



Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

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The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters

by Joann Fricke

What, you might ask, is an Ozarkian Hillcrofter? It is a term I had never heard until recently. An Ozarkian Hillcrofter refers to someone living a simple life close to nature in the Ozark hills, acting as a guardian of the area's heritage. That definition could refer to many Clifftop members who live in the Illinois Ozarks.

The Society was founded in Eminence, MO in 1931, disbanded a few years later and revived in 2018. Its current mission is:

To secure proper recognition of the Ozarks.

- To organize the collaboration of a variety of individuals and personalities with the common goal of Ozarks preservation and conservation.
- To promote the existence of the Hillcrofters and encourage participation and education.

To protect Ozarks wildlife.

- To promote the existing wildlife and fisheries conservation efforts currently in place.
- To educate the importance of the Ozarks fauna and unique biodiversity of the region.

To preserve the natural beauties of the Ozark's historic spots.

- To educate and instill the fact that the Ozarks region is very much a limited resource in itself.
- To support existing land conservation and protection entities.
- To identify and protect historically, culturally, and environmentally sensitive lands.

To perpetuate the history, folklore and traditions of the Ozarks.

- To educate and cultivate an interest in the unique Ozarks history of people, places and events.
- To serve as a common hub for historical, genealogical, and cultural entities and promote their individual efforts.
- To collect, organize and archive the vast Ozarks historical and cultural materials.
- To make Ozarks historical, genealogical, and cultural information easily accessible for research and education.

To teach our own people the value of the great heritage we possess in these regions.

- To use all the elements of the Hillcrofters interests to educate and create interest, appreciation and respect for the Ozarks region.

I recently attended a presentation by Hillcrofters' board member Larry Sifford. Larry lived in Columbia, IL for a number of years, but moved to the Branson area in the 1980s. The Hillcrofters plan to launch a new journal this fall to highlight their work. They acknowledge the fact that the Ozarks extend into Illinois which includes parts of Monroe, Randolph and St. Clair counties and would like to include stories about our area in the journal. Mr. Sifford would like to start a new membership group whose sole purpose would be to contribute articles and photos about this area to the journal. To form this new group would require no

record keeping, no meeting minutes or no money handling. An adult membership is \$48, payable to the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters and mailed to P. O. Box 333, Point Lookout, MO 65726. Please provide your complete name, address, email address and phone number. In addition, they would like someone to act as a local editor, of sorts. This person would solicit articles and photos to send to the editor of the magazine, Tammy Morton. To start us off, I sent them an article about what I know best—two hiking sites: Salt Lick Point LWR and White Rock NP with fabulous drone photos by Shane Kellogg. Hopefully the Illinois Ozarks will be well represented in the inaugural issue of The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters Journal.

Guestviews...

For the Love of Trees

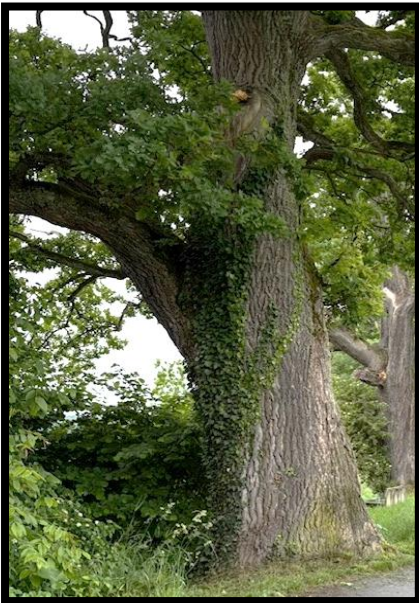
By Kerry Warren-Couch

A hot summer day, birds are singing, insects are buzzing, and a young girl is spending hours in the dark, cool woods on her family’s farm. The tall oak, hickory, locust, elm and maple trees were some of her best friends, and she knew each one of them for their beauty and elegance. I am this girl, and decades later, still retain my love for trees that began so long ago.

The centuries-old trees of Bavaria turned my love to complete wonderment on a recent trip to Germany. Why am I writing about a place nearly 5,000 miles away for most Clifftop members reading this essay? Because so many of us in both places care about conservation and the natural beauty around us. We have a deep and lasting love for the land - the fields, flowers, birds, insects, animals and trees - and want to preserve and protect it for years to come.

I was in Germany to help a dear friend make a complicated move to a new home and used my spare time to explore the beautiful Bavarian countryside. Of course, like many who travel to the Bayern region, I was awestruck by the sight of the Alps on the horizon. But it was the trees that literally took my breath away.

Imagine that first morning, walking down a simple country road by a lake and discovering a magnificent English oak that was so massive, I couldn’t fit it in a photo without walking back 25 feet. (See photo at right.) I audibly gasped when I saw this oak that was hundreds of years old. It was on a bend in the road and was so big, it blocked the view ahead. How did this tree survive without being struck by a car on this blind curve or being severely injured from some other force?



Imagine then, my utter amazement when I walked around this massive tree to discover a walkway along that lake that was lined on both sides with more massive English oaks for as far as I could see. Hundreds of centuries-old, English oaks! Gorgeous, magnificent, spectacular, do not fully describe the remarkable beauty of these trees. Their branches, which are the size of some trees, created a canopy over the walkway, which provided the shaded coolness I remembered in the woods on my family’s farm as a child.

I stopped to ponder so many things as I tried to absorb the sheer elegance of these amazing trees. Who planted them hundreds and hundreds of years ago? How have they survived the centuries? How many

families have strolled beneath their branches? What wildlife and birds have found shelter and new beginnings in the towering height of these trees? What have these trees witnessed over the centuries?

I visited every single tree on this two-mile-long walkway, spending time studying the canopy, the bark, the branches and their long-fingered roots. As I did so, I realized these trees have been revered and tenderly cared for over many generations of people living in this area. These trees have been *loved* and *valued* by the entire community.

The massive branches in many of the trees were properly supported with strapping to ensure they would not bend and break under their sheer weight. Not a single tree had scars from a weed eater or a grass mower, despite each one being neatly and carefully trimmed around its base. The roots were so extensive that much of this trimming would have likely been done by hand to avoid injury to the tree, as I do with some of the trees on my own property. Yet, the grass was neatly trimmed around each of these oaks. The native grasses along the lake were not cut, allowing waterfowl and wildlife to use the tall reeds for cover and food. So, all of the trimming was just for these trees. Imagine the man-hours to accomplish this!

As I walked along this beautiful alley of oaks, I noted that when a tree died, another tree had been planted beside the stump of its predecessor. (See photo at right.) These newer trees were of all kinds of ages, so this replacement practice had been conducted for many years and continues to this day.

I walked along these English oaks for a few miles where they blended into trails going into a massive forest. I wandered these trails with utter joy every day, for miles and miles. To my amazement, I discovered that even in the depths of this forest, when a massive pine, beech, or oak had fallen, sure enough, a replacement had been planted nearby. I further noted the care of the plantings, properly caged for protection from wildlife, and a numbered, dated tag affixed to the cage.

As I hiked through this forest, I also saw jars positioned at various points of the trail. These are like our mason jars with lids. Curious, I picked up one to investigate. The label was in German, of course, but I could discern this was a request that any smokers please put cigarette butts in this jar. Sure enough, some of the jars had extinguished butts. No one had smashed a jar or tossed it off the trail. Protecting the forest was obviously important to the people who used the trails. Impressive.



Also, as here in the States, people love to hike with their dogs in Bavaria. I encountered so many hikers and cyclists with their dogs on miles of trails. What surprised me were the dog waste "stations" often way down a trail and obviously used. Yet another clue to just how much people in Bavaria take care of their forests and trails.

The day before I left, I hiked to each of my new, majestic friends to say thank you and goodbye. I told them to please remain strong and outlive me and the generations that will follow me. I pray these magnificent trees will be here, gracing this earth, shading people, young and old, offering a respite to wildlife and continuing to be the beautiful, majestic trees that they are now for centuries to come.

I enjoyed many aspects of my trip to Germany. But what has stayed with me is the deep love the people of the region have for their centuries-old trees and forests.

Southwestern Illinois and Bavaria are thousands of miles apart, but people from both places share a love for the natural world around them. For us, that means working hard to protect and nurture our trees as they face the challenges of climate change, chemical drift, pests and other threats so the generations that come after us can enjoy their majesty and benefits to our world.



The Wild Things Conference Moves South in 2026

Join us on Saturday, January 31, 2026, in O’Fallon, Illinois

Wild Things invites nature enthusiasts from across Illinois and neighboring states to learn about the flora, fauna, natural history, and management of the special ecosystems of the Midwest. Be a part of the community of volunteers, community scientists, conservationists, natural resource professionals, at the 2026 Conference. Wild Things will return to the Chicago region in 2027.

For more information, please visit: <https://wildthingscommunity.org/>



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Photo gallery...

Meet the Moths July 20, 2025



On an extremely warm and humid night at the Illinois Ozarks Nature Preserve, Angella Moorehouse, Natural Areas Preservation Specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, set up several viewing stations using different lighting techniques. The total species captured (photographically) was 331 with 36 that were new to Angella. Perhaps the most popular visitor, though not a moth, was the Eastern Hercules Beetle. A few of the "new to Angella" sightings are pictured below along with a colorful favorite. IDs on each photo. Angella is also the author of the book *Flower Bugs: A Guide to Flower-Associated True Bugs of the Midwest* which is available on Pollination Press LLC or Amazon.



Eastern Hercules Beetle



Epione underwing



Dot-lined white moth



Hebrew moth



Paw Paw webworm moth



Rosy maple moth



Four sided viewing tent