

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.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Jan Weaver, Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Mark Hahn, Board Members.

President's Message

Kevin Roberson

Dear Friends of Rock Bridge,

I hope that you and your family are well. These are strange times that we live in and they are likely to get even stranger. Depending on which Cable Channel you tune into, this is either the biggest health crisis that has hit the world since the Black Plague, or it is big government over-reach to try and change the new world order (old world order). Whichever side that you are on, I hope that you are not 100% positive and are trying to understand what the best thing to do is. One thing that I do know is getting outside is good for all. I have been to the Park several times and I have heard reports that the trails are getting good use. Spring is a wonderful time to be out and I know it seems that each time I get out I see something new or changed or further evolved in the nature world.

Try and get out and see what you can see. I, for one, am still getting out and enjoying the pre-chigger season to check out the Spring flowers, in between the Spring showers. I have seen two turkeys, a Summer Tanager, Eastern Towhee in the last week and have heard a Blue Jay mimicking a Red-shouldered Hawk. Enjoy and I look forward to seeing you all in person in the near future.

Yours in Service to Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Flora and Fauna Observations and Invasive Plant Control

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

During the last month with school group programs canceled due to coronavirus, we have had more time than usual to focus on invasive plant control. A bonus and an important benefit is that getting out into the park enables us to observe flora and fauna. Those observations are recorded to help document all of the precious life forms that call the park home. Also, sometimes we get photos and share them with a little information in the park's "Nature Quest" Facebook posts.



Marsh buttercup in bloom on 4-15-20. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

I always enjoy the woodland spring wildflowers, but have been really impressed with how abundant they are and noted them in parts of the park that I didn't usually visit in spring. Bird sightings included a Louisiana Waterthrush and a Green Heron along Clear Creek, a pair of

Pileated Woodpeckers overhead, a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers flitting around in the trees, an Eastern Phoebe catching insects and the song of an Eastern Meadowlark in the Grassland area. In May, I encourage you to visit woodlands and listen for the beautiful songs of migrating warblers.

Frogs and toads have loved the wet weather we had for much of our spring. Snakes are enjoying the warmer days. An Eastern Hog-nosed snake, a big one, spread its neck and hissed to try to scare me away. They are very docile and won't bite. Even if handled, they will roll over and play dead. A long Black Rat snake was seen in the Karst area. Mammal holes and scat have been seen.

Meanwhile, we have also accomplished a lot of invasive plant control. The "we" has included full-time Missouri State Park staff who normally work in offices in Jefferson City, but couldn't due to the coronavirus, so they came here to work outdoors by themselves. One person removed over 600 bush honeysuckle plants in just one day! We have pulled enough garlic mustard to fill fifteen 13 gallon bags! Some develop later than others, so it requires more than one visit to catch them all. Spring is the time to control garlic mustard

before they drop seed. We have sprayed multi-rooted patches of winter creeper while the new leaves will absorb the herbicide so it was good to have the ability to work on it at the proper time. We're really making a difference in protecting the park and welcome more volunteers to join the effort. . . and see native flora and fauna while you are out there.

Interpretive Opportunities During COVID-19 at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park

Devil's Icebox Trail, half-mile signed one-way, has several interpretive panels that explain caves and cave life and opportunities to do some self-led cave exploration. Wildflowers are signed along 1/3 mile of the Spring Brook Trail and short videos about these native wildflowers are available on the park's Facebook page. The park's Facebook page also provides "Nature Quest" which features photos and information about flora and fauna in the park and "Stay at Home Adventures" of things kids can do in their yard to discover nature. People can learn about invasive plants by looking at signed plants behind the park office and requesting information via email.