

Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

2017: A Year-End Review



“Any real strides in the conservation of our natural resources must come from the general public, and can be brought about only through increasing awareness of our surroundings”.

~ Dr. Mary E. Wharton, Floracliff Founder

A Landmark Year

This past year has been exciting and productive for Floracliff. **In March, we added 59 acres to the sanctuary thanks to support from our partners and donors.** This tract, known as Trail's End, has proven to be very rewarding to explore. We continue to familiarize ourselves with the land, learn about its cultural history, manage invasive plants, record the plants and animals found there, and even discover species that were previously unknown at Floracliff. In October, we dedicated and opened the new trails to visitors and in November, the LFUCG Environmental Commission recognized the Trail's End project at its 2017 Environmental Awards event. As many of our visitors have noted, the Trail's End addition makes Floracliff feel more complete. We couldn't agree more.

This year has also been a milestone for our programs. For the first time since Floracliff opened for guided hikes, we exceeded 1000 visitors in a year and saw **a 60% increase in visitation.** Thanks to assistance from our Volunteer Naturalists and guest hike leaders, we've been able to accommodate the increased interest and still maintain a balance between its impact and our stewardship responsibilities. Our wildflower hikes, long hikes, and herpetology program continue to be our most popular offerings. The Trail's End expansion provides even more options for hikes and programs and we're eager to continue exploring the possibilities. In 2017, we added more creek walks, evening programs featuring frogs and moths, a woody plant workshop, and we expanded our ongoing citizen science projects by organizing a regional butterfly count. We look forward to finding even more opportunities for new programs in the coming years.



Discoveries From the Field

This year our staff, visitors, and volunteers have made some exciting finds that add to our knowledge of Floracliff and the Elk Lick watershed:

- In June, we hosted a Macroinvertebrate and Fishes of Kentucky Workshop. One of the instructors was intrigued when he found some old mussel shells along the bank of Elk Lick Creek. These were mussel species that would be expected in the Kentucky River, but not in the creek. In further explorations with UK archaeologists Gwynn Henderson and David Pollack, we found more mussel shells as well as a biface, a stone tool that clinched the discovery as a midden leftover from Native American activity. **This is the first Native American site recorded at Floracliff.**
- During an August Creek Walk program, one of our youngest participants found a young turtle in Elk Lick Creek. State Herpetologist John MacGregor confirmed the turtle's identification as a **Northern map turtle**, a new addition to our species list. Northern map turtles are more often found in larger bodies of water than Elk Lick Creek, making this a surprising find.
- A **spring salamander** was found in Elk Lick Creek during our Amphibians and Reptiles workshop in Spetember. This was another new addition to the species list. Since spring salamanders prefer cool, forested stream habitats, we had been on the lookout for them for many years.

2017 by the Numbers:

1.8
miles of trails added

59
acres added to the sanctuary

1200
visitors who attended 74 hikes and programs

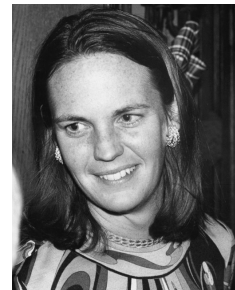
1510
hours contributed by volunteers



New Trails to Explore

After closing on the Trail's End tract on March 14th, our staff and volunteers worked hard to create two new trails that highlight various features of the land:

The **Clay Hancock Trail** was dedicated on Sunday, October 1st. Clay Hancock grew up and lived the latter part of her life on her family's Claiborne Farm in Paris, Kentucky. She served on the boards of the Kentucky Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Land and Nature Trust of the Bluegrass. In addition to land conservation issues, Clay worked tirelessly to support the Paris Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) and she tended a magnificent flower and vegetable garden at her *E-I-E-I-O Farm* in Lexington. The Clay Hancock Trail begins near the Trail's End Lodge and follows northwest- and southwest-facing slopes that are rich in wildflower diversity and mature trees. It serves the important role of connecting the original acreage of the sanctuary to our new addition.



The **Mary DeWitt Snyder Trail** was dedicated on Saturday, October 14th. This trail honors the work and legacy of a woman who was well ahead of her time. Ms. Snyder was an accomplished teacher, farmer, horsewoman, and naturalist. In 1913, she established Camp Trail's End, a girls' camp along the Kentucky River. The camp focused on producing well-rounded young women through a variety of activities including nature hikes, horseback riding, swimming, boating, archery and rifle practice. The Mary DeWitt Snyder Trail passes by the camp's game court then meanders down a southwest-facing slope before reaching the Kentucky River floodplain and the mouth of Elk Lick Creek. The rich biodiversity and cultural history of Trail's End are featured throughout this scenic trail.



Elk Lick Falls Trail Opens

Floracliff has long been known for its tallest waterfall, Elk Lick Falls. At 61-feet, its height is impressive, but its unique tufa formation is what makes it so special. Tufa is a porous limestone associated with cold springs in areas of karst topography. As calcium carbonate-rich water flows over Elk Lick Falls, the water evaporates



leaving the calcium carbonate behind. This has created a surface deposit that some call a "petrified waterfall." Tufa formations are found in other small tributaries of the Kentucky River Palisades, but Elk Lick Falls has the largest one in the region. This Fall, we were happy to announce the addition of a trail to the base of Elk Lick Falls so our visitors can finally see this natural wonder from its best vantage point.

Nature Center Solar Power

Thanks to a generous grant from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, **the Winifred W. Haggart Nature Center became equipped with a solar energy system in late Fall.** Twenty-eight panels were installed on the south- and west-facing roofs. They will generate 10,000 kWh a year and should supply most, if not all, of our energy needs at the nature center. As an organization focused on conservation, we are thrilled to reduce our energy footprint.



2018 Calendar of Events

All events require pre-registration. Please email info@floracliff.org to register and provide your name, phone number, and the number of people in your party. For more information, visit floracliff.org.

February:

10th: Winter Tree Identification

March:

9th & 10th: Lichens of Kentucky Field Studies Workshop

17th: Spring Long Hike

31st: Wildflower Hike

April:

4th: Wildflower Hike

6th: Trail's End Wildflower Hike

18th: Wildflower Hike

20th: Trail's End Wildflower 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.

Staff

Beverly James,
Preserve Director

Josie Miller,
Stewardship Director

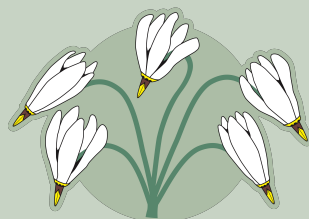


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Founded in 1987, Floracliff is a non-profit nature sanctuary. Its mission is to care for the sanctuary property, ensure its protection as a nature preserve, and promote public education of the natural history of the Inner Bluegrass Region.