

Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Summer / Fall 2022



Protecting, Restoring and Sharing Nature in the Bluegrass

Community Science Thrives at Floracliff

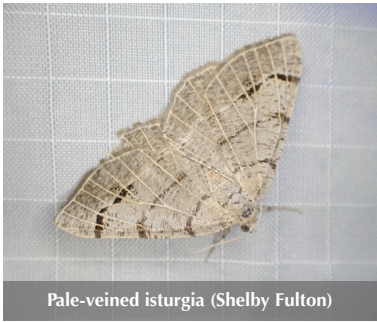
Community science is the participation of the public in collecting and interpreting information about nature, and it plays a large role in our work at Floracliff. Through observing and documenting plants and animals in the sanctuary, volunteers, visitors, and staff learn more about our region’s ecology and biodiversity. In the process, we all become more deeply connected to the wildlife and habitats around us, wherever we are. The knowledge and connections gleaned from participation in community science is what has inspired Floracliff to expand this work over the years to include the Floracliff Biodiversity Project on iNaturalist, the City Nature Challenge, Project FeederWatch, and more.

The iNaturalist app offers a user-friendly way for anyone to photograph a species, record its location and identification, and share it with a network of fellow naturalists who will confirm its identification or suggest an alternate identification. In 2014, we established the Floracliff Biodiversity Project, and since then iNaturalist users have made over 8,000 observations at Floracliff, documenting more than 1,600 species. Over 60% of the observations are research grade, which means their identification has been verified by the iNaturalist community. These research grade observations are shared with the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to provide useful data to scientists and researchers around the world. Additionally, iNaturalist has provided endless benefits to Floracliff. We use the platform to monitor butterflies, bees, and other invertebrates in the pollinator field, share wildlife captured by trail cameras, document life cycles and seasonal changes of our flora, and so much more.

iNaturalist is also the platform used by the City Nature Challenge, a 4-day global bioblitz with participants in 445 cities in 47 countries. In 2021, we organized the Challenge for the first time in Lexington. This year we had co-organizers – the Central Kentucky chapter of NABA (North American Butterfly Association) and Lexington Parks & Recreation. Jefferson and Madison Counties also joined the Challenge in Kentucky. At Floracliff, our partners and volunteers helped us lead public programs that resulted in three new discoveries for our species lists – a stonecat fish (the 30th fish species recorded in Elk Lick Creek!), a pale-veined Isturgia moth, and a hybrid golden-winged x blue-winged warbler. This was the first iNaturalist observation of this hybrid warbler in Kentucky.

As our community science engagement grows at Floracliff, some projects are now completely volunteer-led. From November 2021 through April 2022, volunteers contributed weekly observations from the Trail’s End bird feeding station to Project FeederWatch. Their tally of 37 species documented the transition from winter residents to spring migrants. Volunteer Carol Spence summed up a particularly good day at the feeders, “Fabulous FeederWatch Day! Best ever. A summer tanager and 8, count them, 8 rose-breasted grosbeaks!...My heart almost ruptured from joy...What a thrill this project has been for me.”

Learn more: floracliff.org/what-we-do/community-science



Another Round of Ash Tree Protection

Thanks to a generous donation from long-term friends of Floracliff, 105 ash trees were treated this spring for continued protection from the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The treatment began with a training from Arborjet for Floracliff staff, stewardship volunteers, and partners. LFUCG Environmental Services loaned additional equipment to increase efficiency of treating the trees.

Floracliff is committed to managing the forest for EAB and providing a model for tree preservation in natural areas. Since 2011, ash trees have been treated in areas of high conservation priority in the sanctuary. Minimizing disturbance in these areas is critical to maintaining the forest’s health, ecology, and character, as well as enhancing the educational value and safety of the forest for visitors.

Protecting these trees also contributes to the genetic conservation of wild ash trees for future restoration and preserves the ecological benefits of mature canopy trees. The treated ash trees at Floracliff will continue to provide carbon sequestration, forest structure, and soil stabilization on steep slopes. Additionally, treating our ash trees furthers our stewardship goals by reducing the response of invasive plants that readily move into forest gaps. We are grateful to everyone who made this project possible!



Creating Art in Nature: A New Series

We are excited to offer a new opportunity to dwell in nature as inspiration for making art. If you have an interest or desire to broaden your skills as a naturalist and artist, join us at Floracliff for any of four free art-making sessions during September and October. Each session will be led by Floracliff volunteers and local artists, Stephen Bennett and Laura Mentor.

This series is well-suited to naturalists who want to try their hand at rendering the things they love, as well as artists who value the opportunity to work in a secluded, protected preserve. Participants should come with some previous experience in handling art materials. Guidance will be offered on request. Session themes may include: living still life, plein air landscape drawing and painting, and nature’s rich tapestry of flora and fauna. Some sessions will also include hiking to an inspirational spot. More details at floracliff.org/events.



Bluegrass Land and Nature Symposium

Floracliff and the Lexington Chapter of Wild Ones are partnering this fall to host the *Bluegrass Land and Nature Symposium*. Join us Saturday, October 1st, for a full day focused on the biodiversity, ecology, and stewardship of the Bluegrass region. Renowned urban ecologist, Dr. Margaret Carreiro will kick off the day as our keynote speaker. Afterward, experts from Kentucky’s conservation community will lead outdoor sessions on migratory birds, beneficial insects, gardening with native plants, local flora, watersheds, and more.

As a 346-acre nature sanctuary located on the edge of Kentucky’s second most populated city, Floracliff provides a unique setting to explore the intersection of wild nature with human-built urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. The *Bluegrass Land and Nature Symposium* will offer insights on practices that support wildlife, the challenges along the way, and the ecological and personal rewards that come from welcoming nature at home and in our communities.



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.

August:

6th: Elk Lick Creek Walk

11th: Golden Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

September:

8th: Mindful Hiking: The Healing Power of Nature

13th: Creating Art in Nature: Session 1

14th: New Volunteer Orientation

15th: iNaturalist in Action: A Hands-on Training

17th: Kentucky Wildlands Linocut Workshop

22nd: Golden Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

24th: The Aster Family –Asteraceae w/ Rob Paratley

27th: Creating Art in Nature: Session 2

October:

1st: Bluegrass Land & Nature Symposium

11th: Creating Art in Nature: Session 3

13th: Golden Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

15th: A Tour of Floracliff's Old Oaks

20th: Golden Hour Hike to the Kentucky River

25th: Creating Art in Nature: Session 4

November:

5th: Birding for Beginners

12th: Fall Long Hike

23rd: Thanksgiving Eve Long Hike



Eastern tiger swallowtail on Ohio buckeye (David Lang)

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Preserve Director

Josie Miller
Stewardship Director

Colby Grant
Seasonal Field Technician

Cover photo:
Kentucky warbler (Ward Ransdell)

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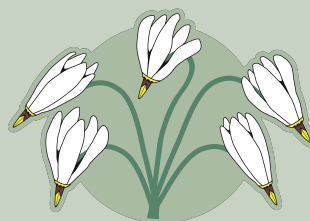
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Founded in 1987, Floracliff is a nonprofit nature sanctuary. Our mission is to care for the sanctuary property, ensure its protection as a nature preserve, and promote public education of the natural history of the Inner Bluegrass Region.