



Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary
Winter/Spring 2025

Promoting Conservation through Shared Experiences

Floracliff's guided group hikes and educational programs are fundamental to our mission of promoting conservation and appreciation of nature. When our founder, Dr. Mary Wharton, established Floracliff as a nature sanctuary, she specified that it be open for guided hikes only. By doing this, she provided a purposeful balance between sharing the sanctuary with our community and limiting human impact on its wildlife and ecosystems. She also created a sanctuary where people come to learn about, explore, and enjoy nature together. Those shared experiences have informed our programs over the years.



In the last decade, our programming has grown significantly. The number of hikes and events we offer has more than doubled due to an increase in full-time staff, trained volunteers, and dedicated conservation partners. In addition to our public guided hikes, we offer seminars, workshops, volunteer activities, art and journaling sessions, private tours, and field trips for small school groups. Our most popular programs continue to be wildflower hikes, bird and butterfly walks, herpetology programs, old tree tours, and golden hour hikes to Elk Lick Falls.

We make sure to offer popular programs every year, but we also want to hear from you as we plan our future programs at Floracliff. Are there specific programs you are most interested in? Do you want to see more opportunities to attend popular programs? Do you have ideas for new programs?

Scan the QR code on the right to access a survey and provide input on our programming. The survey will be open through February 28th, 2025.



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Learn more about Lexington's Green Check program: greenchecklex.org



Floracliff is Green Check Gold!

On September 18th, Floracliff was awarded Gold by Lexington's Green Check, a sustainability certification program. As part of the 2024 Green Check class, we have spent this year assessing our efforts in energy efficiency, water quality and conservation, waste reduction, landscaping, purchasing, outreach, and more. Before joining Green Check, we had already undertaken a number of their sustainability measures. This included installing solar panels on our nature center, replacing all lights with LED bulbs, establishing on-site composting, managing invasive species at the sanctuary, and hosting environmental programs.

Through the sustainability assessment with Green Check this year, we established some standard operating procedures to formalize our sustainability initiatives, particularly around purchasing and energy use. With Floracliff volunteers, we also organized storm drain stenciling in areas throughout Lexington and a day of clean-up along Elk Lick Falls Rd.

A valuable aspect of the Green Check program is that it turns individual actions into collective action, amplifying the importance of sustainability and climate action to our community and policy makers. We're honored to be a part of the Green Check network with other Lexington organizations and businesses who are prioritizing sustainability!



Discoveries from the Field: New botanical finds

Floracliff has been surveyed by many botanists over the years – most notably our founder, Dr. Mary Wharton. As a result, we have a detailed list of over 600 plants reported from the sanctuary. It is a valuable resource for understanding Floracliff's ecology. As years go by, it's getting harder and harder to spot native plants that have not been previously documented. In 2024, we were excited to add two new species:

- **Slender toothwort (*Cardamine angustata*)** - In spring, Preserve Director Beverly James encountered a small patch of slender toothwort on a creekside ledge while making observations for the City Nature Challenge bioblitz. This toothwort is a preferred hostplant for the falcate orange-tip and West Virginia white butterflies.
- **Anglepod (*Gonolobus suberosus*)** - Over the summer, Stewardship Director Josie Miller spotted anglepod blooming along a frequently traveled path. Perhaps its green flowers helped it go undetected until now. This milkweed relative smells faintly of carrion, attracting a variety of flies as pollinators.



Homegrown Conservation: Stewarding nature through early detection

by Josie Miller

For over two decades, Floracliff has prioritized the management of bush honeysuckle and other established invasive plants. In the field, our stewardship team is also on alert for emerging invasive plants that have been reported as problematic by professionals in Kentucky and surrounding states. We practice Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) to find and remove these invasive species before they cause harm and become widely established. Additionally, we report observations of new invasives through online community science programs like iNaturalist or EDDMaps. Unfortunately, many of these new invasive plants are first introduced as garden ornamentals and have spread to nearby natural areas. A few we have managed at Floracliff include:

- **Sweet autumn clematis (*Clematis terniflora*)**: We found this aggressive vine growing along a forest edge. In neighborhoods, you may find it along roadsides and fence lines.
- **Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*)**: At Floracliff, we find populations spreading by bulbils along waterways and drainages. In urban areas, it is found proliferating in lawns. This has been one of the most recorded species in Lexington during the City Nature Challenge.
- **Jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*)**: Fortunately, we have only found two patches at Floracliff. In Kentucky, this plant is most commonly reported near urban counties.

With all invasive species, the best management is prevention. Everyone can help by choosing native plants for home and community gardens, avoiding ornamentals that are known to spread easily, and removing invasive plants from landscapes. Submitting observations of escaped garden plants on iNaturalist can also help us understand the movement and ecology of these plants. Conservation requires teamwork, and your contributions at home can make a difference.

Learn More Ways to Support Biodiversity at Home

This spring, we have scheduled a few programs that focus on actions you can take to support our local forests, birds, and butterflies. Join us for:

- March 7th: **Spotted Lanternfly: A Kentucky invasive and how you can help slow the spread** w/ Carl Harper, University of Kentucky
- April 24th: **Lights Out, Kentucky! Bird Migration and Dark Skies** w/ Rachael Peake, Frankfort Audubon Society
- June 3rd: **Building a Better Monarch Butterfly Garden** w/ Dr. Dan Potter



Explore Kentucky's scientific wonders!

Floracliff is proud to be a part of the newly launched **Kentucky Science Trail**, a curated list of over 70 science attractions throughout the state. "We've got plenty of amazing places in Kentucky that feature natural and technological marvels," said Amanda Fuller, Executive Director of the Kentucky Academy of Science. "We created the Kentucky Science Trail to shine a spotlight on these destinations so that everyone, especially families, can discover a wealth of attractions that foster curiosity and a love for learning about our world."

Learn more: kyscience.org



Calendar of Hikes and Programs

January:

24th: The Natural Word: Nature journaling at Floracliff

February:

16th: Birding for Beginners

March:

8th: Signs of Spring Long Hike

13th & 20th: Golden Hour Hikes

21st, 25th, 28th, 29th: Wildflower Hikes

27th: Seminar: "The Watershed Scale of Climate Change" w/ Dr. Alice Jones

April:

1st: Wildflower Hike w/ Joyce Bender

4th: Wildflower Hike w/ Devin Rodgers

5th: Wildflower Hike w/ Tyson Gregory

8th, 11th, 19th: Wildflower Hikes

10th & 17th: Golden Hour Hikes

13th: Birding for Beginners

13th: Wildflower Hike w/ Dan Patrick

18th: Wildflower Hike w/ Rob Paratley

22nd: Plein Air Painting & Drawing

25th: The Natural Word: Nature Journaling at Floracliff

May:

2nd: Forest Birds of the Palisades

10th: Kentucky's Slithering Friends: A Snake Appreciation Adventure w/ Courtney Hayes & Michaela Rogers

10th: Beginning Drawing in Nature

15th: Golden Hour Hike to the Kentucky River

30th: Live raptors w/ Raptor Rehab of Kentucky

June:

8th: Plein Air Painting & Drawing

12th: Golden Hour Hike to Elk Lick Falls

14th: Rescheduled: Bluegrass Land & Nature Symposium

20th: Butterflies & Hostplants

28th: Biology Careers: What it's like to be a bat biologist w/ Gregg Janos

See the bottom of page 3 for additional programs.

Scan the QR code for the full event calendar and details.



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Elk Lick Echo

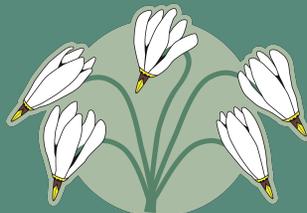
Beverly James

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Founded in 1987, Floracliff is a nonprofit nature sanctuary.

Our mission is to promote conservation and appreciation of nature through education, shared experiences, and stewardship of the sanctuary.