

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 FoRB members,

I send greetings and salutations to all. During this long slog through the COVID 19 morass, there have been many strong reminders of the positive things in our lives: The country has completed a national election and has started the formal transfer of power with none of the feared-of violence that a few predicted; late summer has slipped into fall without a bit of notice from Mother Nature that anything was different; the holidays are upon us and we shared Thanksgiving with family, many of us over Zoom for the first and hopefully the last time; Boone County has finally issued a mask mandate to help preserve the health of all and lastly it looks like the Covid vaccines are safe and efficacious.

Through all of this, the FoRB Board has kept meeting and have kept dreaming of how we can make the Park better, allow a visit to the Park to be more fulfilling for our visitors, and how we may best support the Park and its staff. We are hoping to select a new board member and that is as exciting as the upcoming CoMoGives campaign starting on Giving Tuesday, December 1st.

2020 has been rough, but I believe that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Keep positive and keep on visiting the Park. See you on a trail!

Yours in conservation,

Kevin



ComoGives Campaign starts December 1st

Jan Weaver

CoMoGives is an online fundraiser that supports over 140 high-impact nonprofits in Columbia and central Missouri. FoRB is participating for its third year in a row.

Since 2006, over 5,500 children, youth, and adults have attended FoRB's free Urban Population Outreach Program (UPOP, also funded by the Missouri Parks Association) and Nature Detectives. In UPOP, low income youth learn outdoor skills so they can help their families enjoy the park. In Nature Detectives, preschoolers learn to explore the park with their caregivers. Because of the pandemic this year, we were only able to provide a fraction of our regular programming.

However, a crisis is also an opportunity, so we are using some of the funds raised last year to create a Virtual Nature Center featuring places in the park. We are also updating the Devil's Icebox Trail Guide. Next summer we hope to be back at full speed with all our programs. That's why we hope you will donate to this year's CoMo Gives.



Participants in the UPOP program learn about nature. Photos by Bethany Haid.

CoMoGives opens Tuesday, December 1, 2020, and ends on December 31st. To make a donation, visit

<https://comogives.com/product/friends-of-rock-bridge-memorial-state-park-3/>

Photo on left taken from Catholic Charities of Central Missouri Immigration and Refugee Services Facebook Page

Park News

Sarah Jones, Park Superintendent

Fall is here! We have been taking advantage of the wonderful weather to prep fire lines for prescribe burns in the park. This past month with help from volunteers Kevin Roberson and Gerald Meyr; and staff Rob Trivette, Lane Beverlin, and myself; Park Naturalist Roxie Campbell was able to get the fire lines ready in the Karst Area - West and High Ridge Area.

On Tuesday, Nov 17th, the weather and winds cooperated and we were able to burn the grassland portion of the Karst Area. Thanks to ten Park Staff and Volunteers (all social distancing), the burn went well and in just a couple hours we were able to have the burn completed.



Park Superintendent Sarah Jones with a drip torch. Photo by Roxie Campbell.

I'm always amazed of how the Red-tail Hawks and other birds of prey come flocking in at the first signs of smoke. I saw a Red-tail Hawk catch its dinner even before the burn was over. I'm sure this morning the turkeys were out in the burned area getting a good breakfast as well. I'm looking forward to seeing the area in the spring with all the native grasses and forbs coming up and thriving because of the burn.

It's an amazing process that out of destruction brought on by fire so many good things come from it. I am very "Thankful" we have this tool available to help the natural ecology of the park. Next time you are in the park, take a hike on the Karst Trail and check out the treasures the fire uncovered.

Happy Trails!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

The weather during burn season for the last two years has not been favorable to doing burns, so it had been four years since this part of the Karst area had been burned, two years later than intended. So, we worked hard to have it ready as soon as possible and were pleased that we were able to burn it on November 17th. Fire provides many benefits such as control of "woodies" (unwanted trees) which is essential to maintaining it as prairie and allowing sunlight to reach the basal leaves of wildflowers during winter which gives them an advantage in the next growing season.



The prairie remnant (survived through the years, not planted) shown here received the medicine of fire on November 17, 2020. It is located only about one mile southwest of the south end of "Two Mile Prairie", a 20 mile long, two mile wide tall-grass prairie that was documented by early settlers. Photo by Roxie Campbell

Wildlife benefit because the habitat they depend upon is available (prairie rather than growing up in trees and brush). They are adapted to fire and able to fly away, run away or hide in underground burrows to find safe haven during the fire. Even red bats hibernating in tree leaf litter awaken when fire is some distance off; we're not sure whether it is the crackling sound or the smoke that awakens them.

It always amazes me to see so many spider webs appear so quickly after a burn. Two hours later, almost every stem across the acreage has spider webs streaming across, glistening in the sun. Some insect eggs are lost, but eggs from unburned areas easily repopulate burned areas. Park staff attempt to leave some areas unburned nearby. For example, the eastern part of the Karst Trail area was not burned, but we plan to burn it next year.

FoRB
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