

CLIFTY CREEK NATURAL AREA – Continued from page 48.

dards so those wanting to take it easy may want to park at the parking lot and take the slightly longer but much less strenuous hiking trail.

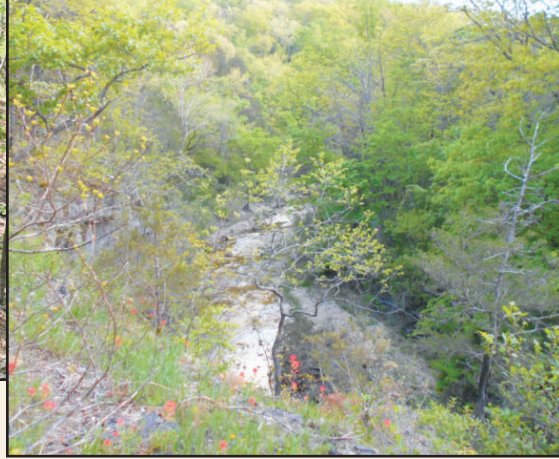
Follow this trail and bear right as it heads down the hill. The trail will join the creek almost right at the bridge. This point makes for an excellent viewing area of the bridge as does the vantage on the other side of the bridge. To get to the overhanging cliffs, one can either walk about one half mile downstream or drive farther down the road and park near the next low water crossing, which also offers a scenic view from the road. Simply walk upstream less than one-quarter mile to the cliffs. Be aware that the hiking of steep hills is involved and the area could be dangerous if one were to slip. Also, be aware that some of the land adjacent to the creek is private property. "No Trespassing" signs and purple/pink paint on the trees mark the pri-



Clifty Creek trail and view of the creek flowing in the valley below natural bridge. Submitted

vate property.

The area is home to another smaller natural bridge/cave just 300 or so yards downstream. This feature is somewhat similar to Rock House Cave on the Current River. As with



Rock House Cave, this small two entranced cave appears to be the meander of a once larger cave system that was destroyed as Clifty Creek down cut in its valley. The two entrances of this cave remnant are spaced close together along the

bluff line and only separated by a rock pillar. This cave is small enough to be almost fully explored without a light, with the exception of a slightly taller dome room that is in the rear of the cave, according to a report by Conor Watkins, a former University of Missouri-Rolla student. Much of the information for Clifty Creek was provided by research done by Watkins in 2003.

(Continued on next page.)

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