

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

Greeting fellow tree-huggers! Love your Mother, nature that is. I think that we have finally squeezed the life out of Old Man Summer and are going to see actual fall weather this week. What a perfect time to get out and see the Park. There are mushrooms galore, snakes are migrating and nut trees are dropping their produce. Last week on one two mile hike I saw a juvenile blue racer, a juvenile speckled king snake, and a DeKay's brown snake. I have seen bucks marking their territory with their pre-orbital glands on a young black locust branch.

Long story short, get out there. The weather is good, the trails are good and many, and the air is free. Be sure to thank (at least mentally) the Park staff for all they do and their strong, unwavering management of our Park resources. Sarah, our Park Superintendent, has obviously learned how to make Rock Soup while she was in Arkansas and our Naturalist, Roxie, has risen to new heights in making the most with minimal resources and volunteers.

As I said, get out and enjoy. Help where you can, do no harm, and leave no trace.

Yours in service,

Kevin Roberson



A maple tree in front of the park office is changing colors. Photo by Sarah Jones. Used by permission.

Park News

Sarah Jones, Park Superintendent

I can't believe it is fall already. It seemed just a day or two ago it was spring and we were working to find ways to juggle an influx of visitors and trying to keep everyone safe. Just like the Garden Spider, we were able to organize our team and make things happen. I am so grateful to our State Park Team of staff and volunteers for hanging in there and keeping the park open for everyone to enjoy. It was an amazing summer with an 48% increase in visitation. A big shout out to them for a GREAT JOB! If you see a staff member or park volunteer, please let them know how much you appreciate them. They have really worked hard.

We are enjoying the cool weather and I'm sure all of you are too. We have seen a re-uptick in visitation from this summer during the cooler weekends. Everyone is taking an advantage and looking for the fall colors. The maple in front of the office is starting to show her colors. I encourage each and every one of you to get outside and enjoy the colors fall brings to the area. We would love to see your pictures of the park. Please email me your favorite picture and description of where and who took it and I will post it on the Park's Facebook Page.

Happy Trails!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

We continue to find ways to adjust to protect against COVID-19 while still accomplishing tasks that we think are important here at the park. September is our primary month of the year available for research trips into Devil's Icebox

Cave. We've been able to conduct several trips by limiting the number of people to six per trip, by conducting social distancing and by having each person use a solo canoe. Roughly half (15) of the Devil's Icebox Cave Institute members have participated this month. They continued the training that they began in August, 2019.

Frankly, just being in the cave environment again was greatly enjoyed and highly savored especially in this COVID-19 season. It was good to see that the cave hasn't changed (well just a little). The cave is quiet, offers adventure and displays beautiful stalactites. Missouri State Park Director Mike Sutherland and Deputy Regional Director Melanie Robinson-Smith went into the cave on September 26th. Those of us who have been around awhile provided training information and leadership opportunities for those fairly new to the cave.

Animal sightings included: an estimated 1,170 gray bats, five pink planarians including two that

appeared to be mating, four small-mouth salamanders, three monorail worms, 25 pickerel frogs and about the usual numbers of isopods, amphipods and snails. Water samples were collected. Cave mapping was done for small side passages in the first part of the cave. Parts of the cave visited included The Belfry, Chocolate-Vanilla Room, The Waterfall, The Crossarms, Polly's Pot Siphon and the Rollercoaster to Hollow Dome.



The color of this pink planarian is a shade of orange. Notice the feeding spot in the center used to suck the juice from invertebrates such as the isopod located close-by to the left. This rock, like many in the cave, has a black mineral coating of manganese oxide. Photo taken by Pablo Islas. Used by permission.