



Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Winter/Spring 2020



Protecting, Restoring and Sharing Nature in the Bluegrass

2019 Year-in-Review

Each year at Floracliff brings new visitors, new programs, and new projects. During 2019, we hosted more visitors and offered more hikes and programs than ever before, while keeping up with our ongoing stewardship goals. We could not have accomplished this without our amazing team of volunteers, who contributed a record number of hours.

This year we also wrapped up many of our goals for the Trail’s End project. In late winter, our caretakers moved into the newly finished apartment on the second floor of the lodge. This on-site presence has provided important security as well as additional observations of wildlife activity after hours. We completed a few minor renovations on the first floor of the lodge to improve its functionality for our programs. In June, Trail’s End was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This designation was a welcome culmination to all of the hard work that has gone into protecting this piece of land and documenting both its natural and cultural history.

With the help of our volunteer naturalists, we expanded our species lists and citizen science programs in 2019. We focused predominantly on documenting various invertebrate groups including land snails, butterflies, moths, and spiders. We contributed to the Kentucky Statewide Land Snail Survey Project, the North American Butterfly Association counts, Monarch Watch, and iNaturalist. Additionally, our dedicated participants in the Floracliff Ornithology Club observed 117 bird species this year, submitting data to eBird and Project Feeder Watch.



Floracliff Ornithology Club (Ward Ransdell)



Indigo Bunting (Ward Ransdell)

Discoveries From the Field



Throughout the summer we conducted multiple surveys of butterflies and moths to better document the diversity of Lepidoptera species and how their populations change through the season. With the help of zoologist Shelby Fulton and our skilled volunteers, we have documented 240 species of moths and 61 species of butterflies. A summer butterfly count resulted in 203 individual butterflies and 27 species, including a golden-banded skipper (left). This rare butterfly is considered vulnerable in Kentucky and our sighting of it was a new Fayette County record. An evening moth event led by Shelby yielded 100 species of moths in just two hours.



In October, we hosted a Spiders of Kentucky Field Studies workshop with Dr. James Wagner. This workshop focused on documenting the spider diversity of Floracliff. We used iNaturalist for species documentation and identification. Participants explored during the day and evening and helped us record 33 spider species representing 10 families. Highlights included a folding-door spider, which is part of a primitive group of spiders known to be elusive, as well as a variety of fascinating jumping spiders.

2019 by the Numbers:

1,301
visitors to Floracliff

85
guided hikes and
educational
programs

2,778
hours contributed
by 69 volunteers

59
acres listed in the
National Register of
Historic Places

Restoring the Land

Thanks to our stewardship volunteers, we made great strides in our forest restoration and trail building work in 2019. Our restoration stewards filled countless bags of invasive garlic mustard in the spring to make headway on the Trail’s End tract and to maintain efforts in areas we have worked for over a decade. The crew also continued to make progress on honeysuckle removal, clearing an additional 8 acres. This work is critical to the health and integrity of our forests and native plant communities. Meanwhile, our trail stewards continue to enhance our existing trails with thoughtful renovations. This fall they built a new trail connecting the Clay Hancock Trail to Elk Lick Creek. This steep, meandering path offers unique perspectives of the Kentucky River Palisades as well as the Elk Lick Valley.

With support from community partners and donors, we made advances in other land management and restoration projects. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided assistance with the control of invasive plants in the renovated grassland, an important step for its establishment as a bird and pollinator habitat. Additionally, a grant from the Kentucky Colonels awarded funds for a brush mower so we can more effectively manage our grassland habitats and trails. Thanks to community support, we addressed safety concerns about dead and dying ash trees by hiring professional arborists to minimize these hazards in priority areas. Managing this land truly takes a village, and we appreciate everyone who contributed in 2019!



Ward Ransdell



Josie Miller

Experience Floracliff in 2020

In 2020, there will be a variety of opportunities to experience Floracliff, whether it be through education, inspiration, or exploration. New and expanded programs include:

- **Wildflower Long Hikes** - Our Long Hikes have always been popular, but this is the first time we have offered them during the peak of wildflower season. Experience Floracliff in full bloom!
- **Forest Birds of the Palisades** - Learn to identify forest birds of the Kentucky River Palisades by sight, sound, behavior, and habitat.
- **Butterflies of Central Kentucky** - This 1-day workshop will teach participants how to identify 40+ species of butterflies with time to practice skills in the field.
- **Creative Reflections** - We began this program series in 2019 to allow visitors time to create, write, or meditate in the forest. In 2020, we are expanding the series to bi-monthly outings beginning in February.

Left: Mixed media created by Kathy Rees Johnson during the spring 2019 Creative Reflections outing.



Building on a Legacy

Dr. Mary Wharton created a legacy when she purchased and protected the land that became the nature sanctuary, established Floracliff as an organization, and left an endowment to fund much of the care and management of the sanctuary. Decades later, a generous bequest from Winifred Haggart made the construction of our Nature Center a reality. Planned gifts like Ms. Haggart’s are vital to expand on Dr. Mary Wharton’s foresight. We seek additional planned gifts to support the ongoing protection, restoration, and educational use of Floracliff into the future. For more information about including Floracliff in your estate plans, please visit floracliff.org/donate. We are immensely grateful to those people, past, present, and future, who have indicated to us that Floracliff is a part of their estate plans.



Upcoming Hikes and Programs

Pre-registration is required for all events. Tickets will be available January 1, 2020 at floracliff.org.

February:

9th: Creative Reflections at the Trail's End Lodge

22nd: Winter Tree I.D. w/ Nathan Skinner

March:

7th: Signs of Spring Long Hike

19th: Magic Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

27th & 31st: Wildflower Hikes

April:

4th: Wildflower Hike w/ Laura Baird

7th: Wildflower Hike w/ Joyce Bender

10th, 11th, & 14th: Wildflower Hikes

16th: Magic Hour Hike

17th: Wildflower Hike w/ Heidi Braunreiter

17th: Creative Reflections at Elk Lick Falls

18th: Wildflower Long Hikes

May:

2nd: Forest Birds of the Palisades
w/ Ben Leffew

9th: Global Big Day Bird Hike

16th: Herpetology Hike w/ Zeb Weese

21st: Magic Hour Hike

22nd: Nature at Night: Frogs and Toads

June:

18th: Magic Hour Hike

19th: Creative Reflections at Elk Lick Creek

27th: Butterflies of Central Kentucky:
An Identification Workshop

July:

16th: Magic Hour Hike

18th: Nature at Night: Moths and More
w/ Shelby Fulton

To stay up to date on additional events, sign up for our email announcements at floracliff.org.



Staff

Beverly James,
Preserve Director

Josie Miller,
Stewardship Director

Cover photo:
Dutchman's breeches (Beverly James)
Inside, bottom left photos:
Golden-banded skipper (Shelby Fulton)
Canopy jumping spider (Beth Oleson)

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Founded in 1987, Floracliff is a nonprofit 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.