

The BRIDGE

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (RBMSP)

A membership 501 (c)(3) organized to promote understanding, appreciation, enjoyment & preservation of RBMSP & the surrounding area
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From the Friends of Rock Bridge MSP (FoRB) News - from the FoRB President, Jan Weaver

Spring is when our state representatives meet to legislate and this session Representative Larry Wilson has introduced House Bill 250 (HB 250) which allows horse and mule riding on any state land except where conditions are unsuitable for public safety or maintenance issues. If HB 250 passes, horseback riding would be permitted everywhere in the park (not just the Gans Wild Area) unless it could be shown to be unsuitable for safety or maintenance reasons (so park staff would have to spend time and money making a case against riding on each of the trails in the rest of the park).

While allowing horses and mules on all state lands might seem like a good way to expand opportunities to ride, horses and mules do not mix well with trail bikes, could be alarming to families with small children, and in numbers are quite hard on trails, nearby plant communities and wildlife. So allowing riding everywhere on state land will interfere with other citizens' recreation and with preservation of natural landscapes. Since our state park system is funded by a 1/20 of a cent sales tax that is renewed every ten years, it is dependent on citizens using and enjoying parks. By interfering with that use and enjoyment (which might only take one negative encounter with one irresponsible rider), horse and mule riders might significantly undercut the current high level of support.

Missouri enjoys a multi-use park system, but that does not mean that everyone should be able to use every park resource anyway they like. Because some uses seriously conflict with other uses, the best management strategy is to identify the highest use (including preservation) for each area and keep conflicting uses separate.

It does not appear that HB 250 will get out of committee this year. However, it did have nearly 20 sponsors, so it is quite likely to show up in future years. Now is the time to let your representative know how you feel about horse and mule riding anywhere on state land. Visit <http://www.house.mo.gov/> for a list of house members and a description of the bill.

Nature Notes by Roxie Campbell

Not only do our spring wildflowers have a great variety of colors and shapes of flowers and leaves, they also possess a variety of chemicals with different characteristics. Historically, some have served as medicines, such as digitalis that helped heart rhythm (now it's made synthetically). The woodland wildflowers found within a few feet of one another on the hillside just past the footbridge illustrate this variety. Bloodroot (white flower) contains chemicals that the Native Americans used as a dye. Toothwort (small white flower) has a root that tastes peppery, similar to horseradish. Meanwhile, those who have tasted the root of Bellwort (twisted yellow flower) have found it to be bitter. The root of Jack-in-the-Pulpit (canopy over a spike, green and purple striped) contains calcium oxalate that causes a prickly/burning pain in the mouth when eaten raw. Native Americans discovered that when dried, it is edible with a cocoa-like flavor. Keep in mind that state law prohibits digging or collecting plants in any Missouri State Park. Usually, you can count on seeing bloodroot in bloom early-mid April, the others mid-late April. To learn more, attend wildflowers walks advertised elsewhere in this newsletter.

FoRB Membership

Thank you to these FoRB members who have recently renewed!

Hazel Breitenbach, Anita and David Cox, Eleanor Mitter and Rob Hill, John Larkin & Maggie Kirby, Mr. & Mrs. Forrest Leighton, and Rosemary & Leon Stevens

FoRB values the support of its members and offers the following reminder to those whose membership has not yet been renewed:

Jack B. Beckett, Lina and Harry Berrier, Nancy Boon, Dee Dokken, Mark Morgan, Jim Rathert, Pat and Phil Sachs, Ginger and Otis V. Wheeler, Tom Bass, Joan and Don Bay, Jeannette and Jerry French, Cay Goodman & Peter Holmes, Sheila & Robert Bailey, Jeanne & Vernon Barr, Cathy Richter & John Besser, Ava Fajen & J. Scott Christianson, Dona Sue Cool, Sandra Hild, Lynn & Scott Schulte, Marcia Walker

From Rock Bridge Memorial State Park News - from the Park Superintendent, Jim Gast

Plans are underway to construct a major reroute of the Deer Run trail. The proposed route has been approved by the division's trail coordinator. We received our cultural resources clearance and are now waiting the natural resources clearance. Once received, we will begin construction in several stages. The trail will be moved away from the park boundary, and we will get rid of the steep hills that have had erosion problems. In an earlier column I mentioned Chris Miller's Eagle Scout project that placed a bulletin board and a bench in the Grassland area. I neglected to mention a second bench on the white connector trail.

We completed all of our prescribed burns for the season. We burned parcels in the Karst, High Ridge and Grassland sections of the park as well as in the Gans Creek Wild Area.

The park will not have a deer hunt this year.

Trails to Explore by Roxie Campbell

A variety of spring wildflowers can be seen by taking a short walk on the Springbrook Trail. A sign to the right of the kiosk at Devil's Icebox parking lot shows you where to start. The trail is fairly flat as it parallels a creek. A footbridge takes you across the creek to a hillside that grows the wildflowers described in Nature Notes. Either return the way you came (round trip of about 3/4 mile) or go up the hill, take a left and another left at the junction to walk of loop of about 1.5 miles.

Opportunities (Volunteer and Educational)

Volunteer Training and Public Programs.

In an effort to generate more volunteers while making the public aware of park issues, several public programs (PP) will double as volunteer training (VT) this spring. Some also include service project (SP) opportunities.

(PP, VT, SP) Chasing the Beautiful Butterfly Saturday, April 4, 2009

Program/Training: 2-4 p.m.; Butterfly Survey 2-4 p.m.

(PP, SP) Treasure Hunting with a Twist: Saturday, April 11, 2009

Program and Service Opportunity: noon - 4:30 p.m.

(PP) International Night Sky: Tuesday, April 21, 2009 6:30-8:30 p.m.

(PP) Where the Wildflowers Grow: Saturday, April 25, 2009 1-4 p.m.

Wildflower Walks are BACK: Every Wed. in April, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., meet at Devil's Icebox Parking Lot, do not need to make reservations. Led by volunteer Randal Clark.

Where the Wildflowers Grow, hike in the Gans Creek Wild Area, led by Roxie Campbell. Sat. April 25, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., Call 449-7400 to make reservations.

Visit us on the WEB at: <http://rockbridge.missouri.org/>

Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is managed by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks, and is funded by primarily by the Parks-and-Soils Sales Tax. It is located at 5901 S. Highway 163, Columbia, MO 65203. Information about the park is at www.mostateparks.com and the park may be contacted by email at rock.bridge.memorial.state.park@dnr.mo.gov or phone at 573-449-7400



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\$15 Special (park staff/vol, student, sr.)

\$20 Individual \$35 Family

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