offers a charming quaintness to the mid-spring forest floor. Native to most of Eastern North America, the slender-stemmed plant nods from the apparent weight of the one to two-inch twisted bell-shaped yellow flowers it bears. The perfoliate leaves appear alternately pierced on the stem with small hairs on the lower surface.

In the dappled light of the deciduous woods, large-flowered bellwort entices pollinators such as mining bees (*Andrena* spp.) and sweat bees (*Lasioglossum* spp.) to visit by offering a sweet nectar reward. Female bees combine this with the high-protein pollen they collect to create bee bread that feeds developing larvae. After bellwort is successfully fertilized, seeds develop with attached protein-rich elaiosomes. Attracted by the nutritious treat, ants carry seeds back to their nests, consume the elaiosome, and discard the seed "waste", thus propagating the lovely large-flowered bellwort for future generations.

Flora Focus: Early Meadow-rue - *Thalictrum dioicum*

By: Laura Baird



The male early meadow rue flowers have dangling stamens.

Early meadow rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*) is an understated but well-loved spring ephemeral. Native to much of the eastern United States and Canada, it is often found on wooded slopes, ravines and limestone outcrops.

The entire plant is one or two feet in height with long-stalked leaves that divide many times into softly lobed leaflets, giving the plant a delicate, lacy appearance. It superficially resembles the foliage of columbine.

As pretty as the foliage is, early meadow rue is best known for its flowers. The species name *dioicum*, deriving from the Greek for "separate houses", refers to the way male and female flowers appear on separate plants, ensuring cross-pollination. They are wind-pollinated, so they expend no effort to attract attention with bright colors or pretty smells. Both sexes lack petals, instead having small greenish or purplish sepals that cup the flower. The male flowers are showier, with their abundance of bright yellow stamens giving the flower the appearance of a golden tassel. Females are less noticeable but still tassel-like

with comparatively few whitish pistils. Both versions should be appreciated when they appear this April and May.

Many thanks to those who donated in the last quarter:

Donors

Acorn (\$5-49):

Sonya Reed

Sharon Stubblefield

Shooting Star (\$50-99):

Jeffrey and Vicki Holmberg

Sandra Young

Spicebush (\$100-299):

Terri Koontz

Charles and Gloria Martin

Hickory (\$500-999):

Audubon Society of Kentucky

In-kind Donors

Sharon Stubblefield

Program Leaders

Betty Beshoar

Heather Housman

Volunteers

Nancy Adams

Hugh Huffman

Montessori Middle School

Kevin Robinson

Charles Sither

Nathan Skinner

Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$5 per person or \$12 per family unless otherwise noted. Most hikes last 2-3 hours. Call 859-351-7770 or email floracliff@aol.com to register or get more information.

Programs and Hikes

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

Saturday, April 5th @ 10:00 a.m.: Wildflower Hike w/ Martina Hines

Martina Hines, an ecologist with the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, will lead this wildflower hike during the peak blooming period. Highlights will likely include Virginia bluebells, celandine poppies, and bellwort.

Sunday, April 13th @ 1:00 p.m.: Wildflower Hike w/ Josie Miller

Floracliff Field-tech Josie Miller will lead this wildflower hike to Elk Lick Creek. Highlights will likely include celandine poppies, bishop's cap, nodding trillium, bellwort, shooting stars, and more.

April 19th (part 1) & May 3rd (part 2): Kentucky's Spring Flora Workshop w/ Dr. Brad Ruhfel (EKU)

Interested in learning more about Kentucky's spring wildflowers and other plants? This workshop will cover plant identification, plant communities of Kentucky, collection techniques, and conservation issues. Field locations will be Floracliff and Maywoods Environmental and Education Laboratory. The cost is \$50, which covers two days of instruction and a field guide.

May 10th & 11th: Bluegrass Birding Festival & Craft Fair

There will be festivities all day Saturday and Sunday at Jacobson Park, including morning field trips to Floracliff led by David Lang at 8:00 a.m.. Please note that Floracliff is not handling the registration for these hikes. Please contact info@bluegrassbirdingfestival.com or 859-268-0114. More information about the festival can be found at bluegrassbirdingfestival.com

Saturday, May 24th @ 9:00 a.m.: Herpetology Program w/ Zeb Weese

Zeb Weese, biologist for the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund, will lead this program for all ages to find some of our native frogs, snakes, salamanders, and turtles in the pond and Elk Lick Creek.

May 30th & 31st: Kentucky's Aquatic Diversity Workshop

Led by Michael Compton of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and Ryan Evans of the Kentucky Division of Water, this workshop will cover identification and diversity of aquatic organisms, particularly fish and macroinvertebrates. Water chemistry, collection techniques, and stream habitats, and conservation issues will also be covered. Field trips will include Floracliff and the nearby Lower Howard's Creek State Nature Preserve. The cost is \$50, which covers two days of instruction and educational materials.

Saturday, June 7th @ 9:30 a.m.: An Introduction to Kentucky's Dragonflies and Damselflies w/ Ellis Lauder milk

Ellis Lauder milk, Invertebrate Biologist with the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, will give a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "An Introduction to Kentucky's Dragonflies and Damselflies". Immediately following the talk, unless it is raining, we'll take a walk through the preserve to see which dragonflies and damselflies we can discover. Bring a pair of close-focusing binoculars.

Friday, June 20th @ 7:30 p.m. 10:30 p.m.: Bats and Moths of the Palisades w/ Dr. Luke Dodd

Dr. Luke Dodd, a researcher from the University of Kentucky, will be leading a program about the bats and nocturnal insects of Kentucky. Stations will be set up to hear echolocating bats, and to see some of the diversity of moths we have in the Kentucky River Palisades region! Bring a flashlight.

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

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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 _____

- \$5 - \$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.
Thank you!



**P.O. Box 21723
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Address correction requested