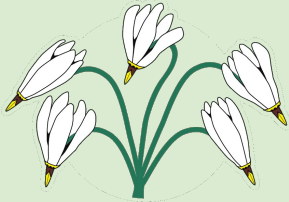


Elk Lick Echo

The Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary



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Indiana bats were confirmed at Floracliff in 2014. Photo by Adam Mann.

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Send an email to info@floracliff.org with your name and address to request the change.

Thanks!

A Glimpse Into Operating a Nature Preserve

A question frequently asked by our visitors is “What do you do to manage a nature preserve?” The answer is not quickly summed up as our work encompasses many different activities. However, the following explains some of what we do and how you can become involved and benefit from our programs.

Conservation is our top priority and we manage the forest to promote the diversity of our native plants, animals, and habitats. We spend a lot of time at the preserve looking for and removing invasive exotic plants such as Amur honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and wintercreeper. We also stay on top of new threats such as Star-of-Bethlehem, which can spread quickly in areas where spring wildflowers thrive. We work on invasive plant removal year-round and have monthly volunteer activities on the first Saturday between September and February. We can sometimes use volunteer help on weekdays.

We also work on planning, leading, and facilitating educational programs. We have popular annual programs including spring wildflower hikes, the spring herpetology program, and the fall Long Hike. In addition, we try to offer new and unique programs every year. Last year, we hosted programs on dragonflies, moths and bats, and geology. This year we have planned 2-day workshops on mosses and birds and a Bioblitz in June. While we lead many of our programs, we rely on the generosity and expertise of biologists throughout Kentucky to strengthen the diversity and quality of our educational opportunities.

It's important for us to continually expand our knowledge about Floracliff through monitoring, citizen science, and university research projects. We participate in bi-annual macroinvertebrate surveys and the Kentucky River Watershed Watch program. While we have been maintaining species list for years, last year we began using the iNaturalist app to help us document the location and time of species observations. This year we will be working with an intern to start a spring phenology project that will help us keep track of changes in the leafing, flowering, and fruiting times of wildflowers and trees.

In addition to our efforts, we rely on research projects from universities and partners. In 2014, the Federally Endangered Indiana bat and gray bat were recorded at Floracliff through an acoustic monitoring project. Funded by the Indiana Bat Conservation Fund, this was part of a joint project of the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund and Kentucky Natural Lands Trust. Thanks to Zeb Weese, Dr. Luke Dodd, and Zack Couch for conducting the surveys.

Floracliff is also a resource for residents, teachers and organizations in the community. We regularly host small groups of students from K-12 schools and universities. The preserve provides a place to observe and learn about stream health, dendrochronology, forest ecology, plant identification, and more. In 2014, we hosted the University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, Lafayette High School, and SCAPA Bluegrass. We also hosted programs for the Kentucky Native Plant Society Stewardship Certification, the Fayette Alliance, and the Bluegrass Birding Festival. We welcome inquiries from teachers and groups who are interested in visiting Floracliff. Our nature center is also available for other environmental groups to use for meetings and programs.

Finally, we also spend time on maintenance so that our visitors can have a safe and enjoyable experience. This includes trail work, landscaping, and nature center upkeep. Over the next few years, keeping our trails safe will become more of a challenge, both logistically and financially, as we face definite changes to our forest from the Emerald Ash Borer. Tax deductible donations are encouraged to help us off-set the increased costs of maintenance. To find out more about participating in or contributing to any of our programs, please contact us at info@floracliff.org.

Thanks to those who contributed in the last quarter

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Fauna Focus: Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)

By: Josie Miller

Standing about two-thirds the height of the common robin, the Eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is one of the more recognizable members of the thrush (Turdidae) family. Although the coloring of females appears less conspicuous than that of males, both sexes don blue feathers from the top of the head to the tip of the tail, with a rusty breast and a white undercarriage.

During cold months when invertebrates are less active, bluebirds may be observed plucking the berries of black cherry, dogwood, hawthorn, hackberry, Virginia creeper, or pokeweed. Most of the year they prefer insects, such as beetles, crickets, and caterpillars, spiders, worms, and even the occasional amphibian or reptile. Approximately two-thirds of the bluebird diet consists of animal rather than plant material. Unlike many red or yellow birds, the coloring of the bluebird's feathers comes not from its diet, but from the structure of its feathers, which reflects blue wavelengths.

Eastern bluebirds are found in open areas around trees and seek natural cavities, such as old woodpecker holes, for nesting. They also respond favorably to nest boxes. In 2013, a citizen scientist monitoring a bluebird nest through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nest Watch reported the first ever twinning in Eastern bluebirds.



Schedule of Events

Pre-registration is required for all events. To register, please email info@floracliff.org and provide your name, number of registrants, and a phone number.

February

Saturday, February 7th, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Volunteer Day

Weather permitting, we will be working on Amur honeysuckle eradication. This is part of an ongoing effort to protect our native species and we rely on the help of volunteers. Tools and snacks will be provided.

Saturday, February 7th, 1:30 p.m.

Winter Tree Identification

Hike Leader: Beverly James

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

Preserve Manager Beverly James will cover how to identify trees using their bark, buds, and leaf scars. This hike will also feature Elk Lick Falls.

March

Saturday, March 21st, 11:00 a.m.

Signs of Spring Hike

Hike Leader: Beverly James

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking level: Moderate to Difficult

This will be our first wildflower hike of the season. We will hopefully see early risers such as trout lilies, snow trilliums, hepatica, and others.

March 28th-29th, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Mosses and Liverworts of Kentucky: A Floracliff Field Studies Workshop

Instructor: Dr. Allen C. Risk, Morehead State University

Cost: \$50

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

Learn how to identify some of the region's moss and liverwort flora as you develop knowledge about the structural and reproductive lives of these interesting plants. Emphasis will be on identification of common species of the area as well as fascinating aspects of their biology. A second day field trip to a bryologically fascinating area in the Daniel Boone National Forest will show the importance of local geology to plant distribution.

April

Wednesday, April 1st, 1:00 p.m.

Mid-week Wildflower Hike

Hike Leader: Beverly James

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

Saturday, April 4th, 11:00 a.m.

Wildflower Hike

Hike Leader: Laura Baird

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

Floracliff Field Technician Laura Baird will lead this wildflower hike discussing natural history, folklore, pollinator relationships, and other information about our early spring ephemerals.

Sunday, April 12th, 1:00 p.m.

Wildflower Hike

Hike Leader: Josie Miller

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

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

Wednesday, April 15th, 10:00 a.m.

Mid-week Wildflower Hike

Hike Leader: Beverly James

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

Saturday, April 18th, 1:00 p.m.

Wildflower Hike

Hike Leader: TBA

Suggested Donation: \$5

Hiking Level: Moderate to Difficult

May

May 29th-30th, 7:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Birds of Kentucky:

A Floracliff Field Studies Workshop

Instructor: Dr. David Brown, ECU

Cost: \$50

This is a beginning to intermediate field-based birding workshop. The emphasis will be on identifying birds by sound, but of course we'll see lots of birds, too. The workshop will include a hands-on bird banding demonstration on Saturday morning at Taylor Fork Ecological Area. All participants will receive *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*.

**This workshop has already filled up and registration has closed. To be added to a waiting list, please email us at info@floracliff.org.

**The Mary E. Wharton
Nature Sanctuary at
Floracliff**

P. O. Box 21723
Lexington, KY 40522

Phone: (859) 351-7770
Email: info@floracliff.org

On the web:

www.floracliff.org
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| | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000+ | old oak tree |

Please make checks payable to "Floracliff" and mail to:
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**P. O. Box 21723
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Address correction requested