

Bluffviews

a quarterly newsletter by Clifftop

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Here's How You Can Support the White Rock Expansion Project

By Jeffrey Couch, Clifftop Board Director

Clifftop NFP has launched a major fundraising campaign to support the expansion of its White Rock Nature Preserve to nearly three times its current size.

The multimillion-dollar purchase of 965 acres of upland forests, hill prairies, and limestone glades would not have been possible without the financial help of our nonprofit partners, the Illinois Audubon Society, The Conservation Fund and the Prairie State Conservation Coalition, plus other private donors.

Now we need your financial help.

Our goal is to raise at least \$200,000 in additional donations from people like you to help pay for Clifftop's share of the acquisition cost and restoration work, such as removing invasive plants and restoring hill prairies and limestone glades.

The Conservation Fund will own the property until December 2027, when it will transfer ownership to Clifftop. This nearly two-year transition period gives Clifftop time to raise its full share of the acquisition cost before we fully assume financial and stewardship responsibilities in perpetuity.

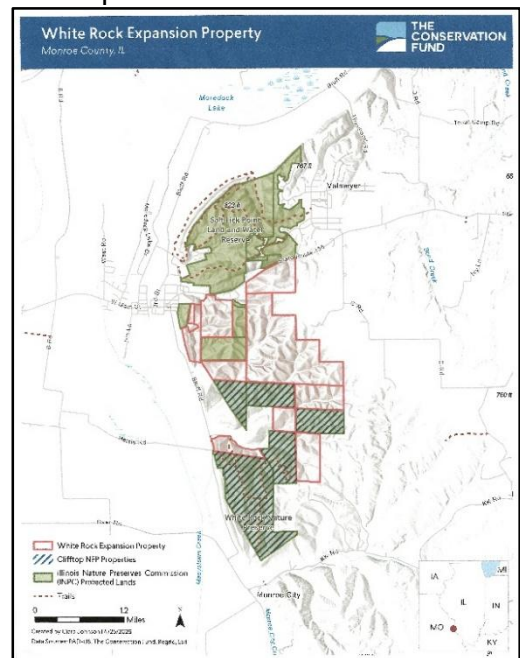
That's where you come in. Your financial donation would help Clifftop reach its goal. And if you are not already a member of Clifftop, joining our all-volunteer, nonprofit organization would help, too.

We'll tell you how to donate and become Clifftop members in a moment.

But first, we'd like to briefly explain why your financial support is a worthy investment.

Why the White Rock expansion project is important

Clifftop has a 20-year track record of protecting and conserving land in the Mississippi River bluffs corridor of southwestern Illinois. Today, as we mark our 20th anniversary, we own and care for three nature preserves: Storment-Hauss Nature Preserve on Reed Road with a Red Bud address; Paul Wightman



Subterranean Nature Preserve on G Road with a Fults address; and White Rock Nature Preserve off Bluff Road with a Valmeyer address.

The White Rock expansion will protect an additional 965 acres of ecologically rich, upland forest habitats. The site is home to 19 threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, including the northern long-eared bat, the cerulean warbler, Missouri orange coneflower, crested coralroot orchid, and climbing milkweed, which are abundant on the property.

The land is also part of the Mississippi Flyway, an important migratory route for more than 60% of North America's birds. Migrating birds use the forests and prairies on the property to refuel and rest. And many birds make their home there for at least part of the year.

The newly acquired property, like the White Rock Nature Preserve, is part of what is known as the Hill Prairie Corridor in the Mississippi bluffslands. Blufftop hill prairies are rare in Illinois, and conservationists are working urgently to protect these unique, sensitive ecosystems. There are 16 hill prairies and limestone glades on the new property.

With the additional acreage, White Rock will grow from about 575 to 1,540 acres, once it is incorporated into the nature preserve system. In the meantime, there is much work ahead for Clifftop members and volunteers, from removing invasive species and restoring prairies to creating a master plan for the expanded White Rock Nature Preserve.

But first, we have to raise funds for the expansion.

What you can do to help

You can make a tax-deductible donation by check, payable to Clifftop NFP, and send it to Clifftop, P.O. Box 131, Maeystown, IL 62256.

Or you can make your donation through the [PayPal Giving Fund](#). There is no transaction fee, so your entire donation will go directly to Clifftop.

If you aren't a Clifftop member, joining the organization is a great way to contribute to the cause, through your membership fees and stewardship work. You can sign up by clicking [here](#) and following the instructions.

You can find out more about Clifftop and its White Rock project on Thursday, May 7, at Hopskeller Brewing Company's "Dine Out for Clifftop" event. Hopskeller is donating a portion of the dinner proceeds to Clifftop. You can also try some of Hopskeller's newest brew, White Rock Ale, created exclusively for Clifftop. The event starts at 6 p.m. at Hopskeller, 116 East Third Street, in Waterloo. We thank Hopskeller Brewing Company for its generosity and support.

And we thank you all for considering a financial contribution toward the White Rock expansion project and joining us on our mission to protect and preserve the region's precious natural lands. We are so grateful for your help.

If you have any questions about the White Rock expansion project or anything else involving Clifftop, please feel free to contact us at cliffmbr@htc.net.

Project Monkey Chow

By Joann Fricke

When the 965 acres surrounding Clifftop's White Rock properties was offered for sale over two years ago, several conservation minded people and organizations got together to discuss the possibility of acquiring the parcels. At that meeting, I told the story of how the previous owners of the property had developed Ralston Purina Monkey Chow.

The story goes something like this: Drs. James Corbin and Joseph Vandepopuliere worked together at Ralston Purina in St. Louis and developed several successful animal chow products. Monkey Chow was developed as a nutritionally complete diet for monkeys and primates, formulated with high protein (25%), fat, and necessary vitamins like C and D. Specialized diets and lab-developed formulas were instrumental in keeping Rhesus macaques alive and healthy enough for the extensive testing required to develop the polio vaccine in the 1940s and 1950s.

The mere mention of the words Monkey Chow made us all giggle a little, and soon someone suggested that be the code words used to refer to the White Rock project.

Upcoming Events...



Mother's Day Bird ID Hike, May 10, 2026, 7:00 a.m. White Rock NP, 6438 Bluff Road, Valmeyer, IL. Please join us as Mike Avara, Avian Lab Manager and Field Coordinator at the U of I Urbana-Champaign, leads us on a hike to ID birds that are passing through on their way to their summer homes, are here for breeding purposes or live here year round. We will meet at the White Rock parking lot and hike along the flat driveway. When we get to the trailhead, the incline will increase, but we will take it slow, listening for bird calls and songs. We encourage you to download the Merlin bird ID app on your phone, but it is not required. Attendance is limited to 20 participants. Call or email Joann to reserve your spot. 618-340-1772. Cliffmbr@htc.net

Chainsaw Technique & Safety Workshop, Saturday, June 6, 2026, 9:00 am until 3:30 pm. White Rock NP, 6438 Bluff Road, Valmeyer, IL. University of Illinois Extension Foresters will lead this workshop focused on the safe use of chainsaws and the techniques used for thinning nuisance trees and eliminating invasive species. Attendees will be instructed on safe practices, chainsaw safety features, personal protective equipment, and safe felling techniques to cut down woody species. We will also demonstrate maintenance and sharpening techniques. We will have equipment for participants to use, but if participants wish, they may bring their own chainsaw and personal protective equipment (goggles, ear protection and chainsaw chaps). Leather boots that come above the ankle are required. Attendance is limited to 15 participants. Call or email Joann to reserve your spot. 618-340-1772 cliffmbr@htc.net



Please save any feed bags you may accumulate until next spring for Debbie Newman. They will be used for bagging invasive species, mostly garlic mustard that is close to going to seed, that has been pulled from natural areas and can't be left laying on the ground.



Take Your Child to a Conservation Workday, Saturday, June 20, 9:00 until 11:00 am. Paul Wightman Subterranean NP, 3325 G Road, Fults. This event is focused on young families who would love to volunteer at one of our beautiful nature preserves but are so busy with children and work that attending can be very daunting. Is this perhaps, you? If so, you and your children, age 6 years old and up, are invited to attend.

Clifftop site stewards and volunteers will take the adults out into our beautiful 535 acre native wildflower and tall grass prairie and woodlands to perform some very needed conservation tasks. The children will gather under our large pavilion for some crafts and simple lessons on what is found at PWSNP and why it is an important ecological preserve. We will take the children on short walks, following craft time, to see and perhaps hear some of the nature preserve residents and enjoy the prairie

wildflowers. Clifftop will provide simple snacks and drinking water plus all craft materials for the children. Adults will be provided with all hand tools needed to complete assigned tasks under the direction of PWSNP site stewards. Adults need to wear long slacks, long sleeved shirts, closed toe shoes, a sun hat and work or garden gloves. Children may wear shorts but please have them wear only fully enclosed shoes; no crocs, or sandals. Bug spray and sunscreen are a good idea to bring along with you. Adults may wish to bring a water bottle to carry with them out on the prairie.

Email Joann Fricke at clifmbr@htc.net with your RSVP. Attendance is limited to 10 children, so please let us know how many will be in your party, # and ages of children and any food allergies.



Dine Out for Clifftop

Thursday, May 7, 2026

HOPSKELLER BREWING COMPANY

Will kindly be donating a portion of their proceeds to Clifftop when you dine with them on May 7

Try their new brew, White Rock Ale, created exclusively for Clifftop!

Menu items available for purchase include pizza, salads & appetizers

At 6:00 pm, Clifftop will discuss details about a monumental project that will have been announced a few days before in local and regional news outlets and answer any questions you might have. We're counting on your support!

Hopskeller Brewing Company
116 East Third Street
Waterloo, IL