

# The Bridge

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

P.O. Box 7642, Columbia MO 65205-7642 <http://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>

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.

Send your submissions to Jim Gast, editor at [FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com)

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Jan Weaver, Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Mark Hahn, Board Members. **The next board meeting is Monday, December 9th, at 6:00 p.m. at the park office.**

## President's Message

### Kevin Roberson, FoRB President

Greetings Friends! It is a contemplative time of year. Too cold and wet to get excited about going outside for work or fun and the holidays are coming with all that means to family and friends and activities. This is also a good time of the year to begin planning for the next year and what we hope to accomplish.

I am thinking about how to make the next two Rock Bridge Renewals even more impactful and supportive of the Park, I am hoping to be elected to the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) board and will co-chair the Natural Resource Committee for Public and Private Lands at the CFM Annual Convention and hopefully present a resolution or two concerning water quality and maybe the mission statement of some of our State Park Employees.

If any of this excites or interests you, drop me a line and we can work on these together. [robersonkw@gmail.com](mailto:robersonkw@gmail.com)

Thanks to all and visit the Park!

In service,

Kevin Roberson

## CoMoGives Campaign Starts December 1<sup>st</sup>

The annual CoMoGives fundraising campaign begins on Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. To donate to FoRB, go to <https://comogives.com/product/friends-of-rock-bridge-memorial-state-park-2/>. FoRB uses CoMoGives as its fundraising mechanism. Money collected during this campaign is used to provide nature programs to low-income children through Nature Detectives and Urban Population Outreach Program (UPOP). Since 2006, over 5000 participants have attended these free programs.



Boys and Girls Club members paint the cave stream as part of UPOP.  
Photo by Bethany Haid. Used by permission.

Donors must donate on-line using a credit card. The minimum donation amount is ten (\$10) dollars. We are trying to get as many donations as possible especially for donors under 35 years old because these two categories are part of the challenge grants. We received \$500 for coming in second place for the "non-profit participating for the first time" challenge last year. Earlier this year, the FoRB board reduced the cost of membership from \$20.00 to \$10.00 and did away with the family membership. We also offer a free membership. The board hopes that the members would make up the difference by donating to the CoMoGives campaign.

The testimonial published in this year giving guide nicely expresses our view on the campaign. "Our 2018 CoMoGives donations were dedicated to getting kids out into nature through two programs. Nature Detectives shows parents and other caregivers how to enjoy nature with their preschoolers. Urban Population Outreach connects

under-served minorities and low-income kids and teens with outdoor experiences like hiking, caving, hunting crawdads, and setting up camp. Our favorite part was thanking all our donors. We got to connect with new folks and reconnect with old friends. Additionally it helped bring our board together to serve a common goal. CoMoGives provided the structure, training and reach to help Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park meet our fundraising goals and grow as an organization.”

Please consider donating to FoRB through the CoMoGives campaign.

## Park News

### Sarah Jones, Park Superintendent

First Day Hikes at Rock Bridge and other Missouri State Parks will be held on January 1, 2020.

In the next couple of weeks, we are going to have a new way to sign up for special events in MO State Parks. Rock Bridge will be taking her maiden voyage with this new technology with the First Day Hikes. Starting December 2, people can sign up for a First Day Hike on the Missouri State Park website ([www.mostateparks.com](http://www.mostateparks.com)). Go to “Make a Reservation.” For now, click on the camping or lodging reservation button, but watch for a button for Rock Bridge that will be appearing soon. Then, click the activities button. Search under Rock Bridge for First Day Hikes. Or you can go straight there by following this link. <https://icamp.m.o1.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx>. If you have not made a reservation with MO State Parks before, you will have to start by setting up your login and profile.

This is going to be a great tool to see what activities are out there in your favorite State Park. On your next camping or lodging visit to a MO State Park, as you sign up for your night/s stay, it will let you know what programs are available at that park. You can sign up right then for that activity or program. As you make your New Year’s plans, we hope to see you at one of the Missouri State Park that is hosting a First Day Hike. Happy Trails.

## Upcoming Events

### First Day Hikes, Wednesday, January 1, 2020

Reservations are required for all of these hikes. ***Although we will be asking people to sign up through the link mentioned in the article above on the state park website this year, they can***

***still call the park at 573-449-7400 and we’ll sign them up.*** They will receive a confirmation email with details including driving directions to the meeting location and how to find out if the hike is canceled due to inclement weather. Footwear should be sturdy.

### Streams and Wildlife on the Deer Run Trail

**12:30-3:30 p.m. 3.75 miles, strenuous**

Enjoy the rolling wooded terrain and walk alongside Little Bonne Femme Creek for about .5 mile. Watch for wildlife and learn about streams and aquatic animals. Not recommended for children four and under unless carried by an adult. Prefer no dogs. Not stroller accessible.

### Canyon, Caves and History in the Gans Creek Wild Area 12:30-3:30 p.m. 2 miles, strenuous

Enjoy the challenge of rugged terrain to get to a shelter cave on a hillside and to go up a steep dry rocky creek valley known as “the Canyon.” Part of this hike will be off-trail, the other part will be on trails, some of which are on bluffs that overlook Gans Creek. See ruins of the Reyburn homestead of circa 1811 and learn about what life was like back then on family farms. Have the option to visit another little cave if the creek isn’t up. Limited to those of ages 8 and up. No dogs. Not stroller accessible.



A First Day Hike participant in the Gans Creek Wild Area.  
Photo by Jim Gast. Used by permission.

### History and Caves on the Sinkhole and Devil's Icebox Trails 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-2:30 p.m. 1.5 miles, moderate

A guide will show you hidden historic features and share about the history of Rockbridge Mills in the 1800s. Also, see Devil's Icebox and the Rock Bridge. If the water level is low, you will have the option to enter the opening of Connor's Cave and go inside the Rock Bridge. Learn about caves. Not recommended for children four and under unless carried by an adult. Prefer no dogs. Not stroller accessible.

## **Bird Watching on the Grassland Trail**

**2:30-4:30 p.m.\* 2 miles, moderate**

Join Columbia Audubon Society members to look for sparrows, raptors and other flora and fauna of interest while walking through the mixed grassland, shrub, and forest-edge habitats. \*Those who wish to, can linger near the parking lot from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m. to watch and listen for a last pulse of daytime bird activity and possible evening birds like owls. Watch the sun set over the sea of grass around 4:47 p.m.. If the parking lot is full, vehicles may be parked on the edge of the wide gravel road on the Grassland side of the road. Limited to those of ages 8 and up. No dogs please. Not stroller accessible.



A bluff at the I-70 bridge on the Katy Trail near Rocheport.  
Photo by Jim Gast. Used by permission.

## **Katy Trail at Rocheport 10:30 a.m. to noon 3 miles flat, strenuous**

We will start at the Katy Trail trailhead in Rocheport and go out 1.5 miles, turn around and come back. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcomed and encouraged to attend. It is stroller accessible.

## **Naturalist News**

### **Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**

On November 16th, we held a training day for 21 Devil's Icebox Cave Institute members which included walking to the entrance to Polly's Pot Cave. I shared with them a story that came to us through an oral history interview with Ron Kucera. In the 1960's, Ron and his friends Steve Clark and Peter Pauw were rescued from Polly's Pot Cave. I'll summarize the story using some quotes from Ron.

The entrance is a vertical shaft about 36 ft. straight down which requires one to rappel in and out of. Ron said, "We got in the cave, did the exploration,

then we're at the bottom of the climb back out. Steve was the only one who had practiced prusiking in his backyard. He put the little nylon ropes on to make the prusik slings, exactly like the little knot manual told him how to do, which he had done in his backyard..." but it didn't work when they wanted to climb out of the pit. "Steve made the mistake of buying the soft nylon."

"The sky got totally dark, and there were a few stars going overhead occasionally. We realized that our parents probably wondered why you're not there for dinner. ... We just figured that somebody responsible... they'd end up probably coming to rescue us.

The boys' fathers went looking for them and found Ron's car parked in the Rock Bridge area. They assumed that the boys had gone into the Devil's Icebox Cave. An announcement went out on TV and "dozens of cars" of people came and went into Devil's Icebox Cave to search for the boys. While the cavers searched, the boys' fathers talked with the landowner who told them the boys were in Polly's Pot Cave (the boys had asked permission). After coming to the opening of Polly's Pot, Ron's father asked him what he was doing down there. Ron thought that was a silly question. After the three fathers tied knots along the length of the rope, despite being cold, the boys were able to climb out of the cave. They had been stuck in Polly's Pot for about 8 hours.

Ron says that he was not worried, but was "mortified" and embarrassed. Ron said, "There were still rescuers deep in Devil's Icebox, who were probably there for hours and hours later after midnight, fulfilling their obligations to check all the side passages. So these poor rescuers who were sent in there, their job was to keep going on their assigned passages until they burned them out and either they found us or didn't find us. It was a big story; 'kids trapped in a cave' is always a big story; it did seem to be in every newspaper in the state. It just increased our interest in caving overall."

*You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram.*



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