

**BOONE COUNTY CLIFFS** State Nature Preserve encompasses 74 acres situated along a tributary to Middle Creek in western Boone County.

Purchased in 1974, the original 46-acre tract was the first preserve of the Kentucky chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The preserve was dedicated by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC) in 1988, protecting it forever from development. In 2010, ownership of the preserve was transferred from TNC to the Boone County Fiscal Court.

Boone County Cliffs derives its name from the 20 to 50-foot cliffs of conglomerate rock that rise above the valley slopes of a small tributary to Middle Creek. The cliffs are considered to be among the finest examples of glacial deposits in Kentucky. Originating from outwash materials from Kansan-age glaciers, the conglomerate consists of well-cemented coarse gravels that were deposited 700,000 years ago.

The glacial debris includes fine-grained igneous and metamorphic rock that originated in northern Canada. Meltwater from the glacier carried sand and gravel that had been locked in the ice into this upland valley in Boone County. The course of what would become the Ohio River was just beginning to form at this time. As the Ohio River cut its channel, the Middle Creek tributary at Boone Cliffs began eroding and carving through the solidified glacial deposits as it flowed towards the Ohio River. The sculpted shapes of the cliffs we see today are the result of the erosive power of flowing water.

The preserve lies within the Eden Shale Belt of the Outer Bluegrass Region. Soils are generally fertile and basic, ranging from mostly moist to moderately

dry. The forest is characterized as calcareous mesophytic and consists of many species including sugar maple, basswood, beech, white oak, white ash, and slippery elm. Hikers may see wildflowers such as trout lily, spring beauty, dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn and bloodroot along the trails in the springtime.

The moist, spring-fed stream valley is home to the redback salamander, an uncommon species in Kentucky. Two-lined and dusky salamanders are found in association with springs on the property. In addition, the preserve supports an unusually high diversity of bird life, with warblers being especially abundant during the spring migration. Resident species include great horned owl, turkey, wood thrush, white-breasted nuthatch, scarlet and summer tanagers.

Visitors are welcome to enjoy hiking, birding, photography and nature study from sunrise to sunset, every day of the year. The loop trail is a little over a mile and a half in length. It is moderately strenuous as it ascends to the ridgetop. Once on top of the ridge, the trail is an easy walk. It passes through a grove of mature beech on the east side and provides wonderful views of the cliffs and the stream valley below. Note the changes in tree composition from the north-facing slopes to the south-facing side. Sugar maple, beech and basswood dominate the canopy on the moister, shadier north side and maple, chinquapin and red oaks occupy the drier south side.

Other vegetation changes are becoming more apparent. Garlic mustard, chickweed and bush honeysuckle have been steadily invading the preserve for several decades. These invasive non-native plants are taking over the habitat of native species that do not compete as well for space, nutrients and light. Efforts have been made to slow their spread, but more help is needed to stop invasive plants from overrunning the preserve. Please contact KSNPC if you would like to volunteer.

Because of the fragile nature of this preserve, rock climbing, mountain biking, horses, camping, pets and ATVs are strictly prohibited. For safety, all visitors must remain on the marked trail system at all times.

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**Owner:**

\* Boone County Fiscal Court

**Managers:**

\* Boone County Parks

\* Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission

**Purchased with Assistance of:**

\* Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund

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For more information please contact:  
**Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission**  
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naturepreserves.ky.gov

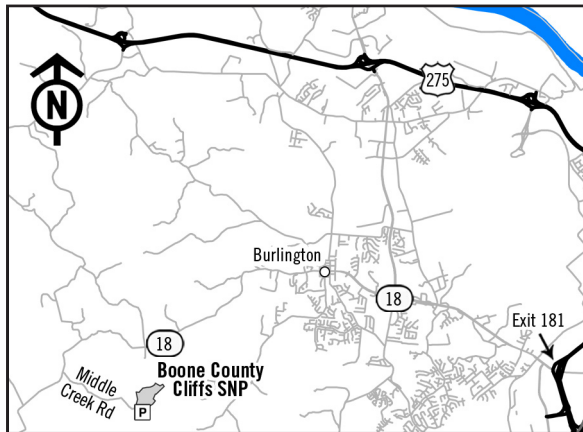
KSNPC ~ February 2012

cover artwork by Ann DiSalvo

# BOONE COUNTY CLIFFS

## STATE NATURE PRESERVE





Directions: Boone County - From exit 181 on I-75 take KY 18 west for approximately 11 miles, passing through Burlington. Turn left on to Middle Creek Road and travel 1.7 miles to the parking area on the left.

**By observing the rules for State Nature Preserves, you will be helping to protect Kentucky's natural heritage.**

1. Preserves are open sunrise to sunset.
2. Trails are open to foot traffic only. The established trail system provides you with the safest and best way to travel through the preserve. Visitors must not re-route or shortcut the existing trail system.
3. Horses, bicycles, climbing and rappelling are not permitted in nature preserves because of their destructive impacts to the trails and natural features.
4. Motorized vehicles are not permitted.
5. Possession of drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
6. Collecting plants, animals, rocks, artifacts or wood reduces those things that are needed to maintain nature's delicate balance. Therefore, collecting, hunting and trapping are prohibited on dedicated state nature preserves.
7. To ensure the natural beauty of each preserve and to promote visitor safety and enjoyment, camping, picnicking, building fires, audio equipment and pets are not permitted.
8. Remember to carry out your trash.

THESE RULES ARE ESTABLISHED BY 400 KAR 2:090. ANY PERSON IN VIOLATION OF THIS REGULATION MAY BE LIABLE FOR A CIVIL PENALTY OF \$1000 PER DAY AND POSSIBLE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION AS PROVIDED FOR IN KRS 224.

