

# Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

January, 2012

Vol. 1, No. 2

## A Good Day at White Rock

Story by Pen DauBach

Photos, unless otherwise noted, by Tom Rollins

A Goldilocks day—not too warm and not too cool—graced the 125 participants at the celebration of the opening and dedication of White Rock Nature Preserve. The perfect golden-hued autumn day encouraged attendees to walk about, hike some, visit some, and enjoy the official opening of the trails at the 306-acre tract.



The area near the former White Mine forms a natural amphitheater and served as the gathering point for the celebration. Visitors enjoyed music provided by



Photo by Joann Fricke

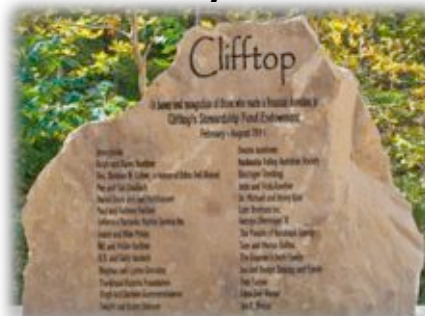
**The String Connection** while they had first looks at the interpretive and recognition signage placed in the area. Hikers enjoyed the trail system leading to two prairie overlook sites both before and after the formal program.

**George Obernagel, President of Clifftop's**

**Board of Directors**, welcomed everyone to the event, and thanked all the partners, supporters and volunteers who had made the acquisition and thus the opening day possible.

While the preserve itself was the main showcase of the day, speakers also noted the innovative nature of partnerships that made the acquisition of the property possible. **John Rogner, Assistant Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources**, spoke of the value of public – private partnerships that led to the permanent protection of the White Rock lands. **Dave Eustis, Executive Director of the Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development**, said that the joint-ownership of the property by Clifftop and the SWIRCD was a unique business model among land trusts in Illinois and the nation and that such partnerships could lead to better conservation efforts. **Delbert Wittenauer, Chairman of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners**,

commended the SWIRCD and Clifftop for their efforts in protecting the area's rich natural resources and noted that this effort reflects



Monroe County's traditional way of "getting things done and finding solutions



at the local level.” **Elizabeth Cisar, Crown Family Philanthropies**, spoke of the support by private foundations for acquisitions such as White Rock by private land trusts and of the importance of continuing to preserve the state’s remaining natural areas. **Carl DauBach, Clifftop’s Executive Director**, recognized the value of the multiple partnerships that made the acquisition and the development of the public access infrastructure possible. **Debbie Newman, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission**, detailed the criteria required for lands to be dedicated as a nature preserve, noting that such designation is limited to the “best-of-the-best” natural areas that host significant wildlife habitat, geological features and threatened or endangered species, and that such lands constitute less than one percent of Illinois’s lands. **Joann Fricke, Clifftop’s Membership Chair**, recognized the important work done by Clifftop volunteers and that the readiness of volunteers to take on projects such as White Rock ensures that Monroe County and Southwestern Illinois will retain and enhance their vital natural resources.

*Ridgetop Trail, North and South*, is a non-looping flat trail that leads to two hill prairie overlooks. The southernmost hill prairie and glade ecosystem on the White Rock Nature Preserve has been named *Edna’s Dell*, in honor of long-time Clifftop supporter and early encouragement-giver Edna Dell Weinel, seen below talking with other supporters at the opening ceremony.



Since the opening of White Rock Nature Preserve, hikers have enjoyed the trails and the stunning views along the ridge tops and the two prairie overlooks. And, Clifftop volunteer stewards have seen additional areas of the preserve while working to clear brush from an isolated interior hill prairie. It comes as no surprise that the hard-working volunteers took time to admire this place where “the views are always grand.”

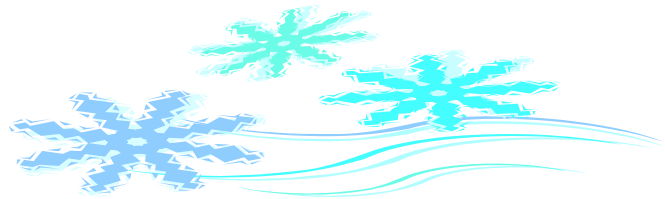


Photo by Joann Fricke

Trail and place names at the nature preserve celebrate the partnerships and the history of the site. *Early Venture Way Trail* was named in recognition of Southern Illinois Farms and their generous grant of easements allowing the public access trail onto the nature preserve. *Madeline’s Rest*, the area in front of the former White Mine, named for Madeline Cisar, honors Elizabeth Cisar’s work as a mentor to Clifftop. The *White Mine Trail*, which winds and climbs to the top of the nature preserve, recalls the site’s mining history. The

White Rock Nature Preserve is open daily, dawn to dusk, for passive recreational activities, such as hiking, wildlife and nature observation and photography. Motorized vehicles are not permitted on the Preserve. The parking area is located off Bluff Road two miles south of Valmeyer. From the parking area, walk north along the gravel pathway beside Bluff Road for about 300 feet to the gravel roadway to the east. Walk along the private roadway for about 1,000 feet to the White Rock trailhead entrance gate on the right side of the private roadway. A box with trail maps is near the gate. Walk past the gate along Early Venture Way Trail to the informational area at Madeline’s rest. The White Mine Trail continues up the hillside to the Ridgetop Trails, North and South.

# Guest Views...

## BLUFF-TOP HOME

By Karlene Feldker

Thirty-seven years ago, I was dragged kicking and screaming from my City of Waterloo home to a bluff-top wilderness of dense woods and a soybean field in the Deer Hill area. I called the woods surrounding me on three sides "The Jungle" as each June approached.

For the first year, my outside adventures mostly consisted of going out the door to get in the car. The scope of this larger landscape was very intimidating and ever so wild.

Eventually, my children took me outdoors and started pointing out some of their discoveries. Bill, my youngest and probably four at the time, found a snake eating a frog. I had read that snakes were sluggish after eating and so had no fear as we approached. When we were within a couple of feet, the snake zoomed away into the woods. So much for sluggish! (I did find that wildlife had often not read the books.) Frogs, toads, snakes, bees, wasps, mosquitoes all made me jump. Nevertheless, I started planting flowers close to the house. In the country, where does one's yard really end?

You can see Mother Nature's lure was slow to catch me in her net. Paul, truly my better half, loved trudging through the woods and found the creek bottom of bluebells down our bluff. Again, he



Photo by Paul Feldker

almost had to drag me down there the first time. But the quiet waters of Bond Creek and the spring spectacle of bluebells finally roped me in.

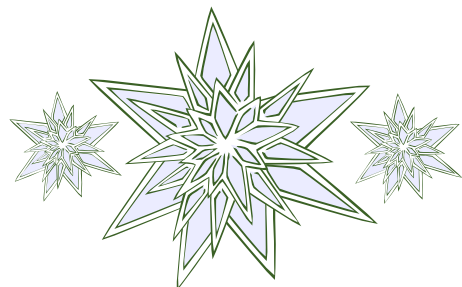
I decided at that point to develop the areas of nature I enjoyed. Flowers topped a list that included birds, butterflies and trees. In baby steps, I found that to encourage certain butterflies, specific plants were required. I also discovered that insecticides killed butterflies and their larvae as well as the bug for which the insecticide was intended. So, little by little, in very small increments, I became a nature lover, a tree hugger and a bit more knowledgeable about my world on top of this bluff. The small prairie we planted is cover for so many small animals and birds. It is a joy to walk the prairie path in the fall and see clouds of finches and sparrows fly up out of the grasses.



Photo by Paul Feldker

Now there are also paths in the woods and I love to walk down to the creek. In December and January we often see frost flowers blooming. Poison ivy has never been my friend, so I am not fond of the summer woods still.

Through the years, bird watching and feeding, deer watching, planting trees and a small prairie, and controlling invasive species have helped us to evolve as bluff-top landowners. Thanks to Clifftop, we have learned much.



# Bush Honeysuckle, Scourge of the Bluffs

by Joann Fricke

Before moving to a home in the bluffs, thoughts of honeysuckle brought one of two things to mind—the heady smell of the flowers from the vine on the white picket fence next to my tree swing at the house on Main Street in old Valmeyer where I grew up or the Avon fragrance that I favored as a young adult. Both were pleasant thoughts, but now that I know about bush honeysuckle, all I can think of is how to eradicate it.

Asian bush honeysuckle was imported and planted with the best of intentions—to control erosion and provide food and cover for wildlife. However, this aggressive plant took over the forest floor in some areas. Not only are its berries lacking in nutrition but the dense growth provides so much cover for deer that hunters have trouble finding a clear shot through the dense thicket. Good for the deer, not so good for the hunters.

Serious bush honeysuckle invasions impede native tree regeneration due to the excessive shade created. Yet the honeysuckle thrives because of its shade tolerance, spread far and wide by the birds and small mammals that eat its worthless berries. Without the acorns and nuts from our native hardwoods, deer, turkeys and other critters will move out of the area seeking “greener pastures”.

Once you know what to look for, you will see bush honeysuckle everywhere. There are large concentrations of it along most every county road, state highway and private drive where a forest environment exists. It is the first plant in the woods to green up in the spring and the last to lose its leaves in the fall. If you are in doubt about the identity of a plant, cut a stem with a clippers or knife. Bush honeysuckle has a hollow pith running throughout each stem.



Photo by Joann Fricke

On November 5, Paul Feldker and Larry Scace joined a crew of hardy souls to remove honeysuckle at the Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve. As can be seen in the photo at lower left, bush honeysuckle seems to be able to grow anywhere—even right out of solid limestone!



Photo by Debbie Newman

The photo above shows a high concentration of bush honeysuckle on our property. This fall we have been diligently working to rid ourselves of this invasive plant. The following article outlines the most effective methods of eradicating this notorious invasive and when it is best to apply these methods.

## So, You Want to Weed Out Bush Honeysuckle?

by Mike Fries, Fries & Associates

Joann’s preceding article illuminates how her early memories of the pleasant summertime aroma of honeysuckle flowers left an imprint on her for a lifetime. Our life experiences influence us and just the same, we shape the world we walk. If you want to alter the trajectory of your local environment to favor the highly diverse native flora and fauna of our area, one of the most significant things you can do is to control the invasive and aggressive vegetation in your neighborhood. Bush honeysuckle is particularly problematic because of the speed at which it can colonize extensive areas. Once plants are established in an area they reach reproductive maturity in a few short years and population densities quickly explode and overwhelm native vegetation. The most effective strategy to defeat bush honeysuckle would be to recognize the problem early and keep it from producing seed.

Where to start on such a big task like preventing bush honeysuckle from producing fruit? First, recognized that it will be a multi-year effort and not

something to be completed in an afternoon. As the seasons pass, those small honeysuckles that you may not even notice in the interior of the woods are maturing, until one day, they are full of ripe, red fruit – another place for birds to feast, and , as they do, drop many of the seeds in the nearby forest. Start where it is the easiest and most effective – the fringes of the problem area, not just the concentration of large bushes that has been there producing seeds for years.

## Here are two primary methods to eliminate bush honeysuckle:

### Pulling and Grubbing:

Think of it as though you were weeding your garden. Surprisingly, these shallow-rooted bushes are almost as easy to pull as the herbaceous weeds of your garden. Large numbers of small and medium sized plants can be removed with this approach. If pulling out bushes by hand isn't your idea of fun, there are tools such as a grubbing hoe (and numerous variations of this) that employ leverage to increase the pulling force and enable an individual to remove a bush much larger than you ever would have thought possible.

Soil structure and moisture can make a dramatic difference in the effort required and potentially affect re-sprouting from plants which break instead of pull out of the ground. It is best to avoid pulling when the soil is too dry. Heavy clay soils require very moist conditions to avoid excessive breaking. (Editor's note: Avoid pulling too hard to keep from throwing your back out, as well. Personal experience talking here. Also, hang pulled plants upside down in the fork of a tree so the roots dry out and don't have a chance to re-root in the soil if just tossed on the ground.)

### Cut-stump Herbicide Treatment:

This is the means of choice for the largest of the bushes but is much less effective on small to medium sized plants due to the difficulty in finding and treating the multitude of small stems that are often present. Tools such as loppers, handsaws, chainsaws or brushcutters are used to cut all stems of a plant within a few inches of the ground. A mixture of herbicide and water should be applied to **all** stems as soon as possible after cutting (within 15 minutes) to increase the amount of herbicide that is taken into the stem and eventually down to the roots where it will be effective. The amount of herbicide that actually reaches the roots can be affected by the season and is maximized when the natural flow of sap is downward towards the roots.



Photo by Martin Kemper

We typically think of sap flow being downward in the fall and upward in the spring, but there are other times of year when sap flow is upward toward branches that are leafing out, flowering or fruiting. Cut-stump treatment is effective most any time of year but most reliably so in the fall and winter as well as other periods of stable growth. During periods of upward sap flow (calendar dates vary year to year) effectiveness is reduced. If you are uncertain whether you are in a period of upward sap flow, you can increase the concentration of herbicide to minimize the possibility of re-sprouting from the stump.

The recommended mixture of herbicide is a glyphosate product (e.g. Roundup with a 42% active ingredient) mixed with water at a 50% concentration – one part Roundup to one part water. Lower concentrations, as low as 20%, can be used if you are confident that the season and technique are optimal for intake of the herbicide.

Anyone can apply these two tactics as part of an effective and enjoyable strategy to improve the health of you and your world. So get out and have some fun, exercise and help shape the future ecology of the region. At the end of the day or end of the season, your objective should be to have as large an area as possible free of all sizes of honeysuckle. The satisfaction of seeing an area without this pesky aggressive weed will enhance your ability to enjoy the beauty of our native vegetation.

**For more information about invasive species identification and eradication, please visit our website <http://clifftopalliance.org> and click on the Invasive Plants in the Bluff tab on the left.**

# Inaugural Monroe County YMCA Illinois Ozarks 10K Bluff Trail Run



Photo by Joann Fricke

On Saturday, October 29, 2011, 78 dedicated runners gathered at Borsch Park in Valmeyer to participate in the first ever trail run in Monroe County. They came from as far away as Cape Girardeau to challenge themselves to the tough climb up the trails at Salt Lick Point Land and Water Reserve. And they had to make that climb twice!

John Guyer of Fenton, pictured below, was the overall winner of the race with a time of 46 minutes, 38 seconds.



Photo by Joann Fricke

By Joann Fricke

Of more than 40 volunteers, 26 were out on the trails to help the runners stay on course and to assist should anyone be injured. Clifftop was one of 17 sponsors of the event and also provided several volunteers.



Photo by Mick Hoepfinger

The goal of the race was twofold—to get the YMCA out into the local communities and to promote the great hiking trails in the area. Brochures for Clifftop and White Rock were inserted into every runner and volunteer packet. As a result, we have gained several new members.

In an email from one of the participants after the race, it was suggested we add more hills for next year's run. I am pretty sure he was being sarcastic.

Photo by Gale Midyett





# A Winter Wonderland



Photo by Joann Fricke



Photo by Joann Fricke

**Enjoy the Season**-- Dean Martin sang on his 1966 Christmas album, "It's a marshmallow world in the winter" and that truly is the case. So put on the coveralls, heavy coats, gloves, boots and hats and get out and enjoy the beauty of winter. All the area hiking trails are open every day for your enjoyment, just be careful out there!

**Bird Care Tips**--Keep those bird feeders stocked with the seeds birds love and provide the most nutrition. Black oil sunflower seed is one of the best and widely acceptable by the greatest number of birds, but peanut pieces, safflower, white millet and thistle are also popular menu items. High fat, high calorie suet is the perfect food to help birds get through longer nights and colder temps.

Gently brush snow off berry-bearing plants to make the fruit more accessible to birds.

Don't forget to offer water, as well, for drinking and bathing. If you don't have a bird bath heater, consider purchasing a heated pet water dish. Add a rock or a few pebbles if the dish is deep so the birds can bathe safely.

**For more information on winter bird feeding, please visit our website <http://clifftopalliance.org/cliffnotes/> and click on the third topic under the year 2009, "Got Food? Feeding stations bring nature closer to home"**



Photo by Paul Feldker



Photo by Paul Feldker

Don't miss these upcoming events...

Please join us for an Owl Program and Owl Prowl.

Owl educators and their mentor, Pam Lippert, shown right with a very noisy barn owl, of Treehouse Wildlife Center in Dow, IL, will present a program on our local owl residents, their natural history, habits and habitats. Following the formal program, Pam and the owl educators will be on hand to answer questions and pose for photos. This program is another in the continuing seminar series "Meet the Neighbors," and is hosted by Clifftop, the University of Illinois Extension Service, Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society and SWIRCD. The program will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 at the Monroe County Annex, 901 Illinois St., Waterloo.



Photo by Tom Rollins

That evening, we'll conduct an Owl Prowl at White Rock Nature Preserve to listen for, identify, and count the owls we hear. Experienced birders and owl-call interpreters will guide this special evening field trip, which will run from 7 p.m. to about 9 p.m. and will begin at the White Rock parking area off Bluff Road about two miles south of Valmeyer. We encourage field trip participants to car pool, if possible, as parking space is limited. Participants should dress for the weather as it's probably going to be cold, and bring a small flashlight.

Why head out for an owl prowling in winter??? We're most likely to hear owls during their breeding season, which takes place in late winter, as the birds identify territories and try to attract mates.

Pre-registration is required for both events so that we know how many people will attend and, should the weather be very bad, so that we can let you know if the program or prowling is postponed or cancelled. Please register no later than February 9<sup>th</sup> by e-mailing [clifftop@htc.net](mailto:clifftop@htc.net) or by calling (618)458-4674.

Become a *Citizen Scientist* in the comfort of your own home!

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a great way to enter the world of "Citizen Science," learn more about the birds that visit your yard and still relax over a cup of coffee. The dates for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual GBBC are Feb. 17-20, 2012.

The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. This voluntary effort by citizen scientists results in a tremendous boost in data collection throughout North America. In 2011, more than 92,000 bird checklists were submitted by participants in the United States and Canada. The 2011 GBBC resulted in 11.4 million bird observations. Each count provides a snapshot of birds – about 600 species – and their whereabouts. Trends in bird populations and movements of species can be plotted from the data on a year-by-year basis.



The count can be extended beyond your backyard if you'd rather venture on a field trip. Many GBBC participants head to national parks, nature trails, city parks or other "bird friendly" areas.

To participate in this year's GBBC, all you need do is remember the count dates, commit to a minimum of 15 minutes to watching and counting birds on any day of the count (February 17-20, 2012) and then enter your count results at <http://www.birdcount.org>. You can also watch as count data is entered and the tallies grow from across the continent.



## Upcoming events continued...

### Members-only Event

White Rock Nature Preserve – Clifftop’s Great Backyard – provides a perfect site for citizen science. Clifftop members are invited to participate in a one-day Great Backyard Bird Count at White Rock. This free, members-only event will be held on **Saturday, February 18, 2012**, and will begin at 8 a.m. at the White Rock parking area off Bluff Road. Experienced birders will lead the count day field trip and offer tips on viewing and identifying birds, using field guides and the value of counting for science.



Photo by Joann Fricke

Participants should sign up and register for the White Rock GBBC by contacting Membership Chair Joann Fricke at [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net). We’re asking for registration in case poor weather forces a cancellation or change of meeting time.

The data gathered by Clifftop members at the White Rock GBBC will be entered into the official website as a “point count station” at the end of the day. Join the 15<sup>th</sup> annual GBBC and the FIRST annual White Rock GBBC on Saturday, February 18<sup>th</sup>!



Photo  
by Eric Fries

### Weekend Gardener

Want some butterflies, birds, bees, moths, even a toad or two in your gardens? Clifftop volunteers Carl and Pen DauBach will offer a presentation on “Gardening with Natives: Bringing the Wild Into Your Yard” at the Weekend Gardener conference. This educational program is sponsored by the University of Illinois Extension and provides workshops for both beginning and veteran gardeners. Participants may select four seminars to attend during the day-long program. Seminar topics include Backyard Pond Maintenance, Native Plants, Beneficial Insects, Herbs and Landscape Design.

The Weekend Gardener will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. on **Saturday, March 17, 2012**, at the Gateway Convention Center, 1 Gateway Drive, Collinsville, IL. Pre-registration is required and further information is available by contacting the Madison County University of Illinois Extension Office at (618)650-7050.

### The Eagles Have Returned

Word has it that the eagles have returned to Monroe County. Hundreds of eagles were observed about 2 miles south of Harrisonville on Levee Road last year. There is no reason to believe that won’t be the case again this year. Don’t miss the opportunity to see these majestic birds in all their glory.



Photo by Pen DauBach

# 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  
Maeystown, IL 62256