

Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

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Clifftop Purchases Storment-Hauss Nature Preserve

We are excited to announce our purchase of the Storment-Hauss Nature Preserve located on Reed Road, just one-half mile east of our Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve.

The purchase was made possible by a generous Land Acquisition Grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF). Jolie Krasinski, Natural Areas Program Director with ICECF, commented, "The Foundation is proud to support the protection of wildlife habitat at natural areas throughout the state. To date, Foundation grants have assisted with land acquisition at over 220 project sites."

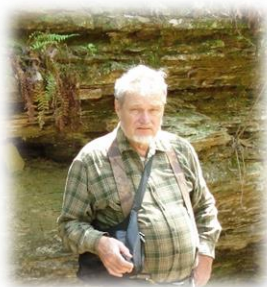
The 85-acre site includes 64 acres of upland forest and a unique sandstone cliff community. A small creek transverses the property with waterfalls in two separate locations. Over the years, 59 species of birds and 33 herpetofauna species have been documented on the site. The previous owner, David Storment, constructed several small fishless amphibian ponds along the edges of the property to provide breeding habitat for many amphibians.

Future plans for the site include invasive plant control, construction of trails and a small parking lot to accommodate visitors after opening to the public for passive recreation. Debbie Newman, Natural Areas Preservation Specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, said, "I'm looking forward to working with Clifftop on stewarding this beautiful property."



"We wish to thank James Storment for allowing us to fulfill his late father's wishes by maintaining the property for the benefit of wildlife conservation," noted Jared Nobbe, President of Clifftop's Board of Directors.

Joann Fricke, Clifftop's Membership Chair, declared, "Clifftop members continue to help local faces save great places!"



David Storment

Love at First Tick

By Annette Rau

The trails of Monroe county are more than just pretty places. My love of the woods and appreciation of everything they give has evolved over years.

Many years ago (24 years to be exact) my first date with Nathan, my husband, was to the trails of Monroe County. We hiked at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve and he states it was "love at first tick" because I calmly removed a tick from him. He said he knew right then that I was the one for him.



Annette's husband, Nathan, and daughter, Hazel.

with a few hills. (Editor's note: a "few hills" is an understatement!) It took a few more years and some coaxing from a coworker to get me to go back out and find my joy in running again on wooded trails.

Since then, the trails have become a place to connect with myself, friends and family. I come to the trail alone a mess of raw nerves and stress that our world throws my way and I leave with a sense of calm and peace. I meet a friend at a trail to have run therapy sessions that have given us a sister-like bond. I take my daughters here to teach them the calm and peace that the woods can provide during a pandemic. I hike with my parents giving us time to talk and see the blooming flowers in the spring.

One of the most exciting events of the nature around us happened on August 21, 2017. That's the day Clifftop hosted the solar eclipse watch event at the Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve near Fults. Woods surrounded the clearing where all the shelters were set up and where all the activity happened. My family watched in awe at all the different phases of the eclipse. We felt such camaraderie with people we didn't know because we were all there for the same purpose. We shared our shelter, food, and knowledge. As the moment of totality came, there was a hush, a rustling of insects readying themselves for evening, and whispers of awe and wonder as the crowd watched the 360-degree sunset.

Time in these wooded paradises calls me to slow down the clock, find myself, listen to friends, be with family, and always leave my stress behind.

The Woods by Annette Rau

**Time, Tick, Tick, Tick, Tick
Slow down she says, I've got you
Worry not, leave your stress here**



Annette's daughters, Ava and Hazel at Clifftop's solar eclipse event.



In a news release on October 19, 2020 grownative.org reminded us of the following:

"Leaving the leaves provides habitat for animals as they search for a place to hibernate. Frogs, snakes, salamanders, and many other animals rely on fallen leaves to provide cover in the winter months. Many caterpillars and pupae of moth and butterfly species overwinter in fallen leaves as well. Insects roll up in leaves on the ground, emerging in the spring as perennial plants begin to break dormancy.

Leaf litter is a vital food source for decomposers, like millipedes, snails, and worms, which not only help

create soil, but are also important food for songbirds. Leaf litter is also a great natural fertilizer, helping bring nutrients back to the soil as it breaks down."

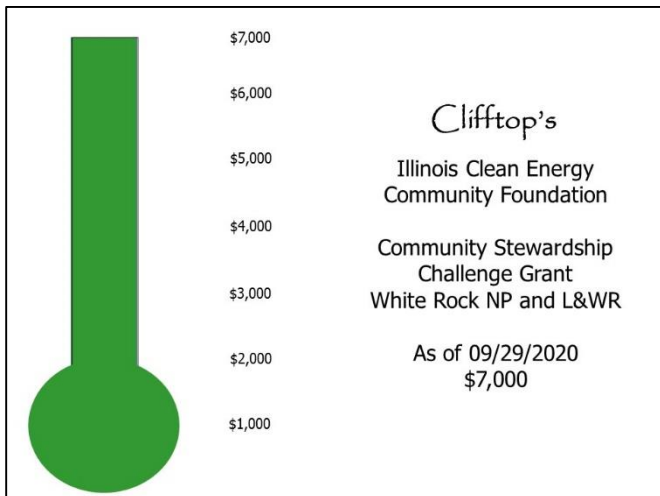
So, if you are not a fan of raking leaves, you now have an excuse not to!



While there have not been many volunteer opportunities during the pandemic, we want to let you know that several prescribed burns on Clifftop properties as well as private lands are planned over the next few months. Masks will be required for all who attend which will also be helpful to reduce smoke inhalation. Tools will be sanitized prior to each burn. Leather gloves are always a requirement and we will have some available if you don't have your own. If you are not on our volunteer list but would like to be, please email cliffmbr@htc.net or call 618-935-2542.



Please be sure to notify us of your new address. Send updates to cliffmbr@htc.net or call 618-935-2542



In March 2020, Clifftop was awarded a Community Stewardship Challenge Grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF). The foundation will match 3:1 for every dollar donated to Clifftop, up to \$21,000. This means when Clifftop receives donations of \$7,000, ICECF will donate \$21,000 to be used for invasive species control and hill prairie expansion at White Rock Nature Preserve and Land & Water Reserve. We reached our \$7,000 goal on September 29, but we don't have to stop there. Every dollar collected will go toward stewardship at our White Rock properties. If you'd still like to make a contribution, please contact us at cliffmbr@htc.net or 618-935-2542.

Christmas will be here before you know it. Do you have a hard-to-buy-for conservation-minded family member or friend? Consider the gift of a Clifftop membership. Only \$25 for an individual membership will award your friend or relative with our quarterly newsletter, Annual Report, invitations to special members-only events, the opportunity to work directly with the Clifftop Board of Directors on committees and, most importantly, **the satisfaction of preserving and protecting our natural areas and natural heritage**. The following link will take you to our membership form: <http://www.clifftopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/membership-form.pdf> or contact us at cliffmbr@htc.net or call 618-935-2542





Despite weeks of drought, the colors were (and some still are) spectacular this year. The photo on the left is the bluffs just south of Overlook Prairie at White Rock Nature Preserve, 6438 Bluff Road, Valmeyer. The photo on the right was taken from Cardinal Flower Trail at Paul Wightman Subterranean Nature Preserve, 3325 G Road, Fuels.