

Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Winter 2018 – 2019



Protecting, Restoring and Sharing Nature in the Bluegrass

2018 Year-in-Review

Following a year of expansion at Floracliff, 2018 has been a year of cultivating ideas and bringing plans to fruition. Having added the Trail's End tract to the preserve, we have set our goals on restoration of the forest understory and documentation of the plants and animals there. So far, we have removed invasive bush honeysuckle from one-third of the 59-acre area. Additionally, we increased the number of ash trees protected from the Emerald Ash Borer by 43%, expanding the project to treat mature and healthy blue ash trees in places where white ash trees have succumbed to the beetle.

We have also focused on enhancing visitor experience and interaction with Floracliff. Our volunteer trail crew has greatly improved footing on and placement of every trail throughout the preserve to make them safer for hikers and gentler on the environment. Our website received a makeover as well, and it is now possible to register for programs online and learn more about Floracliff's ecology, history, trails, and facilities.

This year we shared our new Elk Lick Falls trail with hundreds of visitors. This area is not only an ideal spot to learn about wildflowers, geology, and herpetology, but also a place for reflection and inspiration. There's no doubt the unique and peaceful setting of the falls has benefits on the mind, body, and spirit. We have explored that theme with our Mindfulness and Magic Hour hikes this year and look forward to delving further into how nature inspires awareness and creativity.



Six-banded Longhorn Beetle (Charles Schurch Lewallen)



Xeric forest on south-west facing slope (B. James)

Discoveries From the Field

Every year researchers, staff, and volunteers find and document new species for Floracliff. Here are 2018 highlights:

- Paul Baker, a Graduate Research Assistant at UK, has been conducting a year-long beetle survey on the Trail's End tract. In August, he caught a **Six-banded Longhorn Beetle** (*Dryobius sexnotatus*). This beetle is believed to be native to the Ohio River Valley. It was considered to be abundant at one time but started to become rare after 1900. It is currently one of the few beetles on the US Fish & Wildlife national watch list as possibly being at risk. The reason for its decline is that its larvae prefer to feed on very old sugar maple trees. That makes it a possible indicator for old-growth forests. During Paul's beetle workshop this summer, participants found *Aphorista vittata*. It's a species in the Handsome Fungus Beetle Family and a new record for Kentucky.
- With the help of UK students Willie Graas and Rachel Cook, Floracliff staff focused efforts this year on inventorying plants. The xeric forests on steep south-west facing slopes continue to reveal species new for our list, including **New Jersey tea**, **upland boneset**, and **whorled rosinweed**. Although these plants are not considered rare in Kentucky, they are rare for this area and can indicate high-quality habitat. The dry, rocky woods they were found in contain common drought-tolerant plants like chinkapin oak, Eastern redcedar, Eastern redbud, and Carolina rose, but they are also proving to be complex plant communities teeming with surprises.

2018 by the Numbers:

102

ash trees protected from the Emerald Ash Borer

1057

visitors who attended 70 hikes and programs

1780

hours contributed by volunteers

9200

kWh produced by the Nature Center solar panels

Stewardship Teamwork

Neither frozen ground nor summer rains deterred the newly formed **volunteer trail crew** this year. Led by Certified Master Trail Builder, Charley Sither, the crew was determined to renew all of Floracliff's existing trails. They also found time to construct **two new trails**. The first trail connects two of Floracliff's oldest established trails and offers lovely views of the Elk Lick Creek valley. The second trail provides an easygoing upland saunter on the Trail's End addition, passing by historical and natural features. Highlights include a dry stone fence, impressive tulip poplars and white oaks, and accessible areas for wildlife viewing. Our trail system is integral to our education and conservation programs and we are thankful to have a great group of volunteers to keep it in shape!

With dedication and perseverance, our **forest restoration volunteers** are committed to ensuring the local flora and fauna continue to have a place at Floracliff. This spring, they pulled many truckloads worth of garlic mustard, improving habitat for our early spring wildflowers. Throughout the year, they **cut over 8 acres of honeysuckle** and sawed through climbing wintercreeper vines to reclaim space for our native trees and shrubs and the wildlife that depend on them. Volunteers concentrated on areas of both ecological and cultural significance. Their hard work has revealed picturesque Kettle Falls with its favorable habitat for the streamside salamander, Palisade views, and remnants from Camp Trail's End.



2019 Citizen Science Workshop Series

Floracliff has been participating in citizen science projects for over a decade. We've seen how counting birds and monitoring streams has contributed to our understanding of the region's ecology and health. These projects also provide fun and meaningful experiences for us, the observers and samplers. Citizen science provides opportunities to connect to nature, build community, and practice mindfulness, all while contributing to knowledge of the natural world. To build our region's network of citizen scientists, **we are offering this workshop series in 2019**. Each session will include a 1-2 hour indoor identification presentation and a corresponding outdoor activity or event.



Wildflowers & Project Budburst

March 22nd, 1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Learn how to ID some of our earliest blooming plants and help get Project Budburst started at Floracliff.



Frogs & FrogWatch USA

May 17th, 8:00 - 10:00 p.m.

We will spend time learning our native frogs by sight and sound, then head to the ponds to listen and record data.



Butterflies & Summer Butterfly Count

June 25th, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Learn how to identify over 40 of our most common butterflies to prepare for the upcoming summer butterfly count (date TBD).



Trees, TreeSnap, & iNaturalist

October 11th, 1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Learn the basics of tree identification and how to record your tree observations using two different apps.



Winter Birds, Christmas Bird Count, & eBird

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

If you are considering birdwatching as a new hobby, wintertime is a great time to start. We will cover winter birds of the forest and backyard and provide information on how to participate in one of the longest running citizen science programs.



Upcoming Hikes and Programs

All events require pre-registration. To register, visit floracliff.org.

February 2019:

15th: Great Backyard Bird Count at the Trail's End Lodge

23rd: Winter Greens Hike: Lichens, Mosses, and Ferns w/ Kendall McDonald

March 2019:

9th: Spring Long Hike

20th: Magic Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

22nd: Citizen Science Series: Wildflowers & Project Budburst

30th: Wildflower Hike

April 2019:

3rd: Wildflower Hike w/ Joyce Bender

5th: Trail's End Wildflower Hike

6th: Wildflower Hike w/ Hannah Helm

13th: Wildflower Hike

17th: Wildflower Hike

19th: Trail's End Wildflower Hike

20th: Waterfall and Wildflower Hikes

25th: Magic Hour Hike to the Kentucky River

28th: Creative Reflections Hike

We regularly add new programs to our calendar. To stay up to date on additional events, sign up for our email announcements at floracliff.org or follow us on Facebook.



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Cover Photo:
Elk Lick Falls (B. James)

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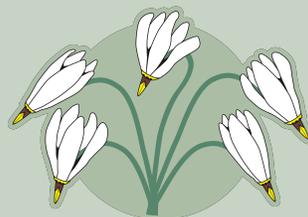
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Founded in 1987, Floracliff is a non-profit nature sanctuary. Our mission is to care for the sanctuary property, ensure its protection as a nature preserve, and promote public education of the natural history of the Inner Bluegrass Region.