



Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Winter / Spring 2022



Protecting, Restoring and Sharing Nature in the Bluegrass

2021 Year-in-Review

Floracliff's response to the programming and outreach challenges of the last two years has produced an unexpected outcome. In 2021 we achieved our highest program participation to date! This is a result of expanding our offerings beyond guided in-person hikes at Floracliff to include virtual natural history programs. We also organized new and ongoing community science events in Lexington. Over 160 people contributed biodiversity observations during the inaugural Lexington City Nature Challenge in spring, and the 5th annual Central Bluegrass Summer Butterfly Count saw the highest number of trained butterfly counters yet!

We continue to document and learn more about Floracliff's biodiversity and ecosystem health through community science projects, stewardship work, and bio-inventories. Visitors, volunteers, staff, and partners added new records for native plants, birds, mammals, and caddisflies, and our night surveys yielded over 30 new moths for the sanctuary. Unfortunately, a few new invasive exotic plants were also discovered this year, but our stewardship team's early detection and quick response will limit their impact.

Facilitating access to nature education and experiences was also a focus this year. We offered more free programming than in years past, and we plan to expand this even more next year. Golden Hour Hikes, City Nature Challenge programs, and Tree Week programs will be offered at no charge in 2022. We'll also have binoculars available for visitors to use during hikes thanks to a generous grant from the Beckham Bird Club. In addition, the binoculars and the moth kits purchased earlier this year will be available for community groups to borrow for their own programs. Interested community groups can email info@floracliff.org for more information.



Bird Walk (Ward Ransdell)



Viceroy butterfly (Josie Miller)



National Moth Week event (Beverly James)

Floracliff Receives Excellence in Environmental Education Award



On September 23rd, the Kentucky Association for Environmental Education presented Floracliff with the **2021 Outstanding Community Partner Award for Excellence in Environmental Education**. The KAEE's awards are presented annually "to recognize those individuals and entities best-exemplifying dedication, commitment, and influence in the field of environmental education." Floracliff received this award for demonstrating outstanding long-term service and leadership in environmental education and land stewardship through regularly scheduled education programs, partnerships, and dedication to documenting the biodiversity of the preserve.

Madeline Heredia, the Heritage Lands Outreach Specialist for Kentucky Nature Preserves, who nominated Floracliff for the award, said, "Even when faced with the adversity of a global pandemic, Beverly and Josie of Floracliff were able to connect with the community through several virtual environmental programs including educational webinars and through a city wide community science nature challenge."

We are honored and grateful to receive this recognition!



2021 By the Numbers:

12

community science programs & events

21

acres managed for invasive honeysuckle

1340

program participants

3,700

iNaturalist observations, documenting over 1,000 species

Discoveries From the Field

At Floracliff, we use trail cameras to document the presence, seasonal movements, and behavior of wildlife, particularly mammals and birds. We expect the cameras to capture views of our more elusive animals like bobcats, owls, and beavers, but occasionally they provide wonderful surprises. This year, we were excited to see two different mammals previously unrecorded at the sanctuary.

After one of our cameras captured a small rodent resembling an Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), Eastern Kentucky University graduate researcher, Makayla Beckner, installed a few additional camera traps specifically designed to document this rare mammal. Allegheny woodrats are a Vulnerable species in Kentucky and globally, which means they are at moderate risk of extinction. Populations are impacted by habitat loss and change, predation, and parasites. Their preferred habitats are rocky areas in deciduous forests, where they are known to cache food such as leaves, fruits, nuts, and seeds, as well as man-made items, shells, and bones. We are happy to report these "pack rats" were confirmed in three separate locations at Floracliff!

The other exciting discovery is the long-tailed weasel. This weasel was spotted on a trail camera in late spring. Despite their small size, long-tailed weasels are ferocious carnivores. They feed mostly on other small mammals and vertebrates, including ones larger in size. They are found in woodland and field habitats, often near water, and they burrow in holes created by small rodents. While long-tailed weasels are not rare, they are often nocturnal, so we were thrilled to have the trail cameras confirm their presence at Floracliff.



Alan Cressler (Creative Commons)



Allegheny woodrat at Floracliff (Makayla Beckner)



Matt Lavin (Creative Commons)



Longtail weasel at Floracliff

Cultivating Nature Connections Through Volunteers

Volunteers are fundamental to Floracliff's stewardship and educational programs. Not only do they donate their time, knowledge and skills, they also act as ambassadors of our shared values by promoting an awareness of and empathy for nature throughout the Bluegrass community. In return, Floracliff volunteers are continually learning, developing friendships, spending time in nature, and contributing to conservation. This year we undertook a major initiative to grow and enhance our volunteer program by improving training, expanding opportunities, and increasing our capacity for new volunteers.

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities at Floracliff that contribute to caring for, studying, and sharing nature. Volunteer roles include:

- *Conservation Stewards* who join us in restoring forest, grassland, and riparian habitats for wildlife.
- *Volunteer Naturalists* who provide program assistance and contribute observations to community science projects such as iNaturalist, Project FeederWatch, and the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project.
- *Volunteer Educators* who help us expand visitor services by leading hikes and providing programming on our region's ecology, biodiversity, natural history, and more.

Our next Volunteer Orientation is scheduled for March 2022. To learn more about Floracliff's volunteer opportunities and how you can join our team, visit floracliff.org/volunteers. We look forward to protecting, restoring, and sharing nature with you!



Grounds Steward Volunteers (Ward Ransdell)



Conservation Steward Volunteers (Ward Ransdell)

Upcoming Hikes and Programs

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

Stay up to date on additional events by signing up for our email announcements at floracliff.org.

February:

26th: A Tour of Floracliff's Old Oaks

March:

11th: New Volunteer Orientation

12th: Signs of Spring Long Hike

15th: Webinar: Urban Nature Connections
with iNaturalist

17th & 24th: Golden Hour Hikes

26th & 29th: Wildflower Hikes

31st: Wildflower Hike w/ Laura Baird

April:

2nd: Wildflower Hike

6th: Wildflower Hike w/ Joyce Bender

8th, 9th, 12th, & 14th: Wildflower Hikes

14th & 21st: Golden Hour Hikes

15th: Wildflower Hike w/ Heidi Braunreiter

16th: Wildflower Long Hike

16th: Community Conservation:
Garlic Mustard

April (continued):

22nd: Easy Earth Day Wildflower Walk &
Bird Watch

29th: City Nature Challenge: Nighttime
Exploration w/ Shelby Fulton

30th: City Nature Challenge: Herpetology Hike
w/ Zeb Weese

30th: City Nature Challenge: Creek Exploration
w/ Mike Compton

May:

7th: Forest Birds of the Palisades
w/ Ben Leffew & Michael Patton

12th & 19th: Golden Hour Hikes

21st: Sedges of the Palisades Hike
w/ Kentucky Botanists

June:

21st: Webinar: Butterflies of Central Kentucky

24th: Field Day: Butterflies of Central Kentucky



Male and female indigo bunting (Ward Ransdell)

Staff

Beverly James
Preserve Director

Josie Miller
Stewardship Director

Cover photo:
Eastern box turtle (Beverly James)

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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.