

# Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

April 2025

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## AmeriCorps STL – Working for You!

by Joann Fricke

Clifftop became an AmeriCorps STL (ACSTL) partner in January 2024 after working through our concerns about providing housing for the team members during their work details, which is a requirement in many cases. It turned out that Clifftop's projects were close enough to AmeriCorps headquarters in St. Louis that it was an easy drive back and forth each day.

The team members have built trails and performed fire break preparation at White Rock Nature Preserve (see photos at left). At Stormont Hauss Nature Preserve, the team has enhanced the trail system by installing water bars to prevent erosion and steps to improve the footing on a hill for hikers (see photos below, right). Team members learn life skills on each project that they can take with them after leaving ACSTL service. Our site stewards have enjoyed working with them on each project.

If you have been following the news lately, you are aware of the many cuts to federal funding. Eighty-five percent of the national AmeriCorps staff have been placed on administrative leave. "Late Friday evening, states were notified of the termination of active grants which had been obligated to operate AmeriCorps programs," Ann Hannan, AmeriCorps St. Louis Executive Director, stated in an email to partners. She continued, "On Saturday morning, ACSTL was informed that nine programs in Missouri were spared from the grant terminations, and the grant which funds the ACSTL Emergency Response Team was included on that list. Based on current knowledge, the federal cuts will NOT impact the operations of our crews or our ability to fulfill service agreements through the month of July."

If you'd like to show your support, contact your members of Congress or make a donation via this link: <https://www.givepulse.com/event/601631>





# Generational Impacts

by Matthew Goessling

When I chose to study biology at SIUE, I believed it was a random choice with a great outcome. In retrospect, it was far from random. The natural world has been a constant source of comfort and formative memories, with a deep appreciation passed down from generations I've never met. Planting gardens and flowerbeds with my mother or grandmother prompted me to dirty my hands. Eagle-watching from the Melvin Price Locks & Dam Great Rivers Museum to the Grafton Ferry showcased the subtle, lively winters as the Mississippi River pushed ice rafts larger than cars aground. I was encouraged to walk through a spring-fed stream as it developed into a wetland, a lake, then back to a forested creek, which directed my curiosity towards differences between habitats. My respect for nature's power was cemented when I peeked from cover to watch storm winds lay trunks of wetland trees in the mud, raising a network of roots into a woody, woven barricade in their stead. As a child, I recall every outing was accompanied by my ceaseless questions, 'discoveries', or lessons to be learned.



Matthew sharing an appreciation for nature with the next generation (his nephew), during totality of the 2024 solar eclipse. Photo by Colleen Goessling

As a young adult, my Bachelor's degree in Ecology, Evolution, & Environment allowed for hands-on work with amphibians, flying squirrels, invasive vegetation, and a travel study through national parks of the U.S. and Canada. Despite the experiences, the 4-year education wasn't enough for me, leading to a Master's degree in Biological Sciences on plant-insect community ecophysiology. My time spent studying *Lespedeza cuneata* and ground beetles (*Chlaenius emarginatus*) fostered a pivotal expansion of my perspective about how seemingly minor or transient changes in the environment will expand well beyond their initial impact, and surely last longer than I will. This fuels my yet unfaltering drive to learn about disparate biological concepts for the purpose of finding inevitable connections between them, and to spread knowledge (or at least an appreciation) of nature.

While I don't make an income by spreading my passion for nature, I'm sure to make a life of it. I'm currently employed as a wetland biologist, delineating wetlands primarily so renewable energy projects minimize impacts, submitting reports to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as per Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This work takes me across the country, from Rockies to Smokies, Badlands to Rio Grande. When the work is done, I know I can make my greatest impacts through my roots in Monroe County, for which I am grateful to Clifftop for allowing me to facilitate these impacts, providing opportunities to form memories in generations I'll never meet.



Peyto Lake, Banff National Park, Canada.  
Photo by Matthew Goessling

*Chlaenius emarginatus*,  
pinned for research.  
Photo by Matthew Goessling



# Where, Oh Where, Are the Illinois Ozarks Wood Thrushes?



In the July 2024 issue of Bluffviews, we published an article about wood thrushes tagged at several locations near Valmeyer and the erection of a MOTUS Tower at the Illinois Ozarks Nature Preserve (IONP). This past winter, one of the wood thrushes tagged at the IONP was reported in the Yucatan and another in Belize. On April 12, #152 was reported at the Houston, TX Audubon Coastal Operations and on April 14 at the Missouri Department of Conservation's Stegall Mountain in Shannon County.

On April 3, #547 was tracked to the Trinity River National Wildlife Reserve near Houston, TX and then at the Peabody River King tower near Freeburg. On April 13, the transmitter on #159 reported that he was at MDC's Trail of Tears.

They should be back in Monroe County very soon, if they aren't already!

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## Upcoming Events...

**Saturday, June 14, 2025 - "Hidden in Plain Sight: How Herbicide Drift is Effecting Native Trees and Herbaceous Plants" 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Monroe County Annex, 901 Illinois Avenue, Waterloo.**

Martin Kemper, retired IDNR Natural Heritage Biologist, will present data collected over several years about the health of trees and ecosystems across Illinois, as a result of years of damage from drifting herbicides. Call 618-340-1772 or email [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net) to register.



**Sunday, July 20, 2025 – "Meet the Moths: Your Nocturnal Neighbors" 8:30 to 11:00 p.m., Illinois Ozarks Nature Preserve, (details shared upon registration).** Celebrate **National Moth Week** with us as we explore the incredible diversity of nighttime insects that visit our light sheets! We'll shine a light—literally—on the fascinating world of moths, casually discussing their identification, ecology, role as pollinators, and the benefits they bring to ecosystems. Presented jointly by Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves, Clifftop and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Limited to 30 participants, call 618-340-1772 or email [cliffmbr@htc.net](mailto:cliffmbr@htc.net) to register.



If you haven't yet renewed your Clifftop membership, please do so at your earliest convenience either by check mailed to P O Box 131, Maestown, IL 62256 or using our PayPal Giving Fund platform:

[paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/2435507](https://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/2435507)

Thank you!





March was a busy month for prescribed burning at Clifftop properties! With the help of many volunteers, we were able to conduct large burns at both Paul Wightman Subterranean NP and White Rock NP. In addition, we burned Overlook, Copperhead and Vulture Prairies as well as Edna's Dell at White Rock!



PWSNP



90 acres @ White Rock



The crew for  
Edna's Dell



Vulture Prairie

