

# Bluffviews

A quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

October, 2014

Vol. 4, No. 4

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 11, 2013*  
*11 a.m. until 2 p.m.*

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

*Special guest speaker will be Debbie Scott Newman*  
*Natural Areas Preservation Specialist, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission*

RSVP to Membership Chair Joann Fricke by October 9  
at [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto: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 2014, learn of upcoming programs for 2015 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!

## A River Rat at Heart

Story and photos by Susan Rick

When asked to write an article for Bluffviews my reply was.....but I'm a river rat at heart. It is true my first three and half years were spent living near the bluffs where Steppig Road meets Bluff road. My memories from that time are few, if any, except my mother was in fear of her young daughters coming across copperheads as we played in the yard. We continued to farm the land after we moved and had many picnic lunches with Dad in the shadows of the bluffs; a treasured memory for our cousins and us.

We moved to a farm along the Mississippi near Warnock and my fascination with the river and water began. A river rat was born! Many hours were spent at the river clearing the land, playing in the sand, watching the barges and the Admiral on the river, hunting mushrooms, enjoying hayrides, bonfires and hotdog roasts, beach combing after floods and, unfortunately, boating over the soybeans at times. No copperheads here to worry about - just a few others!!

We did take that yearly drive every Autumn to view the fall color along the bluffs with the family and in the spring to view the flowering dogwoods and redbuds. When old enough, we would ride our bikes to the bluffs looking for caves, playing at Terry Springs, visiting Miles Cemetery or looking for bluebells. Living in the bottoms along the river you learned to appreciate both of the natural treasures of the county - the mighty Mississippi and the beauty of the bluffs.

My fascination with the bluffs and the bottoms did not end when I attended SIU Carbondale. Some of my favorite areas to roam were LaRue-Pine Hills Research Natural Area in the Shawnee National Forest and



Devil's Backbone Park near Grand Tower, IL. The view from atop the bluffs at Pine Hills (pictured at left) is fabulous—you can even see the river! I also volunteered to help a fellow student do a study of the algae of Winter's Pond at the base of Pine Hills. No one but me would go with her during April and October when the roads were closed for snake migration. Years later it is very disappointing to see how the population of snakes has diminished.

I left the area for 35 years and worked as a field research and development representative for an agricultural chemical company. My upbringing on the farm in the bottoms had much to do with my choice of

careers. It also influenced my recreation choices including traveling, hiking, birding, water sports, wildflowering or anything out of doors. When friends come from places like the Carolinas or Colorado, chances are they will be taken on a ride to view the bluffs whether along the river north of Alton, hiking White Rock, Salt Lick Point or Pine Hills or all three areas. The bluffs and the rivers always amaze folks when they visit the corn/soybean covered prairie state.

I cannot say enough about groups like Clifftop and the Salt Lick Point Stewardship Committee for their efforts to preserve the unique hill prairies, provide hiking trails and opportunities to enjoy nature in Monroe County. I've begun my second career now--learning (or relearning) the plants, reptiles and amphibians, birds, butterflies, etc. of Southern Illinois and volunteering my time to help preserve the wild areas of the county. One of these days maybe we can have public access to the river...a river rat can only dream! For now I will have to view the bottoms from high on the bluffs and thank you all for the privilege.



# Two New Nature Preserves in Monroe County!!

By Debbie S. Newman, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

If you're a member of Clifftop, you likely already know that Monroe County has a wealth of important natural features from caves to prairies to glades, and many rare plant and animal species. Monroe County has a higher percentage of natural lands than many counties of Illinois, but being in the Metro-St. Louis Region, there is ongoing pressure on these wildlands. Continued efforts by private landowners, groups like Clifftop, and others are critical to keeping large sections of this beautiful landscape from being consumed for other uses.

2014 has brought our area two new nature preserves, both of which significantly contribute to preserving some of our natural areas. Nature Preserve dedication with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) provides a high-level of protection, including from eminent domain/condemnation for other uses.



Photo courtesy Dr. Jerry Lewis

One site you'll be familiar with is owned by Clifftop! The 535-acre Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve (NP) was given final approval for dedication at the September 9<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting. The site, acquired by Clifftop in 2013, protects a significant portion of the Fogelpole Cave system recharge area and cave passage. Fogelpole Cave is part of the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site known as the Renault Karst, which encompasses several thousand acres in mid-Monroe County. Fogelpole Cave is one of Illinois' most important caves for numerous reasons: it is the state's largest known cave, the most biologically diverse, and it harbors populations of 3 state and federally-endangered species, the Illinois cave amphipod (seen in photo below, left), the Indiana bat (seen in photo below, right), and the gray bat (as well as another species soon to be listed, the northern long-eared bat.) The cave hosts 18 globally rare species and Illinois' largest number of troglobites---animals that can only survive in cave environments.

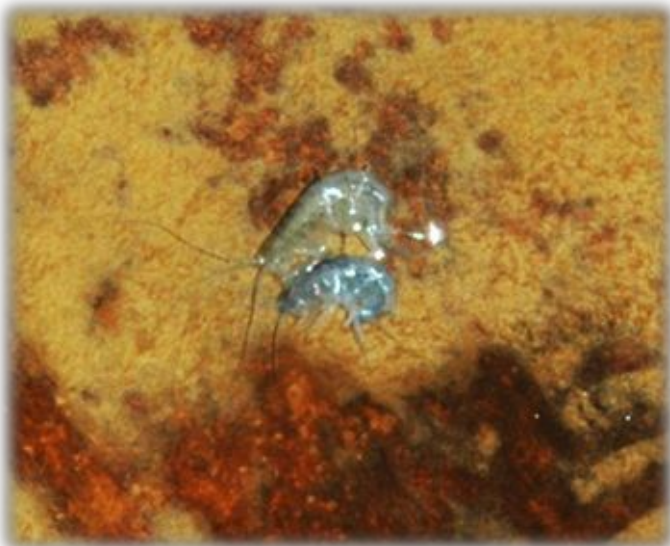


Photo courtesy Dr. Jerry Lewis



Photo courtesy Dr. Steve Taylor

The significance of this site made it readily qualify for nature preserve status. Further increasing its importance, the Wightman preserve also surrounds the 27-acre Fogelpole Cave NP owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and is located a mile from the privately-owned Storment-Hauss NP. Nature preserve names are sometimes chosen to memorialize or honor someone; Clifftop's site was named in honor of Father Paul Wightman, who was an early explorer of Fogelpole Cave in the 1940s, and eventually mapped 8 miles of the cave and conducted dye-tracing activities. After more than 70 years, Wightman remains an avid supporter of Fogelpole cave conservation.

Only the subsurface of the Clifftop site is dedicated as the Paul Wightman Subterranean NP. The surface remains legally unencumbered although Clifftop included in the dedication documents restricted activities on the surface of the property to further protect the karst area. Clifftop chose to dedicate only the subsurface to allow for certain activities such as enrolling some of the cropland in the federal Conservation Reserve Program. Provisions of CRP currently do not dovetail with nature preserve rules.



Photo courtesy Dr. Steve Taylor

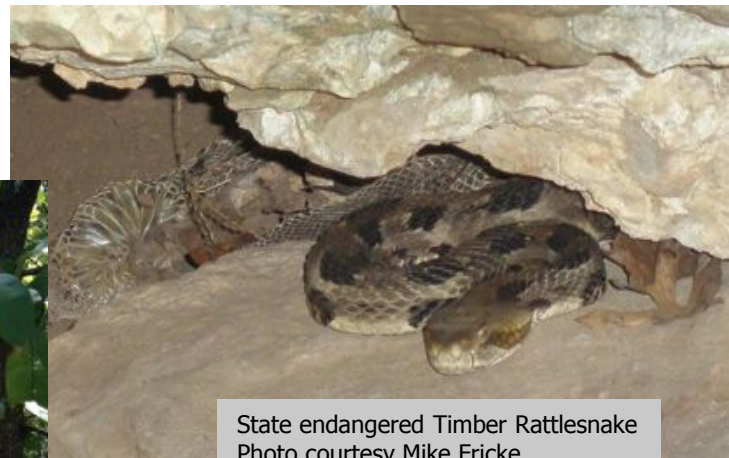
The Paul Wightman Subterranean NP is the 2nd site to receive nature preserve dedication for the subsurface. The Armin Krueger Speleological NP, located a few miles from the Wightman preserve has fully dedicated and subsurface-only dedicated land within its boundaries.

A bluffs site just south of Valmeyer also received approval for final dedication by the INPC this year. The 34-acre Illinois Ozarks NP, owned by Mike and Joann Fricke, was dedicated at the Commission's May 2nd meeting. You may recognize Mike and Joann as active Clifftop members; and Joann serves on the Clifftop Board as Membership Chair.

The Illinois Ozarks NP is a biologically diverse site harboring Grade A hill prairies, a remnant Grade B limestone glade, and mature woodlands that are part of a much larger contiguous block of forest. Three state-endangered species (2 plants and one snake) have been documented at the site. One species, the woolly buckthorn (seen in photos below, left), is known only from the bluffs of Monroe and Randolph Counties, and the preserve boasts a healthy population of this plant. The Illinois Ozarks preserve also hosts Species of Greatest Need of Conservation identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, such as the bobcat, the Kentucky warbler, Acadian flycatcher, whip-poor-will, and worm-eating warbler.



State endangered  
Woolly Buckthorn  
Photos courtesy  
Joann Fricke



State endangered Timber Rattlesnake  
Photo courtesy Mike Fricke



This site is an important addition to a growing complex of protected high-quality natural areas in the bluff corridor. Adjacent to the Illinois Ozarks NP is the 134-acre Luella Schaefer Land and Water Reserve (LWR); across the road is the 594-acre Salt Lick Point LWR and a 9-acre private Natural Heritage Landmark; to the south within a mile of the new preserve are the 168-acre White Rock LWR and the 306-acre White Rock NP, both co-owned by Clifftop. A total of more than 1200 acres of critical habitat is protected and being managed within a 2-mile section of the corridor.

When Mike and Joann purchased the property in 2007, a portion of it was already preserved as the Martha and Michelle Prairies LWR. The Frickes strengthened the protection of the original LWR and added acreage to it with the dedication of the Illinois Ozarks NP. Mike and Joann have taken a keen interest in the care and protection of their property and all of its plant and animal inhabitants. Knowing how rare hill prairies are (~500 acres of high-quality hill prairie left in Illinois), the Frickes have worked tirelessly to cut invading brush, remove invasive species, and facilitate controlled burns with INPC. One of the most recent accomplishments was the Frickes' reconnection of two formerly contiguous prairie patches by removal of brush between them, and seeding and planting after a burn to assist in the restoration. (The reconnected prairie can be seen in the photo below.) Their commitment as landowners, to the health of their property, is a shining model.



Photo courtesy Joann Fricke

Mike and Joann wish that all of the bluff corridor's prairies and woodlands could be preserved---or at least appreciated and cared for. They make it a point to educate others about plants, animals, hill prairies, burns, invasive species and healthy woodlands, often using their preserve as an example. In addition to volunteering significant time with Clifftop activities, the Frickes also help other private landowners on stewardship of their land, and have contributed many hours to stewardship at Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve.

Congratulations to Clifftop and Mike & Joann Fricke on their new nature preserves! And thanks to both for preserving an important part of southwestern Illinois natural history.



Photo courtesy Debbie Newman



Bobcat kitten captured by Fricke trail camera

# Every Piece of Land Has a Story

By Pen DauBach

Reading the land can be a narrative of historic land cover as, for example, an ancient white oak with heavy limbs spreading outward to a horizontal reach nearly as wide as the tree's height, tells a tale of widely spaced and open woodland for much of that tree's youth. A patch of hill prairie whispers of dry winds and the sere conditions of facing south and west into long days of hot sun.

People-focused stories may also be part of a landscape narrative. As a commissioner with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, I am privileged to learn both the natural history and human history of lands proposed for enrollment. The dedicated staff of INPC weaves tales of natural history from across our state -- sand prairies, big woods, lakeshores, wetlands, hill prairies, stream corridors, remnants of native plants and wildlife habitat in cemeteries, cities and small towns – to illustrate that the best use principal for this patch of land is permanent protection through dedication or registration. The staff also carefully outlines a human history. These stories, too, speak to the “best of the best” with a common theme of owners’ recognition of natural lands as a gift from the past, and an unbreakable commitment to ensuring that gift for the future. Generosity towards the people of our state – present and future – is the key element that binds the landowners’ stories into a singular and grand narrative.

Since the 1963 enactment of the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act, more than 370 nature preserves in 84 of the state's 102 counties have been dedicated. 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 to corn and soybeans in our state in 2013.

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. Enrollment in an INPC program, or, as an alternate, granting a conservation easement to a private land trust, is an act of generosity as the landowner donates all rights to future development. While a landowner may, through tax incentives, recoup some of the devaluation of property value resulting from restrictions on use, the primary motivation remains generosity.

A Chicago-area family enrolled with INPC land their grandparents purchased and which has served as a family gathering spot for decades. Their acreage in the Kankakee Sands supports numerous rare plant species and through their generous donation of development rights, the high-quality habitat will remain, rather than succumb to development and concrete. Another dedicated lover of the rare remnant habitats of the Kankakee Sands has spent personal funds and many long days over many years on lot-by-lot purchases creating a piece-quilt – nearly full connected by her years of careful stitching – of permanently protected acreage now totaling nearly 150 acres.

In other areas of our state, individuals, families, land trusts and conservation groups, local and state governmental agencies, and corporations and businesses have joined this spirit of generosity to permanently guarantee a future for Illinois' natural lands and the enjoyment of nature afforded to all. These are voluntary acts and are promises to future generations.

Clifftop was founded in January 2006 by a group of people who also embody this spirit of generosity. Among our founding board members were Bill Gonterman, who dedicated several hill prairie nature preserves with INPC, and Dennis Knobloch, who spearheaded Valmeyer's movement to enroll the Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve. Current board member Charlie Frederick has dedicated nearly a lifetime of care for and hundreds of acres for permanent protection through both INPC enrollment and USDA's Wetland Reserve Program. George Obernagel, Clifftop's President of the Board, oversaw the transfer to IDNR of valuable lands adjacent to Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve. My husband and fellow board member and I took the alternate route and have permanently protected our own acreage and its state-listed species, by grant of a conservation easement to a private land trust. Now, board member Joann Fricke and her husband Mike, have permanently protected additional acreage by dedicating the Illinois Ozarks Nature Preserve.

Clifftop has worked to permanently protect our acreage. The White Rock properties, jointly owned with Heartlands Conservancy, were enrolled with INPC in 2011, with 306 acres dedicated as a nature preserve and 168 acres registered as a land and water reserve. The Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, purchased by Clifftop on December 30, 2013, was approved for dedication by the INPC in September.

While I recused myself from the Commission's vote on the Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, I cheered on silently. It has been my privilege to shepherd acts of generosity, such as Joann's and Mike's, into the continuing narrative of natural areas land protection and landowners' care for all our futures.

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



Photo courtesy Eric Fries

## A Call for Volunteers

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Clifftop plan to conduct—as always, weather permitting—large prescribed burns at Salt Lick Point Land & Water Reserve (SLP) and White Rock Nature Preserve (WR) on separate weekends in November.

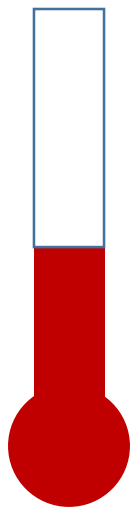
Approximately 217 acres is planned to be burned at SLP on November 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>, while a total of 170 acres comprise the burn unit at WR, with the execution planned for November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

Because of the size of these burn units, a lot of help is needed. So, if you have volunteered before or have always wanted to help, now is the time. This is an "all hands on deck" call for volunteers.

A substantial crew will be needed at SLP on November 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> (actual date to be determined by the weather conditions).

Similarly, we will need a large crew, 25 volunteers or so, for November 15<sup>th</sup> (during the daytime), 8 to 10 people for the night shift on November 15<sup>th</sup> into the 16<sup>th</sup>, and 10 to 15 people for continued mop-up on November 16<sup>th</sup> (8 AM to ?—it is not likely to be an all day mop-up). In addition, we will issue separate calls for volunteers to help prepare fire breaks beginning in early November.

If you can help on any of these days at either of these burns, please email [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net) or call 935-2542. Your support is much appreciated.



--\$7,000  
 --\$6,000  
 --\$5,000  
 --\$4,000  
 --\$3,000  
 --\$2,000  
 --\$1,000

# ICECF Challenge Grant Update

In the July issue of Bluffviews, you learned that Clifftop had been awarded an Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Stewardship Challenge Grant. The grant consists of three components:

1. **Cash Donations:** \$3 for every \$1 of actual cash contributed toward a stewardship fund for use at the White Rock Nature Preserve, up to \$21,000.
2. **Equipment:** 80% of the amount paid for individual stewardship equipment to be used to improve natural habitat at White Rock NP, up to a maximum of \$5,000.
3. **Volunteer Labor:** An outright gift of \$4,000 for a minimum of 400 hours of volunteer work completed at White Rock NP.

As we went to press, we've had 21 cash donations totaling \$3,750. As you can see from the graph above, we are more than half way to our \$7,000 goal to receive \$21,000 for the White Rock Stewardship Fund. ICECF will also grant us funds for new equipment, up to \$5,000, if we raise an additional \$1,000. We also will receive \$4,000 for a total of 400 hours volunteer work at WR, and already have totaled 129 hours, even during the "slow" stewardship season of late summer's hot weather.

If you'd like to help us reach our goal more quickly, here is a link to the donation form:  
<http://www.clifftopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/ICECF-Stewardship-Challenge-Grant.pdf>

A big **THANK YOU** to our members for their generous support!

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## Spring Gathering May 1 – 3, 2015

Clifftop is co-hosting, along with the Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society (KVAS) and the Salt Lick Point Stewardship Committee, the annual Spring Gathering of the Illinois Audubon Society. More information on this will follow in a later newsletter, but right now KVAS is looking for items for a silent auction to be held on Saturday, May 2. Items should be new or in like-new condition. Suggestions are: nature related items, books, framed photos, or anything that you might be interested in bidding on.

If you have a condo or time-share you would be willing to donate for a few days, a drawing or live auction would be considered.

For more information or to donate an item, please contact Carolyn Wright at (618)939-8445 or cai@htc.net.





Coming events:

A Good Day at White Rock  
Saturday, October 11, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
see page 1 for details

Honeysuckle Workshop  
Salt Lick Point Land & Water Reserve  
Saturday, October 18, 9 a.m. to noon  
Meet @ Valmeyer Village Hall



Photo courtesy Craig Nelson

Monroe County YMCA-HTC Center  
Illinois Ozarks 10K Bluff Trail Run  
@ Salt Lick Point L&WR  
Saturday, October 25  
9:30 a.m. start time  
Register at active.com or in person  
at the Y. Call Lia at 281-9622 for more info.



Honeysuckle Workshop  
Stemler Cave Woods Nature Preserve  
Saturday, November 1, 1:00 – 3:30 p.m.



Wintertime Tree Bark  
Identification Field Trip  
@ White Rock Nature Preserve  
Saturday, November 8, 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.



YouTube™ To view videos from previous Clifftop seminars, please visit:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/clifftopnfp>



Steve Taylor photo

# 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.**

Membership dues:

- \$15.00 annually, student
- \$25.00 annually, individuals
- \$35.00 annually, families
- \$50.00 annually, supporting
- \$100.00 annually, sustaining
- \$500.00 life membership

**Questions regarding Clifftop membership, please e-mail: [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net)**

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

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

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

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please send your completed form and a check, payable to Clifftop to:

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