

Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Summer 2017

Trail's End – Wrapping up the Campaign, Continuing the Commitment

We did it! On March 14th, **after two years of working with our partners and raising necessary funds, we closed on Trail's End, a 59-acre addition to the sanctuary.** This addition brings the total acreage of Floracliff to 346 acres and is our first land purchase since 1989. If you have had a chance to visit Trail's End, you know how special it is. From its mature second-growth forest and views of Kentucky River palisade cliffs to its unique history as a girls' camp in the early 1900s and a youth camp in later years, we and our visitors have become enchanted. We can't express how great it feels to look at Trail's End from across Elk Lick Creek and know that both sides are fully protected and part of Floracliff, providing greater habitat protection for countless species.

Over the last few months, with help from our dedicated volunteers, we have been addressing invasive species on the property by cutting climbing wintercreeper vines attached to trees on the floodplain and upland forests and pulling over 50 garbage bags worth of garlic mustard. We are also in the process of completing two new trails that will be used extensively for future programs. Our biological inventory has begun on the vegetation of Trail's End, with wildlife inventories to be conducted in the coming months. New plants added to our species list include *Silene rotundifolia* (roundleaf catchfly), *Symphotrichum laeve* (smooth blue aster), *Quercus imbricaria* (shingle oak), *Obolaria virginica* (pennywort), *Physocarpus opulifolius* (ninebark), and *Carex eburnea* (bristleleaf sedge).

Purchasing Trail's End and protecting it with a conservation easement would not have been possible without the help of the **Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund**, the **Imperiled Bat Conservation Fund** (a partnership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Kentucky Natural Lands Trust), and **over 200 donors and volunteers** who contributed to the project. With all that help, **we were able to raise over \$752,000, reaching 97% of our goal of \$775,000.** In addition to the land purchase, we have been able to get started on stewardship work and updating the historic lodge. Raising the last 3% of our goal is critical for reducing the ongoing expenses of the additional building. The additional funds will help us with the following:

- Update electrical, plumbing, and septic systems
- Provide private, upstairs living quarters for a caretaker. This includes moving the stairs and replacing some flooring.
- Remodel the first floor to accommodate intended programs. This includes improved lighting, furnishings, and painting.
- Add energy efficiency with newer appliances and increased insulation.

We hope to host an open house for Trail's End in the Fall and get much of the lodge work completed by the end of 2017. Stewardship work on the land will be ongoing. If you are interested in volunteering your time to help with invasives at Trail's End, please email info@floracliff.org. **Donations to support the project can be made on our website at floracliff.org.**



Roundleaf catchfly



Trail Dedications



Named after a former board member, The **Mary Carol Cooper Loop Trail** was dedicated on April 1st. Mary Carol Cooper, who passed away in May 2016, was the director of the Salato Wildlife Education Center's Native Plant Program for many years and led countless programs on Kentucky's native flora and fauna, spreading her enthusiasm for Kentucky's environment. This loop trail starts at the nature center and features a mostly wooded trail along the uplands, passing by three ponds and notable plants such as blue-eyed Marys and rattlesnake plantain.



The **Clara Wieland Wildflower Trail**, named after long-time board member Clara Es-Stel Wieland, was dedicated on April 23rd. A friend of Floracliff's founder, Dr. Mary Wharton, Clara has been instrumental in ensuring Dr. Wharton's wishes were carried on and spent many hours at the sanctuary pulling invasives, leading hikes, and building trails. In addition to serving on Floracliff's board, Clara has been a strong advocate for environmental protection throughout Kentucky. The Wieland Trail is located on the northeast-facing slope of Elk Lick Creek and is our showiest trail during Spring, when a diversity of wildflowers blankets the forest understory.



The **Ann & Bob Wilson Trail** was dedicated on May 20th and named after two very dedicated supporters of Floracliff and close friends of Dr. Wharton. Bob Wilson led Floracliff as President of the board for 20 years, overseeing visitation guidelines, its dedication as a State Nature Preserve, and the hiring of the first Preserve Manager. He and Ann have made a point to share Floracliff and their love of nature with other people. Ann Wilson passed away in 2015, leaving a generous bequest to Floracliff. The Wilson Trail is one of the first established trails at Floracliff and features Elk Lick Creek, Floracliff's oldest tree, and the top of Elk Lick Falls.



Photo credit: Joseph King



Rainbow darters

Program Highlights

Thanks to all of our visitors who came out this Spring to support our programs and learn about wildflowers, trees, birds, amphibians and reptiles, aquatic diversity, and more. Our visitation increased by 62% this Spring! Highlights from our programs include:

- adding the scarlet shiner to the fish species list for Elk Lick Creek. This fish was found during our Macroinvertebrates and Fishes Workshop in June.
- hosting over 60 university students who used Floracliff to study plants, insects, and wildlife management. Student groups visited from the University of Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky University, and Transylvania University.
- hosting programs and events for our partners at West Sixth Brewery, the Lexington Chapter of the Wild Ones, the Kentucky River Basin Team, and The Living Arts and Science Center.



Volunteer Projects

Floracliff volunteers have been hard at work this season, covering ground from the trails to the creek. In addition to removing invasive species, they have installed and improved over 2 miles of trails and removed 1/4-mile of wire fencing and honeysuckle, welcoming Trail's End into the Floracliff boundaries. They have also contributed many hours toward preparing Trail's End for programs, including constructing a hand-stacked fieldstone wall to reinforce the driveway. From cleaning to stream

sampling, no task has been too great for our Floracliff volunteers!

Floracliff and our visitors have also benefitted from our Volunteer Naturalists and guest program leaders. These knowledgeable naturalists and biologists allowed us to increase the number of programs offered this Spring, while sharing their botanical, bird, and insect insights and observations.

Thank you to all our dedicated volunteers who have contributed over 750 hours so far this year:

Nancy Adams, John Baggerman, Steve Bennett, Ramesh Bhatt, Suzanne Bhatt, Daniel Boone, Rod Botkins, Amy Braccia, Clint Bush, Jan Bush, Mike Compton, Martha Davenport, Jim Decker, Greg Doyle, Tracey Eaton, Hannah Helm, Cynthia Higgs, Joe King, Terri Koontz, Dave Leonard, Josh Lillpop, Tom Lowery, Aaron Martin, Ian Martin, Kendall McDonald, Ryan McKinney, Laura Mentor, Andrew Obringer, John Park, Al Perreiah, Evelyn Pickett, Joey Pierce, Vicki Reed, Layton Register, Kevin Robinson, Charley Sither, Nathan Skinner, Garrett Spear, Arlene Stoll, David Stoll, Karen Tindall, Mark Tower, Ellen Tunnell, Mark Vogel, Zeb Weese, Bob Wilson, Gene Wyatt, Emma Yetter, and the West 6th volunteer crew.

Floracliff Stewardship Volunteers meet up on Wednesday mornings. We welcome any and all to join in. For more about this or other opportunities to volunteer your skills and services, please email info@floracliff.org.



Partner Projects



Photo credit: USFWS

This Spring, we installed 4 prothonotary warbler nest boxes provided by the **Central Kentucky Audubon Society** and the **Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources**. The population of prothonotary warblers has been in decline in recent years due to loss of their habitat, bottomland forests. We placed the boxes on the Trail's End portion of the Kentucky River floodplain. While we have not

yet confirmed occupancy of the boxes, we have observed the warblers nearby.

We have also partnered with the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** to improve wildlife habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators in a 6-acre field by our

nature center. The field is currently under transition, but will soon be seeded with a mix of native grasses, milkweeds, and other wildflowers, providing a better refuge for insect and bird diversity.



Research Projects

The following research projects are currently underway at Floracliff:

- Dr. Luke Dodd and Dr. Kelly Watson of ECU have set up camera traps to assess habitat use by the spotted skunk and other mammals. Due to limited observations and declines in the population, the Eastern spotted skunk is listed as a species of Special Concern in Kentucky.
- Dr. Brad Lee of UK is conducting soil samples to assess phosphorus levels and soil fertility for Fayette County. The results will be used to help educate the urban sector on soil fertilization.
- Michael Floyd of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is conducting monthly surveys of adult caddisfly emergence from Elk Lick Creek. This is part of a larger project to document and compare stream invertebrate diversity in seven Kentucky River Palisade streams.

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.

July:

28th: Nature at Night: Moths of the Palisades

August:

5th: Know Your Palisades Region: Elk Lick Creek

11th: Creek Walk

September:

9th: Caterpillar Hunt

16th & 17th: Floracliff Field Studies: Amphibians & Reptiles of Kentucky (Sold Out)

23rd: A Citizen's Guide to Land Stewardship: Maintaining Biodiversity in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Landscapes

October:

21st & 22nd: Floracliff Field Studies: Woody Plants of Kentucky

November:

11th: Fall Long Hike

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



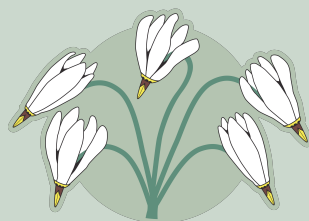
Luna moth

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www.floracliff.org
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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.