

# Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

April, 2014

Vol. 4, no. 2

## Rafter of Turkeys—A Sure Sign of Spring

by Joann Fricke

A Google search reveals that a group of wild turkeys can be called either a flock or a rafter. Whatever you call them, they represent a sure sign of Spring at my house. The puffed up tom (or gobbler, as some sources call adult male turkeys) strutting his stuff for his harem of hens, gives credence to the line from the poem "Locksley Hall" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

For more than a month, a rafter of turkeys, varying in numbers from 14 to 25, has entertained us nearly every morning. On March 31, we were awakened by lots of gobbling calls from toms and strident calls from hens shortly before dawn. As we looked out the windows, we saw 5 or 6 turkeys roosting in the trees to the north of our house. What a treat to witness! As the sun rose, they took off in search of breakfast.

The next morning, we were privileged to observe yet another interesting behavior—a tom tussle. We had seen the hens chase each other and peck at the tail feathers of one another, but this was much more serious. One tom was jumping at his rival trying to injure him with the spurs on the back of his legs. The spurs generally get longer and sharper as the tom ages.

We never know from where the turkey parade will come, but it will soon end, as the hens settle down to hatch their eggs and raise their poults. As I've said many times, there is never a dull moment when living in the bluffs.



Photo courtesy Mike Fricke



Guest Views...

## Fogelpoles' Cave

By Father Paul Wightman

Beneath the sinkhole punctuated plain of Monroe County, lies Illinois' longest natural cavern. It is known as Fogelpoles' Cave. Perhaps you are asking just who are these folks that had access to Monroe County's basement?

I first met the Fogelpoles as a teenager who was becoming enthralled with a new frontier, the world of caves. Caves held that lure of adventure. In 1948 I was a student at St. Henry's Prep Seminary in Belleville, Illinois, just a few miles away from my home town of Waterloo, county seat of Monroe County. A classmate of mine, Cletus Meier, spoke of a cave on his uncle Joe's farm. I understood that it was a sinkhole entrance with a 15 – 20 foot drop and was unexplored. So Cletus and I went out to visit the Fogelpole family.

There was Joe Fogelpole Sr. who was blind. With him lived his adult children: Bill, Kathrine, and Joe, Jr. who ran the farm. It was one of those old fashioned farms where you could still find a variety of animals: chickens, ducks, pigs, horses, cats, and dogs. A variety of crops were grown: wheat, corn, and soybeans. And there was a big garden with many kinds of vegetables including dill and garlic. More about these later.

Katherine used to reminisce about a pig that used to run through the house years ago. The Fogelpoles had a small dog by the name of Tiny. It was a rather mild tempered animal and was allowed in the house. On one occasion the priest from their local parish in Renault visited the Fogelpoles. He brought his accordion along. The priest began his concert and was attacked by Tiny! It must have been hard on the little dog's ears.

The cave seemed to be of little interest to the Fogelpoles. I suppose that Joe, Sr. had warned his family away from such a foreboding hole. Since Cletus was a relative, and I must have looked somewhat reliable, we were allowed to look into the cave. We were seminarians studying for the priesthood. So that was the first of many trips of exploration in the cave.

As I was preparing this article, I occasionally had to dig deep into my memory to verify the chronology of events. I came across this note. Katherine Fogelpole showed me a picture of a wheat field that had been cut. The picture was taken June 25, 1949. She added that this was the



Joe Jr. is on the right, the others are unknown.  
Photo provided by the Wightman family

last year they still harvested wheat by stacking the sheaves in small stacks in the field before thrashing. That helped me to date one of my earliest trips to the cave. Bob Kotva, a classmate of mine, and I made a long trip into the cave and camped out in that wheat field when we came out late at night. I drove our 1937 Ford coupe on that trip. I think we called it a camping trip so as to divert the attention of our parents that it was truly a caving trip.

In years to come I would bring many cavers to the cave. Katherine would always insist that we stay for coffee even if we seemed to be a little muddy. And coffee really meant a three course meal including meat, potatoes and dessert. And then there were the famous Fogelpole pickles which were most treasured by my own family and beyond. I believe the fresh dill and the garlic from their garden gave the pickles their distinctive taste.

Through all this cave commotion the Wightman and the Fogelpole families became the best of friends. My mother, Adele, and my grandmother, Mrs. Hamacher, took a very dim view of all this caving business. My grandmother said many rosaries when she would hear of a cave trip in progress. Cletus' parents had

forbidden him to do any more cave exploring. To lessen some of this stress, I took my family out to meet the Fogelpoles. They were invited to coffee and that did it. I guess that my grandmother experienced at least some control in respect to my caving activities after meeting the Fogelpoles. My family spent many an enjoyable Sunday afternoon at the Fogepole farm and would bring many a city slicker out to see what a real farm was like. The day would end with a card game: canasta or blitz. My family would often reciprocate by inviting the Fogelpoles to their home in Waterloo.

Joe Fogepole had some interesting tales. He would listen attentively as a geologist would explain how caves and sinkholes were formed. Then he would tell about what the old timers said about those sinkholes. "The sinkholes were left after they had pulled up those huge turnips."

Joe could see humor in some of the simple things around the farm. As a gaggle of geese would strut across the farm yard he would encourage them by responding to their "kak, kak, kak, kak." When we had to cross an extremely muddy field on the way back from a cave, he would chide us about how large our feet had become.

Joe knew the area well and was able to point out to me any sinks that had an opening in the bottom. Long before any dye tracings were made, Joe suspected that the surface resurgence of the cave stream was Collier Spring just a mile and a half away. Of special interest to Joe was a spring near Collier Spring called Indian Hole Spring. In a dry season it was just a round hole with little observable flow. But in a very heavy rain in the area over the cave system, it surged and seemed to boil violently. He said it was quite a sight to behold.

I turned to Joe to discover some history of the cave. He referred me to William Fauss in Renault. He had lived near the cave before the coming of the Fogelpoles. About the year 1902, Fauss, Philip Teichgraeber from Waterloo, and one other person had entered the cave. They spent about three hours in the cave and did not get their feet wet. Without getting feet wet, they probably had not gone very far down the main passage. Joe was able to add an intriguing element to the history – the mysterious ladder made of sassafras branches. Joe had discovered this ladder but had no idea who had placed it there. All the local farmers seemed to know nothing about the cave.

The Fogepole cave has a double entrance at the bottom of a large timbered sinkhole. These entrances were about ten yards apart. The larger entrance had a rather intimidating drop of about fifteen feet. This is the entrance we used at first.

According to Joe, the other entrance had been rooted closed by some of his pigs who must have enjoyed the natural air-conditioning blowing from the cave on a hot summer afternoon. Later I was able to reopen that entrance by channeling surface water into that entrance. That is the entrance generally used today.

Joe Fogepole always had a legitimate concern about his liability when permitting folks, especially strangers, to explore the cave. I think that the legal advice he received was that it was safer not to allow entry. I remember that he discussed the topic with the renowned geologist, J. Harlan Bretz, when he visited the cave. The suggestion of "maintaining a public nuisance" arose, but Dr. Bretz allowed that Joe was hardly *maintaining* a public nuisance. It was just a natural feature on his land. Joe's reluctance to let just anyone enter the cave was a factor in the cave's preservation.

All my caving and cave mapping brought some notoriety to the cave. One day some surveyors appeared on the Fogepole property. Joe asked them what there were doing. He was abruptly answered: "If you interfere with our work you will be fined \$500 per day." Some good public relations on the part of a governmental agency! The Department of Natural Resources eventually acquired a small area around the cave entrance.

As Joe and his sister grew older, farming finally got to be a bit too much for them, and they moved to a small home in Waterloo near the GM&O Railroad Station. It was still an active line in those days. They remained good friends of my family. Eventually Katherine went to Monroe County Nursing Home where she died. In just a few years Joe also went to the nursing home where he passed away.

We owe the preservation of this vast underground wilderness to the years of protective care that the Fogelpoles gave to this cave system.



Joe, Jr. in his later years.  
Photo provided by the  
Wightman family





Photo provided by Steve Taylor.

# About The Author...

Reverend Paul R. Wightman, O.F.M., hails from the Wightman Pharmacy family. His grandfather, P.A. Hamacher, took over the family business at the turn of the 20th century; father Sid, then brother Tom, and now nephew Steve continue to run the business. Father Wightman was one of the earliest and consistent explorers of the Fogelpole Cave system, mapping over eight miles of passages. Now in his mid-80s, he remains an active priest and caver, and is singlehandedly credited with encouraging the Fogepoles and others to protect the pristine wilderness of the cave. In the photo above, vintage 1990's, Father Paul is second from right. Also of note in the photo, on the right, is Steve Taylor, Illinois Natural History Survey and our lead scientist. Third from right is Sam Panno, Illinois State Geological Survey, also on our science team.

Spring Wildflower Walk  
Saturday, April 12  
9:00 a.m. until noon  
Salt Lick Point  
Land & Water Reserve

Meet at the parking lot near the intersection of Bluff Road and Limestone Lane in Valmeyer, IL. Hike the flat and easy Johnson Trail to view stunning spring wildflowers. Join an expert led group or walk the trail stopping at attended interpretive stations to learn about the plants in bloom.

Co-hosted by the Salt Lick Point Stewardship Committee, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, the Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society and Clifftop.



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

# Farm Property Update

Since Clifftop 'bought the farm' on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a number of next steps have begun.

First and foremost, we have made application with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission to dedicate a conservation easement on the property and have it designated a nature preserve. With his agreement, the preserve will be named in honor of Father Paul Wightman's long-term efforts to preserve and protect the Fogelpole Cave system, and, so it will be called the Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve.

Our long-term plan is to convert the farm's 400 tillable acres to a native grass prairie-oak savannah by enrollment in the USDA Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Because property must be owned for a minimum of one year to be eligible for CRP, we have rented the farm ground for tillage this year. Over the next three years we will incrementally convert farm ground to prairie.



Possible future site for public engagement at "the farm."  
Photo courtesy Joann Fricke.

Clifftop's board of directors, with the consulting advice of some local craftsmen, has begun to critically examine the variety of structures on the property, with a view to determine costs, benefits and usefulness of the buildings to future public engagement activities.

We've begun the process of looking for grant funding to help us design a public parking and reception / facilities area and a trail system, part of which will be handicapped friendly.

The science effort on the property is off to a booming start. Over a dozen research projects are in the works, with researchers at the Illinois Natural History Survey and the University of Illinois-Urbana in the lead. Researchers are participating from additional institutions and agencies, including Southwestern Illinois College, St. Louis' Washington University,

the Illinois State Museum and the Illinois State Geological Survey. Bat surveys and water quality testing in the cave system are underway, as are a surface survey of reptiles and amphibians and related water quality assessment of seven sinkhole ponds.

We are planning a special tour of the property for Clifftop members in the fall. Most importantly, we hope to issue calls this summer for volunteer help to begin biodiversity inventory projects and some cleanup and structural repair workdays. We hope you'll join us.

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## Bill McClain's Hickory Syrup

1. Gather a pound or so of shagbark hickory bark.
2. Clean it with water and a scrub brush, but no soap.
3. Allow the bark to dry and bake it at 350 degrees on a cookie sheet for 30 to 45 minutes.
4. Place the bark in a large 2 to 3 gallon stainless steel pot filled with good quality water (bottled or distilled).
5. Bring to a boil and then turn down to a simmer. Cook for about an hour.
6. Remove the bark and bring the water back to a low boil to concentrate the hickory taste.
7. Add cane sugar to the water, 2 parts sugar to 1 of water and dissolve sugar.
8. Continue to cook until the syrup reaches the consistency of store bought syrup. You may use the spoon drip test. Dip some out, let cool, and then let it drip back into the pot. Fast dripping, like water, means it is not concentrated enough.





# Photo Gallery



## Archaeology of the Bluffs & Bottoms February 15, 2014



Dennis Knobloch, presenter



Sheryl & Merrill Prange, presenters  
Photos of this event courtesy Tom Rollins,  
ThomasRollinsPhotography.com

To view a photo album of this presentation, please visit our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.500786756693279.1073741840.162533970518561&type=3>

To view a video of this presentation, taped and edited by Clifftop volunteer Tina McElhattan, please visit our YouTube page at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/clifftopnfp>



## Brushpile Burning March 1, 2014

Nineteen volunteers gathered to build (via chain gang, as seen above) and burn brush piles at White Rock Nature Preserve. While munching a Dove chocolate during the event, a volunteer found the prophetic wrapper, at left.

Photos of this event, courtesy Joann Fricke

To view a photo album of this event, please visit our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.494937777278177.1073741839.162533970518561&type=3>



Photo courtesy Paul Feldker



Photo courtesy Paul Feldker

Full Moon  
Owl Prowl  
White Rock  
Land & Water  
Reserve  
March 15, 2014



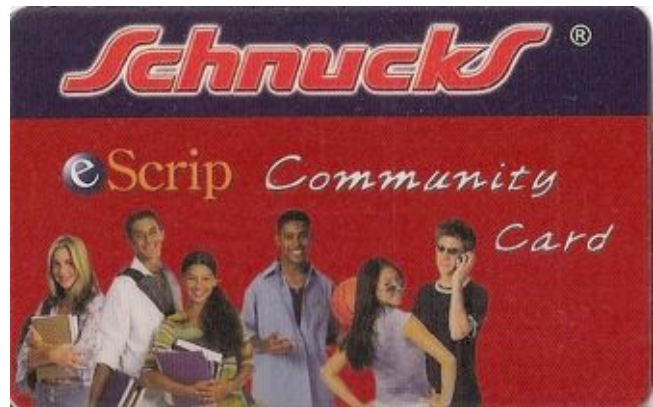
Photo courtesy Tina McElhattan

To view a photo album of this event, please visit our Facebook page at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.502619676509987.1073741841.162533970518561&type=1>



If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please consider doing so at your earliest convenience. Thanks for your support of our mission!

Enroll in the e-scrip program and earn money for Clifftop when you shop. The program is simple: just pick up an e-scrip card at a Schnucks Market and register your card to Clifftop, group ID # 500022680, either online at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) or by telephone, 1-800-931-6258. Participating merchants like Schnucks contribute a percentage of your purchase totals to Clifftop each time you present your card at the check-out register. You also can register and use your card through the e-scrip online shopping mall and create even greater contributions.





# White Rock Nature Preserve North Prairie – Glade Complex Restoration Update

Clifftop, in a joint venture with HeartLands Conservancy, purchased the White Rock tract with generous support from foundations and agencies because the property is home to two unusual, rare and declining habitats in the state. White Rock sustains about seven acres of loess hill prairies and five acres of limestone glades.

Loess hill prairies occur along the tops and very edges of southwest-facing Mississippi and Illinois River bluff cliff faces. Because of the friable loess soils and extremely dry, sunny and windy conditions on these cliff edges, prairie grasses and flowers took hold about 9,000 years ago. There are only about 480 acres of loess hill prairie remaining in our state, and 40% of these acres occur along our bluff corridor, from Dupou to Prairie du Rocher.

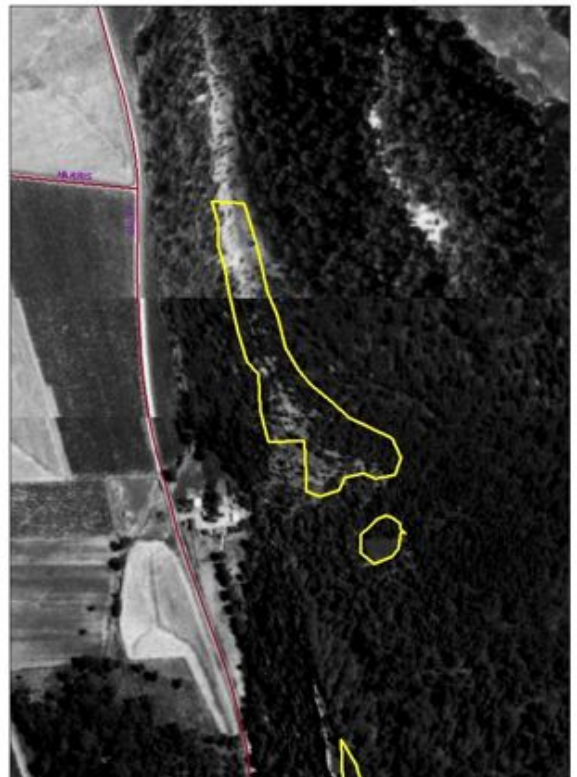
Limestone glades are even more rare, with only 180 acres remaining in Illinois. Monroe County hosts 60% of the state's total acreage. Limestone glades can be found deeper in the forests, away from the cliff faces. Glades have thin and rocky soils, often face southwest and often contain rock ledge systems. Glades also host prairie plants. Because of the drier, inhospitable conditions, only sparser stands of post, chinquapin, and blackjack oaks and black hickory trees thrive amongst the sun-dappled prairie plants.

The hill prairies and glade areas, in our neck of the woods, faced several natural competitors over the millennia. Given a chance, eastern red cedars, rough-leaved dogwoods, sumac, and, more recently, bush honeysuckle, consistently try to move into the hill prairies and glades and out-compete the prairie plants.

Historically, several factors contributed to keep prairies and glades clear of encroaching woody shrubs. We know from fire scar studies on trees that lightning-induced fires ran through the hill prairies every 20 years or so. Native Americans revered the lofty hill prairies as lookouts and burial sites and often set fires to keep the areas open. We know from bones found along cliff talus slopes that elk, bison, deer, and, more recently cattle, often grazed through the prairies and helped keep woody shrubs at bay. And, we know that up to the 1950s and the advent of overly zealous "Smokey Bear" campaigns that essentially eliminated fire from the landscape, local landowners periodically torched the prairies. When the fires and grazing stopped, shrubs began to take over.

White Rock contains several hill prairie and glade areas, but the largest is a 5-acre complex along the Ridgetop Trail on the northernmost boundary of the Preserve. Attached are two pictures of interest. The Army Air Corps took the earliest aerial pictures of much of Illinois 75 years ago. Pictured at right is White Rock's northern prairie-glade complex in 1940. The yellow boundary delineates the 5-acre prairie soil site on the nature preserve. Clifftop's property ends at Harris Road; so you can see the large, open hill prairie running northward onto neighboring lands and the pockets of glades in the southern portion of the site.

Clifftop Hillprairie  
1940 Photography







The second picture, left, was taken in June 2012 and the yellow boundary approximates the 5-acre site. Note the woody shrub takeover.

We began restoration efforts on the site in 2011, with Clifftop volunteers, contractors, and Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) Conservation Camp students all lending hands and backs for this labor-intensive work. Most of the shrubs have been stump-cut and treated with herbicide on the large northernmost hill prairie. The cut brush was dragged off the prairie and stacked along the eastern woods line. In November 2013, CLIFFhanger volunteers burned the prairie and brush piles. Kevin Slavin, with Rock Road Ecological Services, then dropped cedars and other large woody encroachers southward on the site. On

March 1st, 2014, volunteers dragged, piled and burned over 500 cedars. (See photo gallery on page 6.) The cedar and brush culling march will continue southward and we promise additional calls for volunteers on the site.

During the same years, Clifftop volunteers collected prairie grass and flower seeds from neighboring prairies and glades at White Rock. They cold-chilled the seed, a process called stratification, one that's necessary to encourage germination of most prairie seeds. Small amounts of the seeds were planted under lights in volunteers' "basement greenhouses" to produce some plant plugs. Both plug plantings and seed castings were done in 2012 on the large, now cleared, northern prairie and on a small glade in the woods in 2013. That effort will continue as well and we'll be calling for volunteer help for a 2014 seeding and planting effort.

In just a few years, by culling and opening the seed bank to sunlight, by reintroducing local seed stocks, and by burning, we will get the site back to its 1940 prairie splendor. We thank our loyal Clifftop volunteers. Local faces can indeed preserve great places.

**Post Script:** As we were going to press on this edition of the newsletter, our contractor, Kevin Slaven, called to say he had found a delicate little flowering plant growing right on the precipitous cliff edge of Overlook Prairie. He sent along the photo seen below. Bill McClain, retired IDNR botanist and loyal Clifftop member, has confirmed the plant is Whitlow Grass (*Draba cuneifolia*), a state-endangered plant found on hill prairies in only four counties in the state. It goes to show you that if we work hard at investing in the seed bank, the prairie will provide magnificent dividends.



# Upcoming events...



Photo courtesy Paul Feldker

Saturday, April 12th, 9 am – 3 pm **Weekend Gardener**. Participants may choose from 16 classes, with four classes offered during four sessions. Topics include 'Powerful Perennials,' 'Wildflowers,' 'Sustainable Landscaping,' and a presentation by Clifftop volunteers Carl & Pen DauBach on 'Living with Natives.' The conference is held at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, 442 S. Demazenod Drive, Belleville. **This event is sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension, Madison-Monroe-St. Clair Unit.** The \$40.00 registration fee includes lunch and a flash drive with course information (participants may choose a printed program book by adding an additional \$15.00 to the registration fee to cover printing costs), and registration should be accomplished by 4 April. For additional information, please contact the University of Illinois Extension office at 618-939-3434 or view their website at: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mms/>

Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm, *presentation: Forest Park Owls: Hiding in Plain Sight*. Award-winning amateur naturalist Mark H. X. Glenshaw will present a program on owls in St. Louis' Forest Park. He has observed and studied a mated pair of great-horned owls since December 2005 and his discussion will include the range of behaviors – hunting, mating, nest-site selection, and raising owlets – he has documented, photographed and video-taped. **The program is presented by the Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society, a chapter of Illinois Audubon Society**, and will be held at the VFW Post 6632, 830 S. Main St., Red Bud. The program is free and open to the public.



Photo courtesy Tom Rollins, ThomasRollinsPhotography.com



Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, pre-dawn – past-dusk, **Monroe County & Statewide Spring Bird Count**. A full day devoted to finding and counting birds. Illinois has been a leader in compiling natural history data for nearly a century and the statewide spring bird count continues that tradition. To learn more about the Monroe County count or to volunteer to count birds at your feeder during the count day, please email [Clifftop@htc.net](mailto:Clifftop@htc.net).

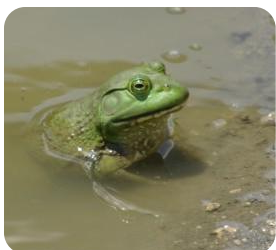


Photo courtesy Pen DauBach

Watch our website at:  
<http://www.clifftopalliance.org/upcoming-events/>  
for detailed information on these two upcoming events:  
**Frog Frolic, Saturday, May 31, 8 – 10 p.m.** and  
**Hawks & Falcons of the Bluff Lands, Saturday, June 14, 1 – 3 p.m.**



Photo courtesy Tom Rollins, ThomasRollinsPhotography.com