

Bluffviews

A quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

October, 2013

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The Clifftop Board of Directors
cordially invites Clifftop members
along with their families and friends to attend

A Good Day at White Rock *Clifftop Membership Day at our Nature Preserve*

*Saturday, October 12, 2013
11 a.m. until 2 p.m.*

Food and drink will be served and "facilities" will be provided

*RSVP to Membership Chair Joann Fricke by October 10
at cliffmbr@htc.net or call (618)935-2542*

Clifftop's gator, fondly known as "Clifton Gator" by stewardship volunteers,
along with a few borrowed Gators will be available
to transport those who do not care for strenuous hiking.
Parking will be available in the White Rock parking lot on Bluff Road
and along Harris Road which is southwest of the parking lot.

Please join us for a fun-filled day to renew acquaintances, meet new friends, reminisce about what our bluff lands mean to each of us, discover what Clifftop accomplished in 2013, learn of upcoming programs for 2014 and just enjoy the great outdoors at our annual members' day event at White Rock.

Reservations are requested so that we can accurately plan for food and drink. Homemade goodies have been pledged by our Board, so don't miss out!

Hope to see everyone there!

Eagle Scout Project



Jacob Warthen, of Waterloo's Boy Scout Troop 323, recently completed a community service project at Clifftop's White Rock Nature Preserve to earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

To earn Eagle rank, a Boy Scout must: progress through the five ranks of Boy Scouting; earn at least 21 merit badges; serve six months in a troop leadership position; take part in a Scoutmaster conference; and, importantly, plan, develop, and give leadership to a community service project.

Jacob's project involved dressing up, beautifying and stabilizing the interpretive and commemorative display areas at Madeline's Rest on the Preserve.

The project begins.

Photo courtesy Wyatt Warthen

Under his leadership, scouts gathered and cemented natural limestone rocks at the bases of our two commemorative rock carvings, built and mortared a limestone retaining wall around the interpretive triptych signage, which will become a native plant garden, and fabricated a concrete stem wall, which will be used for recognizing in-memoriam donations.

Congratulations to Jacob on earning Eagle Scout and our thanks to him and his troop for a job well done!



The finished project.

Photo courtesy Wyatt Warthen



A tired crew at the end of the project. Jacob is pictured at left.

Photo courtesy Wyatt Warthen

Life in the Bluffs

By Joey Wagner, Clifftop member, age 12

Twelve years I've lived in the bluffs, and I've adored every minute of it. Falling asleep to the calming sounds of rustling trees and bustling animals, taking in the fresh pine scent, and waking to the light chirping of birds, always seems to brighten the perspective of my day and life in general. The environment around us definitely affects our emotions; honestly, I can't imagine a better environment in which to live because of the peace, serenity, and beauty it offers.



Photo courtesy David Wagner

During autumn, the bluffs create a wondrous scene of yellows, oranges, and browns; these colors create an unimaginable sight to anyone. When hiking through the bluffs, you start to realize how much it has to offer: majestic animals, small creeks with the soothing sound of rippling water, indigenous plants, and patterns of colors one could only possibly see in an artist's palette of indescribable watercolors.

When you grow up in a certain place, it becomes something that's routine or usual, but living in the bluffs is different; within the seasons and sometimes days, the smell, appearance, and noise can change instantly. This is important to me because with every day comes a whole new wonderland to explore, and I'd absolutely hate to miss out on the beauty each new day brings.

The young authoress is seen in the photo at left at her home in the bluffs with her beloved dog, Shuyak.



Photo courtesy Cindy Nicolls

The Monroe County YMCA is sponsoring the third annual Illinois Ozarks 10K Bluff Trail Run on October 26, 2013, at Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve in Valmeyer. The race begins at 9:30 a.m. in Borsch Memorial Park. The course is challenging and beautifully scenic. For more information contact Sara Martinez at Smartinez@ymcaswil.org. To register, go to: <http://beta.active.com/valmeyer-il/running/races/ymca-illinois-ozarks-trail-10k-2013>



Happy 50th, INPC!

By Pen DauBach

Besides cake, songs, and celebrations, a 50th birthday offers a 50-year perspective: a moment to pause and reflect on origins and see how things have worked out. This year is the 50th birthday of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and we now can look back on this remarkable and visionary act of legislation, passed and signed into law in 1963, with the purpose:

"...to secure for the people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of natural areas, including the elements of natural diversity present in the State, by establishing a system of nature preserves..."

Passage of the legislation took several years of intensive work by a dedicated group of people who saw their first hopes dashed when the Governor, finding fault with aspects of the first enabling bill, vetoed it in 1961. Two years later Governor Kerner signed the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act. A remarkable piece of legislation for its time, the opening paragraph states:

"All areas within the State except those that are expressly designated by law for preservation and protection in their natural condition are liable to be altered by human activity. Natural lands and waters together with the plants and animals living thereon in natural communities are a part of the heritage of the people. They are of value for scientific research, for teaching, as reservoirs of natural materials not all of the potential uses of which are now known, as habitats for rare and vanishing species, as places of historic and natural interest and scenic beauty and as living museums of the native landscape wherein one may envision and experience primeval conditions in a wilderness-like environment. They also contribute generally to the public health and welfare and the environmental quality of the State."



Phrases that seem commonplace today – ‘scenic beauty,’ ‘natural diversity,’ ‘buffer areas,’ ‘habitats for rare and vanishing species’ – had some of their first public uses in the 1963 act. Illinois’ far-sighted legislation was the first in the nation to establish a state’s ability to protect natural areas and features. Since then more than a dozen additional states have passed similar legislation, using the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act and later amendments and additions to it, as a model so their citizens, too, would be able to pass on an enduring heritage of natural spaces.

By 1963 most of the Illinois landscape already had been so transformed that a time-traveling pioneer settler from the 1800s would not have recognized our state. Indeed, only Iowa exceeds Illinois in terms of human alteration to the landscape. Today, less than 1% of the state’s lands retain the appearance and land cover when the first Euro-American settlers arrived. George B. Fell, one of the persons who drafted the 1963 act, recognized how much the state had changed, noting in 1958, “What we have saved, and what we may save in the next few years, will be all the true wild nature that will remain to pass on from generation to generation in the years ahead. There will never be another chance.” A significant amount of the natural heritage lands remaining to us are protected through INPC programs.

Enrollment of lands with INPC is a voluntary act that may be undertaken by private landowners as well as businesses and governance bodies. A landowner agrees to forever restrict future uses of the land so that natural resources and features are perpetuated. Landowners retain ownership rights and can sell or pass their land on to heirs, but the use restrictions carry forward on the deeds. Landowners need not open their dedicated property to public use.

High quality natural areas may be dedicated as a nature preserve in recognition that these areas constitute the "best of the best." If a nature preserve is open to public recreation, activities generally are restricted to passive uses, such as hiking and nature observation. Collecting plant material, hunting, use of motorized vehicles of any sort usually are not allowable uses on nature preserves.

In 1994 the INPC was authorized to create and administer another form of land protection program, the land and water reserve system. The program also is a voluntary enrollment and protects important lands and waters, including larger blocks of wildlife habitat that may not contain assemblages of rare or threatened species. A land and water reserve registration also restricts future land use and, like nature preserves, the landowner retains title and all rights to sell or bequeath the property. A landowner of a property that could meet the criteria for dedication of a nature preserve may choose to register his property as a land and water reserve in order to continue certain practices, like hunting, mushroom picking, or other uses not generally allowed in the more strict rules of a nature preserve.

There now are more than 370 dedicated nature preserves in 84 of the state's 102 counties. Preserves range in size from about 1 acre to more than 2,000 acres and, in total, comprise more than 56,000 acres. Since the inception of the Land and Water Reserve program in 1994, a total of 48,000 acres at 170 sites have been added. While the total protected acreage of more than 104,000 acres seems considerable, it constitutes a very small percentage of the state's more than 37 million acres. Our natural areas land totals and the even smaller total acreage in INPC protected status seems small when compared to the 4% total land use of urban/developed lands and INPC protected lands are dwarfed when compared to the approximately 21 million acres planted in corn and soybeans in our state in 2013.

The mission of INPC continues: *"...to assist private and public landowners in protecting high quality natural areas and habitats of endangered and threatened species in perpetuity, through voluntary dedication or registration of such lands into the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The Commission promotes the preservation of these significant lands and provides leadership in their stewardship, management and protection."*

The visionary, far-sighted language of the enabling legislation has created a legacy that each of us can treasure, enjoy, take pride in, and continue to create, protect and preserve, for generations to come.

Pen DauBach, Secretary-Treasurer of Clifftop, is one of the nine gubernatorial-appointed commissioners of the INPC, serving since October 2012.



Weevils at White Rock: Saturday, November 2nd from 1 to 3 pm at the Monroe County Annex, 901 Illinois Avenue, Waterloo. **Please note the date change to November 2nd for this program.** Straight snouts, broad snouts, bent antenna, bark beetles, primitive or more advanced species? For the past two years Korey Byers, Southeast Missouri State University, has conducted field research at White Rock Nature Preserve to pose these and a host of additional questions about this large group of arthropods. Please join us for this seminar, another in our "Meet the Neighbors" series hosted by the University of Illinois Extension Service and Clifftop. Registration for this presentation is requested by October 31st and may be done by email to clifftop@htc.net or by phone, 618-458-4674. *Photo at left courtesy Ethan Orsburn, SEMO.*



Debbie Scott Newman, INPC, IDNR Director Marc Miller, Nancy & Bob Weck, co-founders/leaders of FSCW and INPC Director Randy Heidorn
photo courtesy INPC

Friends of Stemler Cave Woods Wins IDNR Award

The Friends of Stemler Cave Woods conservation group from St. Clair and Monroe counties was honored at the Illinois State Fair in August as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Outstanding Volunteer of the Year.

The Friends of Stemler Cave Woods formed in 2005 to provide stewardship, protection, monitoring and public outreach within the Stemler Karst Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site. The group especially focuses on the IDNR Stemler Cave Woods Nature Preserve and surrounding privately-owned nature preserves, natural heritage landmarks and other conservation-managed lands in the karst area.

Since its inception, the group has worked tirelessly and enthusiastically on behalf of this important conservation area, logging more than 2,000 hours of honeysuckle removal, sinkhole clean-ups and trail building/maintenance. The group developed a creative, signature event, "**Sinkhole de Mayo**" Trail Maintenance Fiesta in May to encourage public participation in stewardship of the site (complete with a Mexican lunch for participants).

In addition to immense hands-on work, the group has conducted extensive public education and is also a founding member of and regular participant in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan's local partnership group, known as SWIWAP. The Friends of Stemler Cave Woods has been a vital participant in the growing conservation movement in southwestern Illinois.

Members of the group have also frequently assisted the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and IDNR in work days and prescribed burns at nature preserves and land and water reserves outside of the Stemler Karst.

The group's leader, Bob Weck, helped organize and participated in two BioBlitzes held in 2011 and 2013. Bob and his wife, Nancy, have also led numerous herpetological field trips in the area. Bob has also served as President of the Illinois Speleological Survey. In 2011, Bob oversaw a study that produced "Improving Sinkhole Pond Habitat for Amphibians in Southwest Illinois" to encourage best management practices for sinkhole pond management in the Stemler Karst as well as surrounding karst areas.

Congratulations to the Friends of Stemler on this much deserved award.