

The BRIDGE

Volume 25: Issue 4 April 2012

The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park

News from the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (FoRB)

Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is a membership supported 501 (c)(3) organized to promote understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and preservation of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and the surrounding area. email: weaverjc@missouri.edu, address: FoRB, P.O. Box 7642, Columbia MO 65205-7642 website: <http://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>

President's Letter - Kevin Roberson: Stoerker Memorial and Park Clean-up

Greetings Friends! What a beautiful early summer we have been having in late winter. I say "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth and don't plant your tomatoes yet.

There has been much planning going on to get ready for the unveiling of the memorial plaque to Lew Stoerker. This activity will take place at 1:00 pm on Saturday April 14, 2012 at the Devil's Icebox parking lot. Please plan to make time to come down and join with us in recognizing the man that made this park possible. This will be a good time to meet board members and also to get to meet and speak with local and state dignitaries. There will be soft drinks and snacks afterward at the Mill's shelter just South of the parking lot.

Another April activity that I would like to ask for your support on is the Rockbridge State Park highway trash pick-up day. We do this twice a year and this month we will meet at 9:00am on Saturday April 7, 2012. We provide gloves, safety vests, bags, and some refreshments and good company.

In closing, I want to ask you to go to the park and enjoy all that it has to offer and take some time this month to also come to one of our activities and meet some kindred spirits. I look forward to meeting you and your friends along the trails and in the Park.

Happy hiking, Kevin Roberson, kwrcdr@aol.com

FRIENDS BOARD MEETING: Monday April 16, 6:30 pm, at the Park Office, 5901 S Hwy 163

FRIENDS PROGRAM – Park Clean-up, Saturday April 7, 9:00 am, meet at the Park Office

SPECIAL EVENT – Stoerker Memorial Dedication, Saturday April 14, 1:00 pm, Devil's Ice Box

2011-2012 Officers and Directors

2011 - 2012 Officers: President: Kevin Roberson; V.P.: Jeffrey Friel, Treasurer: Jan Weaver, Secretary: Brennan Van Matre

2010 - 2012 Directors: Bill Hobbs, Sue Tillema

2011 - 2013 Directors: Scott Schulte

Park Events in March and April

- April 5 - Bats of Devil's Icebox Cave and the World - 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm, **Columbia Public Library** - <http://mostateparks.com/event/59440/bats-devils-icebox-cave-and-world>
- April 14 - Lew Stoerker Boulder Dedication - 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, Columbia, Mr. Stoerker was instrumental in setting up the park - <http://mostateparks.com/event/59434/lew-stoerker-boulder-dedication>

Events in the Columbia Area

- April 14 - Clean-Up Columbia Day - <https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/WebForms/form.php?formid=23>
- April 18 - What You Can Do for Missouri Bird Conservation, Edge Wade, Veteran Birder - 7:00 pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, 2615 Shepard Boulevard, Columbia - <http://columbia-audubon.org/meetings.php#5>
- April 22 - Columbia Area Earth Day Festival - Noon to 5:00 pm Kids' Area, Noon to 6:00 pm Street Fair, Noon to 7:00 pm, Peace Park Stage - <http://columbiaearthday.org/>
- April 24 - Lecture by Rob Cahill: Community Cloud Forest Conservation - Missouri United Methodist Church, Columbia

News from Rock Bridge Memorial State Park

Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is managed by the Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State Parks, and is primarily funded by 1/2 of 1/10 of a per cent State Parks-and-Soils Sales Tax. It is located at 5901 S. Highway 163, Columbia, MO 65203. phone: 573-449-7400; Website: <http://www.mostateparks.com/rockbridge.htm>, email: rock.bridge.memorial.state.park@dnr.mo.gov

Park News - Jim Gast, Park Superintendent: Wildflowers, Butterflies, Caves, T-shirts, and Memories

WOW! Spring has sprung. The park is alive in color and it's early this year. Now is a good time to visit the park. Randal Clark's weekly wildflower walks began on March 28th and continue through the middle of May. (Meet at the kiosk in the Devil's Icebox parking lot at 5:30 PM.)

Butterflies such as Zebra Swallowtails and several of the sulfurs are already flying around. The red buds and wild plums are in bloom. The birds are singing, calling and building nests. The grass needs to be mowed!!

Connor's Cave will open to school groups on park-led programs beginning April 15th. It will open to the general public on May 15th. We will not have a spring season of Wild Cave Tours of the Devil's Icebox again this year. All of these are in response to White-nose Syndrome (WNS), a fungus that is killing bat species. WNS appeared in Alabama over the winter. It has now been found in 21 states and Canadian provinces. *Geomyces destructans* the fungus that causes WNS has been found in 3 other states. For more information, go to <http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/resources/map>.

We are now selling Rock Bridge T-shirts in the park store. The T-shirt has a photo of the Rock Bridge on the front. Colors are kiwi and yellow. The price is \$12.99 plus tax.

Be sure to attend the Lew Stoerker memorial boulder dedication ceremony on April 14th beginning at 1:00 PM. The boulder is just south of the Devil's Icebox (lower) parking lot.

Park Natural History–Roxie Campbell: Fire and Wildlife

Wildlife are adept at escaping fires, despite what Smokey Bear propaganda may have etched into our minds. After we conduct prescribed burns in the park, we walk around and only rarely see a dead animal. During burns, it's not unusual to see a rabbit or small rodent run out of the burn unit. Larger animals can also easily run away but probably leave before the burn begins when the burn crew arrives. For example, when driving the burn line in the ATV before the Grassland burn, I saw a wild turkey, but no one saw it later as we did the burn.

Obviously, birds can fly away. Some small animals get into the soil to avoid harm as the heat of the fire rises above. Turtles are dug down for the winter and voles (which resemble mice) retreat to their homes in the ground. Frogs even continued to call as fire burned around their ponds. Hawks are attracted to burns because of the small rodents who no longer have the tall grass for cover. It's interesting to think about how the hawks know that smoke seen from a distance means lunch!

Recent research found that red bats which hibernate down in tree leaves are awakened very quickly at the first whiff of smoke and fly away before the fire reaches them - amazing considering that hibernation is a lot more than a state of deep sleep. It's clear that red bats are adapted to fire, which should come as no surprise since fire has been occurring here for many hundreds of years, if not thousands.

There are sometimes casualties, such as a prairie king snake found after the Grassland burn. Reptiles are normally safe in their winter dens, but if burns are done in spring, they sometimes are harmed.

We try to conduct burns before spring for this reason and were able to accomplish 3 of our 4 burns before spring. Even in cases where individuals are killed, it's much better for the habitat and species be maintained (population of prairie king snakes for example), and fire is a necessity for that, than to eliminate fire and see their habitat disappear.

Studies show that most insect eggs are destroyed by fire, but since insects lay such large numbers of eggs, surrounding areas that are not burned are able to repopulate the entire area. The main reason why we leave some of each area (Grassland, Karst, High Ridge, Wild Area) unburned each year is for the sake of insects.

I'd encourage you to hike in the areas we burned. You'll see plants sprouting from the soil and will see wildlife happy as a lark.

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FoRB Membership - To join, Clip and Mail this section with check made out to FoRB, P.O. Box 7642, Columbia MO 65205-7642

\$15 Park Staff/Vol, Student, Senior Name _____
\$20 Individual Address _____
\$35 Family Phone _____ Email _____
\$100 Supporting

FoRB is a 501.c.3 organization. That means your donations to us are tax deductible!

FoRB
P.O. Box 7642
Columbia MO 65205-7642

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President's News: Stoerker Memorial and Park Clean-up

Park News: Wildlife, Caves, T-shirts and Memories

Naturalist News: Fire and Wildlife