

Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

Vol. 2, No. 3

July, 2012

Member Challenge

by Joann Fricke

Just over a year ago, Clifftop membership was in its fledgling stage. We knew we needed members, but how to go about it? The board discussed fees and levels of membership and came to a consensus. That was the easy part, but now the real work began. Slowly but surely, through newspaper articles, group presentations and, most importantly, word-of-mouth, our membership roll grew. Now that we had members, we needed to decide on a renewal date. Once again the board members put their heads together and determined that the best time for this would be January 1, the beginning of the new calendar year. Renewal reminders will be sent out each year in October.

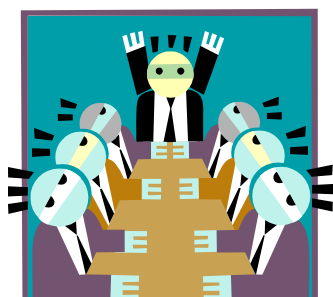
Earlier this year, three of Clifftop's board members participated in a training program designed to help us make the most of our organization. Clifftop's main goal in taking part in this program was to increase our membership base. Many ideas were discussed, but the one that really stood out was a "Member Challenge." Our membership goal for the first year was 200, which we have not yet met. The "challenge" is for each of you to recruit a new member. We currently have 113 members, which makes surpassing our original goal very realistic.

What can we do with twice as many members, you might ask? Well, let me enumerate for you:

1. More members would equal more volunteers (hopefully)
2. More members equals more money and that means...
3. We could put on more seminars
4. We could add to our stewardship fund
5. We could start an acquisition fund
6. We could set up a scholarship fund at local high schools
7. We could pay for volunteers to obtain herbicide licenses
8. We could purchase books for local libraries
9. We would have more money to pay for insurance, equipment upkeep and additional signage at White Rock



We appreciate each and every one of our members and hope that you will continue to support our conservation efforts, so let's get going! I challenge you to double our membership by the end of 2012. Please share the membership form on page 8 with anyone who might be a potential supporter.



Our board supporting the member challenge!

A member,
"beating
the drum"
for new
members!



Board Member Wins Gold



Photo by Thomas Rollins Photography

Clifftop Board of Directors member and former U. S. Marine, Thomas Rollins won three gold medals in weight lifting at the St. Louis Senior Olympics in May. This was Tom's first time to compete in the Senior Olympics and he initially didn't realize that he had placed in all three of his events—arm curls, bench press and leg press. Rollins' wins qualify him to compete in the National Senior Games, but he is not sure if he will participate. For that, he says, he would have to lose body weight and lift more weight. Tom said, "I just want to be a positive example for my five grandchildren." Tom trains at the Monroe County YMCA and is proud of the fact that he can "smoke" the young guys there by doing 18 to 20 consecutive pull ups to their 8 to 10. Rollins said it was a rewarding experience seeing men and women in their 80s and 90s compete, "That was better than any

medal." Tom and his wife, Marian, make their home near Columbia. He is an accomplished photographer and provides many beautiful photos for Clifftop. (Condensed from an article in The Republic-Times.)

White Rock Wildflower Walk

Photos and story by Joann Fricke

On June 2, 2012, noted botanist, author and Clifftop member, Bill McLain, led the first ever wildflower walk at White Rock Nature Preserve. All of our five senses were in use during the walk: we felt the rough leaves of the wild hydrangeas, smelled the crushed spicebush leaves, saw the hundreds of little barbs on the stem of stinging nettle through a magnifying lens (photo below left), and heard the many birds singing in the trees, while at least one of us – Mark – tasted a plant or two.



We learned some interesting facts on the walk, one of which was how to tell the difference between types of vines found in the woods. Virginia creeper vines have deep ridges much like a tree trunk while grape vines have shaggy bark. Poison ivy vines have a hairy



appearance (see related story). Bill brought to our attention a pokeweed plant and warned us not to eat the salad made famous in the song, "Poke Salad Annie," as it can be poisonous. My favorite plant found that day was doll's eyes, *Actaea pachypoda*, (photo above right). The fruits of this plant are a loose cluster of oval, shiny, white berries marked with a dark purple spot at one end, which accounts for the common name. Another common name for this plant is *baneberry* (as in *bad* berry), a good clue that all parts of this plant are highly poisonous to humans.

Near the end of our hike, while we were observing the many flowers and grasses in the hill prairie, someone asked what bird we heard chirping nearby. Pen DauBach told us it was a summer tanager. As if on cue, the bright red male followed by its more drab colored mate flew right through the middle of the group. What a way to end the day.



Love in the Bluffs

By Carl DauBach

The 19th century English poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling wrote that "God gives all men all earth to love, but, since man's heart is small, ordains for each one spot that shall prove beloved over all." And so it is for many that our majestic and towering bluff tops, offering fiery sunsets, eagles on the wing, and panoramic vistas of the American Bottoms have proven to be the spot for love.

Bob Stewart, Monroe County's longtime District Conservationist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, adores prairies. An ardent advocate for prairie plantings he assisted many locals in establishing prairies through the Conservation Reserve Program. Bob loves to visit Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve. In June 1988 Bob and his girlfriend Ruth rode bicycles from Waterloo to Fults Hill Prairie and then hiked up to Big Prairie on the north side of the preserve. They sat to rest and enjoy the magnificent view of the floodplain from the vantage of the large healthy prairie. As he viewed beloved lands beside his own beloved, Bob made an impromptu declaration and proposed to Ruth. They were married in 1989.

Acting far less on spontaneity than predetermination, Mike Krebel carefully plotted and planned his marriage proposal using the bluffs as background and the family farm as parchment. The Krebel family farm nestles against the cliff face to the north of Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and unfolds out into the fertile American Bottoms. Wielding a tractor and disk rather than a pen and ink Mike engraved in very large typeface the huge letters, "Will You Marry Me" into a fallow field in March 2007. He then invited his longtime girlfriend, Shannon Melliore, for a hike in the nature preserve. She liked the message she saw as they looked down from Big Prairie and they were married in June 2009.

Our bluffs also have served as wedding sites as well as a romantic spot for marriage proposals.



Photo courtesy of Ed Wienhoff, Monroe County Independent



Photo courtesy of Richard Spener

In June 1995, Monroe County Circuit Court Judge Dennis Jacobsen performed a civil marriage ceremony at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve. Richard Spener and Toni Armstrong had often hiked the Preserve and wanted to be married at the place they so enjoyed. Knowing their friend Dennis also was an active outdoorsman, Richard and Toni asked him to perform the ceremony. With his somber judicial robes stowed in a backpack, Dennis joined the wedding party of eight adults and three children as they slogged up the trail to Big Prairie on a very hot day. They changed into their wedding attire and Dennis conducted the ceremony (see photo at left). Toni's bridal-day list of must-haves included bug dope, bottled water, toilet paper and snacks in lieu of the more traditional something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue. A reception in St. Louis followed.

Love in the Bluffs continued...

Richard Dotson, of rural Baldwin, often hunted deer at Charlie Frederick's bluff ground in southwestern Monroe County. With time and many hunts, Richard fell in love with Angela's Prairie, a dedicated Land & Water Reserve on the Frederick property, which overlooks the beautiful wetlands of ancient Conner Lake. In October 2008 Richard got married in a ceremony at Angela's Prairie (see photo at right), and the wedding party of about 40 people then attended a reception at Lisa's Restaurant (now Lisa's Market Street Grille) in Prairie du Rocher.



Photo courtesy of Richard Dotson

In our bluff lands, whether for love of nature or the nature of love, passion may outstrip awareness.

In June 2009, Mike Marlen, a biology professor at Southwestern Illinois College, was leading a summer school biology field trip at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve, with about 15 students eager to see and learn all they could about the nature of nature. The study group had nearly finished ascending the wooden staircase from the parking lot to the top of the bluffs when they encountered a naked couple -- *in flagrante delicto* -- who were at the very top of the long staircase. (Editor's note: Sorry folks, no photo was available to accompany this story. Besides, this is a family friendly publication.) The couple was so caught up in each other and in the moment that they were completely oblivious to the entire world.

The study group – still hoping to continue their ecology studies – stopped, coughed and stamped their feet, and made a lot of noise. The couple persisted. After a number of minutes had passed, a student yelled, "Hey, we're trying to have a field trip." The startled couple jumped up and scurried into the trees. Mike and the students waited about five minutes longer and then completed the walk up the last few steps.

At the top, the study group saw a young couple sitting on rocks at an overlook. The couple smiled and greeted members of the study group as they went by: "Beautiful view isn't it?" and "It's a lovely day." Mike notes that members of his study group certainly recognized the day as a lovely one, and adds that all were unanimous in hoping that ticks and chiggers weren't out in great numbers on that beautiful day.

While we all have love for the bluffs, a few – perhaps the most fortunate among us – have experienced love in the bluffs.



Upcoming events...

Saturday, September 1, retired IDNR biologist, Marty Kemper, will lead a wildflower walk at White Rock Nature Preserve. Meet at the White Rock parking area at 9:30 a.m. The hike will last until about 2:00 p.m. Register by August 30 at clifftop@htc.net or (618)458-4674.

Watch for info on Member's Day at White Rock in October in the next issue of Bluffviews

The second annual Monroe County YMCA Illinois Ozarks 10K Bluff Trail Run will take place at Salt Lick Point on October 27, 2012. For more information click on the banner ad at www.stlouistrackclub.com Events Area Calendar.



Photo by Joann Fricke

Leaflets Three, Leave Them Be!

By Joann Fricke

As someone who is highly allergic to poison ivy, I am constantly on the lookout for it –in my yard, the woods, prairies or trails. But not everyone can readily identify it. A former co-worker moved to a condo several years ago and kept getting an itchy rash when she worked in her flower beds. Being the resident poison ivy expert at work (because I've had it so many times), she asked me if I thought her rash was indeed poison ivy. I confirmed her suspicion and took photos of the plant in my yard so she could find it in her yard. That apparently didn't work, because on a recent

visit to her condo, she asked me to look in her back yard for the suspect plant. In no time I spotted it entwined with a flowering bush and the next day she had her neighbor take the Roundup to it.

Poison ivy thrives in extreme heat and drought and spreads through the most casual contact. Standing alone, the plant can reach heights of 5 to 6 feet. If the vine attaches itself to a tree, it will grow up the full height of the tree. A poison ivy vine growing on a tree can be easily identified by its hairy appearance, as seen at right.



Photo by Donna Dougherty

Urushiol oil is present in all parts of the plant. If you are allergic to it, you will develop an itchy, blistery rash if you come in contact with it, and there are a surprising number of ways to become infected. Direct contact is the most obvious, but clothing and gloves are equally responsible. To keep from handling clothing more than once, I have found the best idea is to throw your clothes directly into the washer when you come inside and wash them right away. A warm, soapy shower should remove the oil from your body.

Tools and ATV's can also lead to a poison ivy rash occurrence. My husband and I seem to get the rash on our calves from getting in and out of our Gator after having driven through a patch of poison ivy. Pets are another source that can cause an outbreak to which I can attest. I once had a horrible rash on my thighs in the exact spot where my cat had snuggled on my lap. Washing your tools, vehicles and pets should remove the oil that causes the rash.

Treating the itchy rash is a challenge. I have found that very little eases the itch, but medical professionals recommend calamine lotion, hydrocortisone cream or oral antihistamines. A cool compress helps, too. In extreme cases, a trip to the doctor for a steroid shot may be in order. Probably the best advice is to avoid the plant completely, if at all possible.



Please visit our facebook page to view our photo albums.

Just click on this link: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Clifftop/162533970518561>

Learn more about our organization, the work we do, our partners, area hiking trails and scientific research going on in our area by visiting our website at : www.clifftopalliance.org.

Clifftop

White Rock Stewardship Update

By Carl DauBach

After we purchased White Rock, we had a consulting forester develop a Forest Management Plan for the properties. Our goal was two-fold. First we needed an expert assessment to determine what conservation practices were needed to restore the woodlands, hill prairies and glades. And, secondly, we needed a Forest Management Plan to qualify for various USDA / Farm Bill conservation programs to garner cost-share monies to help implement the necessary practices.

Four key conservation practices must be done on the properties to revitalize the landscape to a quasi-self sustaining natural area: prairies and glades need to be cleared of woody tree and shrub encroachments; invasive species (principally bush honeysuckle) must be controlled; timber stand improvements, by culling understory maples and elms, must occur in the forested areas to encourage oak-hickory regeneration; and, recurring fire, through prescribed burns, needs to be returned to the landscape.



Photo by Martin Kemper

Clifftop volunteers have already cleared woody encroachments from one hill prairie area and have begun brush clearing on two other prairies on the preserve. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission has provided monies for contractors to clear brush from a large glade area on the reserve.



We applied and qualified for Farm Bill Program monies; full implementation of all recommended practices, under current federal fiscal year Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cost rates, will require

\$300,000. NRCS approves contract applications and allocates monies in three increments annually. Unfunded applications may be deferred to the next fiscal year.

We are pleased to report that we have signed four NRCS contracts, totaling \$176,482. We are now fully funded to commence all four practices, using forestry contractors, on the west half of the Nature Preserve and on the east 80-acre parcel of the Land & Water Reserve. We'll continue to compete for the remaining \$124,000 necessary in future funding cycles.

These farm bill programs allow Clifftop to hire contractors for some of the "heavy lifting" that needs to be done on the properties. Their work and skills will enable us to complete the important first round of restoration and stewardship on the land; an additional benefit, of course, is the multiplier effects of contracting and hiring that will ripple through our local economy. As pleased as we are with the ability to jump-start this important work at White Rock, we still rely on volunteer efforts. As weather allows, we plan to conduct volunteer workdays to spruce up the interpretive area near the former mine this summer, complete installation of boundary signage in the fall and winter, and conduct prescribed burns on some of the interior prairies and glades.



Woodpeckers Like Sugar Water, Too!

Photos and story by Joann Fricke

As you may have read in the Cliffnotes article in the June 15 issue of the Monroe County Independent, downy woodpeckers especially seem to enjoy the sweet energy-packed sugar water in hummingbird feeders. You can see in the photo at left that this downy is truly enjoying the nectar in the feeder. This same feeder has an ant moat in the center that is filled with water that a tufted titmouse

likes to use for its drinking water. Some days there are three different kinds of birds fighting for a spot at this single feeder. The article in the Independent mentioned that hummingbird feeders without perches might deter woodpeckers. That fact is clearly lost on the fellow in the photo at right who is bent on retrieving the sweet liquid inside. Where there is a will, there is a way!



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## Just for fun...

It is so hot and dry at my house that this chipmunk has resorted to drinking water out of the saucer under the flowerpot.



Photo by Joann Fricke



Photo by Joann Fricke

We felt so badly for "our" critters that we put out a tub of water for them to quench their thirst. It quickly turned into a raccoon hot tub!



# Join Clifftop

Members receive:

~~ E-mail newsletters

~~ Annual Report

~~ Invitations to special events & work days

~~ Invitations to join committees and work with the  
Clifftop Board of Directors

~~ The satisfaction of Preserving and Protecting  
our Natural Areas and Natural Heritage.

## Dues:

\$25.00 annually, individuals

\$35.00 annually, families

\$50.00 annually, supporting

\$100.00 annually, sustaining

\$500.00 life membership



Pen DauBach photo

*To inquire about Clifftop membership,  
please e-mail: [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net)*

*Membership Registration: Please print and complete.*

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ are enclosed; additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer with Clifftop; please contact me.

*Please send your completed membership registration and a check for dues, payable to Clifftop, to:*

**Clifftop  
P.O. Box 131  
Maestown, IL 62256**