



Elk Lick Echo

Summer 2010

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Nature Center Status



The Nature Center is set to be completed sometime in July. As you can see, it's almost finished! Many, many thanks to the following who have donated services and materials thus far: Chris Edling, Kerry Willett and Dennis Anderson of Anderson Community Properties (general contractor); Bill Rodgers and Jim Potts, James W. Potts Architects; John Park, Yunker & Park plc (legal); and Kay Wright, Rector-Hayden Realtors; Vulcan Materials (gravel); Haynes Trucking (hauling); Kentucky Utilities; and Central Kentucky Landfill & Hauling (disposal services).

Floracliff's Future with a Nature Center

By: Beverly James, Preserve Manager

With the completion of our nature center fast approaching, many people have asked if this means that we will be open to the public. Floracliff will continue to be open for scheduled events and by appointment only, but I would like to give some background information on why. Even though Floracliff is a dedicated State Nature Preserve, it has always been privately owned, operated, and funded. Dr. Mary Wharton, Floracliff's founder, wanted Floracliff to be used as a resource for environmental education and research, however, she was very aware of the impacts that humans can have on the environment. In her will, she specified that the sanctuary could be used for inspiration and recreation "only when compatible with keeping the area unspoiled". For those of you that have attended our programs, you have probably heard us say that Dr. Wharton wanted people to love Floracliff, but she did not want them to love it to death, therefore she did not allow for unrestricted access to the land. In keeping with Dr. Wharton's wishes, the preserve will continue to be open for scheduled events and appointments. However, we are hoping to expand on our programming over time by having more in depth workshops, seminars, and indoor presentations. We are open to any suggestions that you might have regarding what types of programs you would be interested in attending at Floracliff.

As a celebration of the completion of the Winifred Haggart Nature Center and the 400th year of the oldest tree in Kentucky, which is located at Floracliff, we will be having an **Open House on Saturday, October 23rd**. There will be a variety of hikes throughout the day as well as other activities. More details and invitations will come with the Fall newsletter. If anyone is interested in volunteering some time to help with this event, please contact me at 859-351-7770 or floracliff@aol.com.

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!

Fauna Focus: Orchard spider (*Leucauge venusta*)

By: Tommy Kuhlman



The elongated abdomen of the orchard spider is very colorful.

The orchard spider is a common and widespread member of the Tetragnathidae family. While it can be found in many places such as deep in the woods of Floracliff, it tends to especially prefer sunny spots such as gardens and orchard rows, hence the name. This beautiful spider has a slightly elongated abdomen characterized by exquisite stripes of silver, green, yellow, orange and two dots of a brilliant red or orange. Even Charles Darwin himself was moved enough by its beauty to describe it in his journals and to collect it for later classification. It is the only spider whose name was given by Darwin.

One interesting interaction this spider has is with wasp larvae. The larva will attach to the abdomen of the spider and stay there for two weeks, feeding on the spider without killing it. The spider carries on like normal until the two weeks is up at which point the larva will release a hormone causing the spider to become deranged. The spider will then spin a crazy web in disarray. The larva takes advantage of this by clasping on to the web so as not to fall when it then proceeds to kill the spider by sucking out all of the liquid in the whole spider's body, even the legs. The wasp then lowers itself down from the web and spins a cocoon for itself.

Flora Focus: Lily leaved twayblade (*Liparis liliifolia*)

By: Ryan Quire



A stem of the lily leaved twayblade can bear 5-30 flowers.

You may consider yourself lucky if you've had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the conspicuous lily leaved twayblade (*Liparis liliifolia*)- one of Kentucky's rare orchids. Its interesting inflorescence lacks bright noticeable colors, and so it tends to blend into the background quite well. This native perennial has a pair of shiny, oval-shaped leaves that can grow up to six inches long and three inches wide. Its leaves and bulbous corm support a single stem that can grow up to ten inches tall. The stem is smooth, has no leaves, and bears five to thirty flowers arranged in a terminal raceme. Each flower is $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch across with three yellowish-green sepals, and two purplish petals that droop down along either side of the flower's pale purple lip.

The plant flowers between May and June and is found infrequently across Kentucky in dry to mesic woodlands. It grows throughout the Midwest and Eastern US, and is considered threatened or endangered in the following states: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Orchid species are becoming more rare as a result of ecological disturbance and overharvesting. It is very important to avoid digging up these plants because all orchids require the presence of a specific species of mycorrhizal fungi for their seeds to successfully germinate. If transplanted to a location lacking those specific fungi, the plants will last only a few seasons, if any at all.

Orchidaceae is the largest flowering plant family on our earth, with more than 30,000 species! Most orchids are terrestrial in temperate regions, while many are epiphytic in tropical regions. They have adapted to grow on a wide variety of substrates, and most require very specific pollinators in order to produce seeds. Through increased education and admiration, let's hope these delicate organisms may continue to flourish.

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
- Tools (hand tool or power tools)
- Regional field guides
- Gift certificate to hardware or office supply store
- Work gloves
- Spray bottles

Many thanks to those who donated in the last quarter:

Donors

Acorns (\$25-49):

Michael & Miranda Hendrix
Mary Carol Orr

Shooting stars (\$50-99):

Luther B. Caldwell

Spicebushes (\$100-299):

Mr. & Mrs. Norman Brown
William Elwood
Jack Lambert
Clara Wieland

Hickories (\$500-999):

Audubon Society of KY

Hike Leaders

Charley Sither
James Wagner
Zeb Weese
Hank Yacek
Brian Yahn

Volunteers

Paul Harp
Montessori Middle School
Will Overbeck
Grant Phelps
Garrett Powers
David Robertson
Leigh Ann Robertson
Bill Rodgers
Charles Sither

Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$4 per person or \$10.00 per family unless otherwise noted. Most programs last 2-3 hours. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

Interpretive Hikes

We don't have any programs scheduled for July and most of August due to lower levels of interest during the warmer months. However, we are available for private tours. If you are interested in visiting the sanctuary, please call us at 859-351-7770.

Friday, August 20th @ 10:00 a.m.: Macroinvertebrates and Water Quality

The presence or absence of various benthic macroinvertebrates such as crayfish, mollusks, aquatic worms, and the larvae of aquatic insects give us information on the cleanliness of a stream. Cool off near Elk Lick Creek as we discuss and look for them in the riffles of the creek.

Saturday, September 4th @ 1:00 p.m.: Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants

Preserve Manager Beverly James will lead this hike down to Elk Lick Creek discussing popular garden plants that have become invasive in central Kentucky. We will also see many native plants that would make great alternatives in the garden.

Saturday, September 25th @ 1:00 p.m.: Aromatic Plants of Floracliff

We'll use our sense of smell to discover fragrant plants along the trail and talk about why they have these characteristics on this hike that will pass by Elk Lick Falls and Elk Lick Creek.

Weed Warrior Days - free!

Saturday, September 4th, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

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**

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