

Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

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Teach Your Children Well

By Joann Fricke



Rich Dependahl of the Salt Lick committee shows Valmeyer Cub Scouts how to remove bush honeysuckle. Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

Most of us remember the old Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young song mentioned in the title. It's a tune that's been rattling around in my head lately as I think about bringing kids into conservation work at an early age. I was nearly retired when I found out about invasive bush honeysuckle and the problems it is creating for our forests. Likewise for certain threatened and/or endangered animal species like the Timber Rattlesnake. But what if I had learned of these things sooner? Would I have had the time to do anything about it?



These young men get "hands-on" with a snake at a herp program in 2012. Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

With federal and state conservation funds dwindling, we need to teach our children and grandchildren at an early age the value and satisfaction of conserving our natural heritage for future generations. And the way to accomplish this is through our actions, not just our words. Participate in a honeysuckle workday at a local reserve to show kids what a difference removing invasives can make. Attend a field trip like "Frog Frolic" or "Owl Prowl" to get the youngsters interested in the creatures that live in our ponds and forests. Join us for a herp program to let children get "hands-on" experience with a critter that just might spark the interest that leads them on a conservationist's path in the future. Let's "teach our children well" like Sue and Kevin Sweet show us in the article that follows.



This young lady tries to find the Barred Owl during "Owl Prowl" 2014. Photo courtesy Tina McElhattan.



This youngster learns to hoot like an owl at the 2011 Festival of the Bluffs. Photo courtesy Tom Rollins, ThomasRollinsPhotography.com

Young Natalie, below left, prepares for a future as a volunteer.

Cub Scouts from Prairie du Rocher, far right, are fascinated by the bullfrog skeleton held up by Bob Weck, right, at "Frog Frolic" 2014



Photo courtesy Tom Rollins, ThomasRollinsPhotography.com



Photos courtesy Joann Fricke



My Life should be filled with WONDER, discoveries, and adventure.
Take me OUTSIDE. Let me get to know and love NATURE.
I will remind you what it's like to see with a child's eyes and open heart.

Grassstainguru.com

Text and photos by Suzanne & Kevin Sweet

Grandparents everywhere, this article is for you! Stand up and be counted, because you matter. You can make a difference. Proverbs says, "Gray hair is a crown of splendor." As a grandparent, you must wear that crown proudly; always remembering that with that splendor comes responsibility. We have a duty to share, a duty to teach and a duty to love.

In August 2015, my husband, Kevin, and I completed the Master Naturalist program through the University of Illinois Extension Service. We also attended seminars offered by Clifftop and the Audubon Society. We did not realize at the time just how much knowledge was available to us. It was like a whole new world.

We suddenly became more aware of the world around us. We learned about the soil, the flowers, the trees, the weather, bugs, watersheds, rocks, birds and so much more. There is so much to learn, and so much to share. With these newly found resources, we knew immediately that we could not keep these gems to ourselves; we needed to share the knowledge we gained through our training and through our life experiences with our grandchildren.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the experiences we, as grandparents, have had with our four granddaughters. It is so easy to make simple daily routines into learning experiences. Your grandkids will always remember that, "Papa told me about that," or "Nana showed me how."

We have bird feeders in our backyard and the grandkids love to traipse through the snow with Papa to fill the feeders. Then they sit at the windows and try to identify the birds with Papa's help.

There is a pair of swallows that builds a nest every year right under the eave at our front door. Oh, what a mess they make! But the grandkids have a window view of baby birds hatching, being fed by their parents, and then learning to fly.

They learn to listen. Papa says, "Do you hear that sound? Listen closely. It's an owl. Now listen for an answer." The grandkids are filled with wonder. The questions flow and suddenly they want to know more.

Nana points to a butterfly. She asks, "What kind of butterfly do you think that is?" The grandkids shout, "It's a monarch!" They ask, "Where do Monarch's lay their eggs?" Nana answers, "On milkweed!" This sparks another question from the grandchildren, "What do the Monarch caterpillars look like?" Nana says, "Let's plant a butterfly garden and find out." And so we did. With the help of the grandkids, we learned which plants attract butterflies and other pollinators.

Papa says, "Let's go to the creek today. Take your nets and wear your boots; this will be an adventure." Actually Papa and I recently became Citizen Scientists through the Illinois RiverWatch Network. We were excited to share our recent insight into the world of aquatic macro-invertebrates with our granddaughters.

A bucket of these tiny creatures and a microscope can make for an electrifying afternoon full of squeals from a foursome of little granddaughters. Before we knew it, they could explain how a dragonfly starts its life in the water as a larva. They were also able to identify a mayfly nymph, a bloodworm, a caddisfly and a riffle beetle, to name a few. Now they think bugs are cool!



Our grandkids, Alaina Williams and Nola Keithly learned how to collect macro-invertebrates at Fountain Creek.

In the past, the little ones enjoyed capturing critters in jars, studying them through the glass, and then releasing them back into their natural habitat. Papa and I opened the world of photography to the kiddos. Now they had another means by which to examine the artistry of not only creatures but all sorts of natural wonders.



The camera became an essential part of their backpack content. They were able to appreciate nature without disturbing it. Dragonflies became a favorite subject to capture by photography. As seen at left, Ava Pearl Keithly had fun photographing wildflowers along a nature hike.



"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders."

-Abigail Van Buren

Our granddaughter, Sophie Williams, in photo at right, helped plant a family vegetable garden.

The grandkids were adamant about adding some fun plants to the garden, like pumpkins, strawberries and watermelons.



Sometimes it takes a little encouragement to try new things. Papa and I took Ava and Nola Keithly on a hike just recently. It was perfect timing for tasting persimmons. The girls loved them and asked for more! Most of you know that persimmons can give you pucker mouth if they are not ripe. These were ripe and so good!



6-year-old Nola Keithly had her eyes open for chestnuts in a local grove of nut trees.

Oh, nuts!

Yes, it is that time of the year. The nuts are falling and we have some nutty girls ready to gather them. We wanted to try something new this year, so we gathered chestnuts. Martha Stewart said to slit them with a knife about 1/8th inch deep almost completely around their circumference. Or you can cut a cross shape on their flat side. Then you simply put them in the oven at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Just sit back with a cup of warm tea and enjoy the smell of roasting chestnuts as they fill your home with their delicious aroma.



When the chestnuts come out of the oven, it is best to peel them while they are still warm. They are really hard to peel when they cool.

It was unanimous! Not bad. They taste kind of like a baked potato. But they also smell a little like corn on the cob. Any which way, they were worth eating and it was a fun learning experience.



“He that plants trees loves others besides himself.”

Thomas Fuller



Ava did her best to dig a hole for her very own pink dogwood tree. Nola became an expert with the watering can.



The grandkids planted four trees that day in their butterfly garden at PaPa John’s Cabin in Burksville, IL. There were two pink dogwoods and two white dogwoods. The kids decided to make tree planting an annual family tradition.

Thanks to Grandparents and those individuals everywhere who take the time to share their knowledge of nature with others.

Suzanne and Kevin Sweet

Clifftop Receives National Speleological Society Award

The National Speleological Society (NSS) recently awarded Clifftop their Conservation Group of the Year Award for 2015. The NSS is the largest organization in the world dedicated to further the exploration, study and protection of caves and their environment. NSS has 10,000 members and is organized around 250 grottos (chapters) throughout the United States. NSS owns and manages 14 Nature Preserves throughout the country, sponsors numerous cave and karst scientific research projects, facilitates cave exploration and cave rescue safety training, and for over 70 years, is the country's foremost spelunking society.



Clifftop received the award in recognition of the establishment of the Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve in Monroe County. The Preserve helps to protect the Fogelpole Cave system, the largest and most biologically diverse in Illinois. With 15 miles of currently known surveyed passages and 60-foot ceilings in some locations, the cave is the 51st largest in the United States. The cave is also home to four federally-listed animal species, Indiana, Gray, and Eastern Long-eared bats and the Illinois Cave Amphipod; and the system also hosts 14 endemic, globally-rare insect and crustacean species found no other place on earth.



Clifftop board (minus Pen, who took the photo) with the NSS award. Photo courtesy Susan Rick.

Clifftop's award specifically recognizes the purchase of the 535-acre tract, now Wightman Preserve, which overtops a significant portion of the cave system, the long-term surface restoration management plan to improve water quality entering the cave system, and the constellation of cooperative, on-site science research projects underway to understand better land use practices on karst terrain.

Nearly 300 acres on the Preserve were planted to a short-grass prairie this spring in an effort to filter water runoff entering the cave through 36 sinkhole ponds and 100 dry sinkholes on the tract. Science research projects, led by the University of Illinois, Washington University, McKendree University, and Southwestern Illinois College, as well as volunteers, are focusing on water quality, plant, bird, insect, and invertebrate studies both within the cave and on the surface.

A four-mile long public hiking trail as well as interpretive and public parking areas are planned for the Preserve in the coming years. We'll keep you updated on ways you can help make this the perfect place for recreation.

Upcoming event...



The Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society presents, **"An African Safari."** Clifftop board member, Susan Rick, will recount her recent trip to Tanzania with a slide show on Thursday, November 19, 7:00 pm, at the monthly meeting of KVAS held at Red Bud VFW Post 6632, 830 South Main Street in Red Bud. Parking is available behind the building. This event is free and open to the public, no reservations required.



Photo gallery...



**Butterfly Festival
SWIC Red Bud
Campus
September 19, 2015**
Everything butterfly was the theme of the day—from live ones to glasses and balloons. Even yoga classes were offered.



Photos courtesy Susan Rick and Joann Fricke



**Members' Day
Paul Wightman
Subterranean
Nature Preserve
October 10, 2015**

Members and guests were treated to great conversations, hay ride tours of the property and lots of home made food.



To view more photos from Members' Day, please visit our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.757886334316652.1073741858.162533970518561&type=3>

Austin Peay State University students work at White Rock Nature Preserve October 12, 2015

Many thanks to Lane, Colin, Jessica, William, Malena, Osa, Kristen, Nick and Dr. G for spending their Fall break doing stewardship work at Salt Lick, White Rock and the Illinois Ozarks Nature Preserve.

