

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, Steve Ferguson Board Members.

President's Message

Kevin Roberson

Dear fellow FoRB Members,
Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. We got to see a lot of sun today and near 60 degrees, not bad for the end of December. The wind was blustery and didn't get to see too much wildlife on my stroll. I hope that you all were able to get out and enjoy the Park over the Holiday season.

We have exciting news! Steve Ferguson has joined the board. Steve brings a wealth of relevant, professional and personal experience. Steve has worked at very high level executive and administrative positions, including CIO of Berkley CA, and San Jose, CA. On top of this, Steve is a Master Gardener, a Master Naturalist, and a prodigious volunteer at the Park. I expect that his addition to the Board will strengthen us for years to come. Welcome Steve to this new position and wish him well and much success.

Yours in conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Superintendent's Message

Sarah Jones

It's that time of year where we go in and remove trees that have the potential on falling down on the boardwalk trail, a vehicle, or heaven forbid on a person. The ash trees have been hard hit by the Emerald ash bore beetle. We had three ash trees that fell to them this year in the upper picnic area. We plan to replace them with new trees this spring.

The Devil's Ice Box parking area and trail were also assessed for hazard trees this month. We found over 40 dead trees that needed to be removed for the safety of our visitors and the boardwalk. On the first day of "winter," 18 staff and volunteers came out on a beautiful sunny day to help spot for unexpected visitors, cut down, and clean up hazard trees. This

process is somewhat challenging. When you have dead trees that are surrounded by a lot of other trees and the boardwalk, it's hard to fell them in a good spot. We had a few casualties (the boardwalk) in a couple areas. With no other place for the tree to go, it still landed on the boardwalk even though we were cutting it down. Hence, we were glad these trees came down when we planned without visitors in the landing zone.



Ben Nagy cuts a tree on the boardwalk on December 21st. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

We have a few more areas like the small parking lots to tackle after the holidays. Thankfully we have a couple central office trail folks and the COMOTA volunteers to help us finish up the project. Speaking of being "thankful," I am so grateful for all the volunteers that have come out and helped in whatever capacity this year. Whether it was removing invasive species, working on the trail, mowing, cleaning restrooms, giving a program, answering phones, handy hosting, or helping remove hazard trees; we as park staff could not have done it without everyone's help. A big "THANK YOU" to all!

Happy Holidays and Happy Trails!

Naturalist's News

Roxie Campbell

This year, for the first time, many people enjoyed or discovered the pleasure of getting outdoors. We want to encourage everyone to continue to enjoy their Missouri State Parks as the New Year begins. We at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, are again participating with America's State Parks to promote First Day Hikes on January 1, however, due to COVID-19 we will not be doing them in groups led by a park staff or volunteer. Instead, we are providing self-guiding information. To receive information, email rockbridgememorialstatepark@dnr.mo.gov.

We have self-guiding information for two hikes at Rock Bridge and for one on the Katy Trail at Rocheport. At Rock Bridge, we have information about the park's history that goes with the 1.5 mile Sinkhole Trail and information about caves that goes with the .5 mile Devil's Icebox Trail. Both trails are moderate in difficulty. For each trail, we'll send a map of the numbered stops and instructions for finding your way. The history PDF has photos and information designed to be read at 15 stops along the Sinkhole Trail. A variety of historic topics are covered including Rockbridge Mills of the 1800's (gristmill,

whiskey distillery, road and town), excerpts from Edward Jacobs 1891 diary, farm life of the 1900s, the mansion, log cabins, Native Americans and cave exploration stories. Features to be seen along the trail include the foundation, Ingrum Spring, Polly's Pot Cave, wagon wheel ruts in the limestone, Hog's Graveyard Cave, farm silo and the Rock Bridge.

For Devil's Icebox Trail, people have two options: 1) simply read the five wayside exhibit signs that are located along the trail and/or 2) request by email to receive a PDF that has illustrations and information about geology, how sinkholes work, cave animals such as bats and the pink planarian, Devil's Icebox Cave and history. This is made possible by work FoRB has done in recent weeks, with assistance from park staff, to update the "Devil's Icebox Self-Guiding Trail" booklet developed in the 1980s. The best thing about self-guiding is that you can do it anytime. These materials will continue to be made available. The history hike information will be posted on the park's page at www.mostateparks.com and the Devil's Icebox Trail information is available on FoRB's website: <http://friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/vnc/dib-trail/devils-icebox-trail-guide.html>