



Gateway to Boone An Ohio River Bluffs Expansion

Acres: 2.0 Project Total: \$22,500 Current Project Balance: \$12,998

The 33-acre Boone Property is a separate but essential unit of the larger 300-acre Ohio River Bluffs Preserve. It was donated to the Arc of Appalachia back in 2005 by the three Boone sisters: Josie, Patsy and Naomi. The three siblings shared many fond memories of their family holding, and their spirits of generosity prompted them to donate the land to the Arc of Appalachia for permanent protection.

The greater region of the bluffs - from Aberdeen to Manchester - showcases steep limestone cliffs facing the Ohio River on US-52 between Cincinnati and Portsmouth. Most of the Ohio River Bluffs Preserve holdings lie immediately west of the river town of Manchester, whereas the Boone Unit is 15 miles closer to Cincinnati, west of the town of Aberdeen.

Ohio River Bluffs has one of the most beautiful floral displays in all of the Eastern United States. Spring turns the region's winter-brown cliffs into an enchanted landscape of vibrant color. In early April, acres and acres of Virginia Bluebells cast their sky-blue hues halfway up the bluffs - stopping drivers on US-52 to pull off the road in order to

gawk at the sight. Just one week later, Dwarf Larkspurs drench the steep hillsides in tones of deep purple, and False Solomon's Seal and Toadshade Trillium abound. At season's end, so do the graceful wands of Wild Hyacinth.

The Boone Unit boasts many of the same flowers as the eastern holdings of Ohio River Bluffs, but shelters several uncommon plant species as well. Seven of them are found on the Ohio Watch List. Two species of particular interest are Mistletoe and Crossvine, the latter belonging to the mostly tropical Bignonia Family. Both species are more at home in Southeastern United States than in Ohio, and at Boone, they are on the northern boundary of their distribution range. It is not uncommon to see Crossvine, with its large yellow and burgundy clusters of tubular blossoms, climbing up the trees on the Boone tract, and Mistletoe's spherical mass of twigs and leathery leaves high in the canopy.

The tract is characterized by extremely steep slopes that sometimes require arms as well as legs to power up, as well as magnificent old trees of great girth. Some tree



Photos top left and clockwise: Crossvine by Deb Marsh; Immense oaks on the Boone Unit with donor Josie Boone Winterhalter; Toadshade Trillium, and Boone forest canopy in the autumn by Brian Prose.

species found at Boone are relatively uncommon elsewhere in the Arc Preserve System, including Black Maple, Red Hickory, and Kentucky Coffee Tree.

One of the preserve's historical features is an old stone fence running up the hillside, a remnant of the land's past service as pasture for industrious early settlers. We suspect the story of their attempt to farm the site's nearly vertical hillsides must have surely ended badly.

Throughout the 16 years that the Arc has owned this floral gem, the Boone Unit has never had road access, making it challenging for our staff to provide stewardship and organize guided hikes. Consequently, we were thrilled to find this two-acre tract listed for sale that would link the Boone Preserve directly to US-52. Having site access will make better management of the Boone region a feasibility, and enable sharing the site with others a real possibility.

