

**The Ohio River Bluffs spectacular floral displays can be visited each year during the Arc of Appalachia's Wildflower Pilgrimage.**  
Photo Left: Blue-eyed Mary and celandine poppy at the Bluffs by Dave Kuehner. Right: the "green mile" on US 52 by Catherine Kendell.



## SAVING THE BLUFFS

**B**ack in 2005 the Arc acquired two properties on the steep bluffs facing Kentucky on the Ohio River just west of Manchester. A 62-acre tract was purchased outright, and a 34 acre tract was donated to the Arc of Appalachia by three sisters from the Boone Family.

The Bluffs is one of the most striking of all Ohio's natural features. Over many years the Ohio River has eroded through the heavily dissected limestone hill country of the Ripley-Manchester region, leaving behind steep limestone cliffs bordering the river. Wildflowers especially proliferate in alkaline soils, and on these bluffs once grew some of the most spectacular wildflower displays in the entire state.

After 200 years of heavy tree clearing and ill-advised attempts by early settlers to pasture the bluffs, nearly all of the primeval wildflower displays that grew beneath rich Yellow Buckeye/oak/hickory forests have been replaced with spindly Black Locust trees and non-native Bush Honeysuckles. The Arc's properties - sheltering the very last of the floral spectacle - came very close to disappearing as well.

When the Arc acquired the 62 acre tract, the owner had just heavily logged the land. The following year, among the fallen crowns of trees, banks of Bluebells, Dwarf Larkspurs, Toad Trilliums, and Wild Hyacinth continued to grow - so densely that people still swerved off US 52 to gape at the early spring phenomenon. But not for long.

Three years later, a solid sea of Garlic Mustard covered the newly disturbed ground and its struggling wildflowers, and the Bush Honeysuckles were poised to take over the bluffs. Despite the steep slopes, Arc volunteers pulled so much Garlic Mustard that year that we lined the berm of US 52 with a green carpet. We called it the "green mile."

Our volunteer crew, the Ohio River "Cliff Hangers," now returns to the slopes every year to remove invasive plants, thereby saving the bluffs again, and again. We will continue this work annually without fail so that we can save one of the greatest of all of Ohio's natural wonders.

