



# Elk Lick Echo

A Newsletter of Floracliff Nature Sanctuary

Summer/Fall 2025



## A Letter from the Director:

In early May, the first of the 17-year Brood XIV periodical cicadas began emerging at Floracliff. Within days, they appeared in overwhelming numbers, providing a feast for reptiles, birds, and other wildlife. Their deafening chorus echoed through the forest. It was impossible not to hear them, and just as impossible not to be captivated by them.

With the return of Brood XIV, I find myself reflecting on the past 17 years at Floracliff and how much has changed since their last appearance in 2008. At that time, we were offering about 30 programs and tours annually, with no nature center or on-site office to support our work.

Since then, Floracliff has grown in meaningful ways. We opened the Nature Center in 2011, and in 2017, expanded the sanctuary with the 59-acre Trail's End tract – both pivotal additions that have enriched our conservation work and public programming. In 2016, we hired Josie Miller as our first Stewardship Director. Under her leadership, our volunteer program has flourished, helping us expand stewardship efforts and offer more than 100 programs and tours each year.

At the same time, we've seen growing impacts from climate change and invasive species. Strong winds have brought down trees, heavy rains have triggered landslides, flash floods have displaced aquatic wildlife, and the Emerald Ash Borer has killed many ash trees across the sanctuary.

These changes – both the progress we've made and the challenges we face – underscore the importance of ongoing land stewardship, biodiversity monitoring, and nature-based programming. These three initiatives have long been central to Floracliff's mission, and the increasing support of donors and volunteers has been instrumental to our growth and success.

I hope you'll consider a gift to Floracliff in 2025. With your continued support, we look forward to the next 17 years.

Sincerely, 



## New Website!

Floracliff just launched a newly designed website.

Check it out at [floracliff.org](https://floracliff.org) to:

- View and register for upcoming events
- Learn about Floracliff's ecology and conservation projects
- Support Floracliff with a donation







## Community Science Spotlight: The Floracliff Biodiversity Project passes 20,000 observations

Earlier this year, the Floracliff Biodiversity Project reached a significant milestone – 20,000 wildlife observations recorded from the sanctuary! The project was launched on iNaturalist in 2014 by former Floracliff intern Natalie Redish. At the time, iNaturalist was a budding website for anyone to share observations of wildlife and receive input from professional and amateur naturalists. Since then, iNaturalist has developed an app and grown into a global community of over 3 million users who collectively document and identify biodiversity around the world. This has resulted in a vast publicly accessible database that is widely used by scientists and conservation professionals for research, conservation planning, and biodiversity monitoring.

At Floracliff, iNaturalist has been a game-changer for documenting the sanctuary's biodiversity. While we had long maintained species lists for plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, records for insects were largely incomplete. With the help of dedicated volunteers, we implemented a focused effort to photograph and share observations of insects and other invertebrates. Today, the Floracliff Biodiversity Project is one of the largest projects of its kind in Kentucky for a single site, and it now includes over 8,000 insect observations. Thanks to contributions from professional entomologists and insect enthusiasts on iNaturalist, more than 750 insect species have been confirmed for the sanctuary.

Every year, we add new species records to the project, such as the cobra clubtail dragonfly observed this spring. Beyond documenting which species occur at Floracliff, each observation also helps us track the seasonal timing of plant and animal life cycles over time. This includes when spring wildflowers bloom, the arrival of the season's first pollinators, and the timing of caterpillar and adult stages for some of the sanctuary's most common butterflies.

One of the most meaningful aspects of iNaturalist is its ability to connect people more deeply to nature. As volunteer Carol Spence shared, "iNaturalist has taught me to look closer, and it has connected me to nature's clock. Documenting the life cycle of plants and their pollinators or the return of certain birds in the spring or fall, I'm better attuned to the rhythms of the natural world." Terri Koontz noted, "Using iNaturalist has made me a better observer. I'm continuing to learn what details to include in each observation." And for Patty Pennington, one moment stood out in particular: "The Peacock Fly was a first for Floracliff and for me! I found it strutting around on the rocks of the water feature near the lodge. My favorite because I got to observe it cavorting about for several minutes."



## Floracliff Participating in the Kentucky Natural Heritage Bee Inventory

By: Caroline Kane (OKNP) & Beverly James (Floracliff)

Since the onset of spring wildflower season, Floracliff has been participating in the Kentucky Natural Heritage Bee Inventory – a project established by our partners at the Office of Kentucky Nature Preserves (OKNP) to monitor and document native bee species across State Nature Preserves and partner-protected lands. At Floracliff, staff and volunteers are following standardized protocols developed by OKNP to collect bees from areas with floral resources favored by native bees.

There are substantial gaps in the knowledge of Kentucky's native bee species diversity, distributions, population trends, and behavioral ecology. This lack of information makes it difficult to establish effective, wide-scale, long-term monitoring programs. Prior to this project, only about 200 native bee species had been recorded in Kentucky. Through the state-wide inventory efforts so far, nearly 300 species have been documented, and OKNP anticipates identifying at least 100 more.

Amidst global pollinator declines, this project will capture critical baseline data on species occurrence and distribution in Kentucky, increase long-term monitoring through repeated surveys, and support conservation planning by providing conservation ranks and status for Kentucky's native bees. It also promotes public engagement and awareness through volunteer participation and community outreach. Ultimately, the inventory will drive informed conservation actions for Kentucky's most important pollinators – our native bees.



## Join us in Welcoming Isabel Cochran

We're excited to welcome Isabel Cochran to the Floracliff team as our new Land Stewardship Technician. Isabel joined us in March, and is focusing on invasive species management, biodiversity surveys, and public programming. She's been involved with Floracliff for years – as an intern, program participant, volunteer, and professional partner – and brings additional experience as an environmental educator and land steward. Before joining the Floracliff staff, she worked in parks, natural areas, and public gardens.

This summer, Isabel is spearheading a new "Kids Hikes" series designed to connect young explorers with nature. Be sure to check our event calendar to join in the fun!



## So Long, Old Friend

If you've joined one of our old tree tours, you may have met the chinquapin oak pictured above. A dendrochronology project led by Dr. Neil Pederson in 2008 dated this tree to 1697. With a broken top, a strong lean, few branches, and a 22-inch diameter, this unassuming oak had stood at Floracliff for over 300 years!

Sadly, this tree fell during the winter. Though we'll miss sharing it with visitors, it will continue to play a role in the sanctuary's ecosystem as it returns to the forest floor.



Follow the Floracliff Biodiversity Project on iNaturalist:

[inaturalist.org/projects/floracliff-biodiversity-project](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/floracliff-biodiversity-project)





# Upcoming Hikes and Programs

## July:

**24th:** Moth Night

**29th:** Kids Hike: Pond and Stream Discovery

## August:

**1st:** FLOC: First Friday Bird Walk

**5th:** Golden Hour Creek Exploration

**8th:** Place Value: An art exhibit and talk w/ Laura Mentor

**12th:** Seminar: "Lichens, Plants, and Air Quality" w/ Roberta Burnes

## September:

**5th:** FLOC: First Friday Bird Walk

**12th:** Summer's Last Butterflies: From field to forest

**18th:** Golden Hour Hike

**20th:** The Aster family - Asteraceae: An introduction to this large and important plant family, a workshop w/ Rob Paratley

**21st:** Plein Air Painting & Drawing

**23rd:** Seminar: "Kentucky's Wildlife Action Plan: A conservation roadmap for Kentucky's most vulnerable species" w/ Laura Burford

**30th:** Kids Hike: Meet the Trees

## October:

**3rd:** FLOC: First Friday Bird Walk

**16th:** Tree Week Golden Hour Hike

**17th:** A Tour of Floracliff's Old Oak Trees

**19th:** Beginning Drawing in Nature

**25th:** Birding for Beginners

**25th:** The Natural Word: Nature Journaling at Floracliff

**26th:** Plein Air Painting & Drawing

## November:

**1st:** Fall Molds and Mushrooms w/ Megan Buland

**7th:** FLOC: First Friday Bird Walk

**8th:** Fall Long Hike

## December:

**5th:** FLOC: First Friday Bird Walk

**19th:** Winter Solstice Golden Hour Hike

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



## Staff

Beverly James  
*Preserve Director*

Josie Miller  
*Stewardship Director*

Isabel Cochran  
*Land Stewardship Technician*

## 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.