

CLIFTY CREEK NATURAL AREA – Continued from page 49.



Clifty Creek. Submitted

Until just a few years ago, however, reaching this geologic wonder was no easy feat. Though it was the first place in the Show-Me State to be designated as a Missouri Natural Area nearly 40 years ago, no hiking trail existed to reach the dolomite arch. In fact, many visitors would wade the creek in hopes of finding the bridge.

Thanks to a joint effort by the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, the L-A-D Foundation (which

owns the natural area), the Department of Natural Resources and volunteers from the Ozark Trail Association, a 2.5 mile loop trail was completed in the fall of 2008.

The route begins at a parking lot on the adjacent Clifty Creek Conservation Area and travels across the forested, rugged terrain to the bridge, which spans a distance of 40 feet and is 13 feet high. Along the way, visitors can see stands of shortleaf pine -- Missouri's only native pine tree -- and interesting glade plants that are present



Clifty Creek natural bridge in winter. Submitted

in the area. If you're hiking in April, you're likely to see redbuds and dogwoods in bloom, too. Once you reach the bridge and take your pictures, you can retrace your steps or complete the loop back around to the parking lot.

Clifty Creek Natural and Conservation areas are located six miles northeast of Dixon at the end of Route W in Maries County. A six-car parking lot for the area is on Maries County Road 511. For more details, go to www.mdc.mo.gov/a7309. Visit www.mochf.org or call 800-227-1488 to learn more about the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation.

Thanks to an article in "Rural Missouri" provided by Gascoage Electric we were able to print the updated information on the trail.



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