

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; Melissa Hutchens Treasurer; Jan Weaver, Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Mark Hahn, Steve Ferguson Board Members.

President's Message

Kevin Roberson

Dear Park Lovers,

How are you all doing? I hope well, we are fine over here. I can't wait till this hot weather is in the past. It is so hard to get anything completed in this heat. We live for hope of better things: better times, better weather, and better management of the land surrounding our Park. Now is the time for the city and county to work together to protect our Park and sensitive areas that surround it. This was called for in the 2015 Columbia Imagined Report and I believe that its time has come.

This is the perfect time to secure these protections into perpetuity: the Park and the Gans Creek Wild Area are under assault again by the resubmission of the Canton Estates proposed development. This is being resubmitted without working with the involved stakeholders and without answering many of the questions asked by the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission.

We can win at this job of protecting our Park (and the surrounding areas) if we can keep involved and focused. I am afraid if we were to drop the ball, this would be approved without much trouble to the developer. Thanks to all of the effort of the Gans Creek Alliance and especially Jan. She has been moving mountains and has made the difference for this struggle, so far.

Keep smiling and I will see you in the Park.

Don't forget to renew your membership at <http://friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/join.html>.

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

Turtles: We are so pleased that all five of the eggs that were laid by the ornate box turtle that was injured back on June 24th have hatched and are alive! They were released in the park on September 19th. We wish them long and healthy lives!



This baby ornate box turtle is checking out his home in the park.
Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission

Vandalism: The park has experienced several acts of vandalism in September that included: damage to the restrooms at the Gilbert picnic shelter, a broken window in the log cabin and three occasions of spray paint applied to the walls of the Rock Bridge and Connor's Cave. Staff fixed the restroom and removed the spray paint. Sarah found a volunteer who plans to replace the window.

Cave: We were able to conduct eight trips into Devil's Icebox Cave in September. The park

provided rapid COVID-19 tests and we had no issues there. Here are some highlights: We noted some changes to the cave including: a slab of rock (5'x4'x1') from the wall slid down at the Belfry passage but did not block the passage. Last year, we had noticed a crack had developed there. Apparently the flood waters of the summer washed away mud and sand in places, left a flood line high in the Big Room and refilled the puddles in the upper walkway. The erosion revealed a trash pit of bulbs and carbide at least 50 years old. Volunteers removed them. We saw at least 850 gray bats in the Water Passage. We were also excited to see one healthy-looking tri-colored bat since they used to be numerous and have been rare since White Nose Syndrome.

The pink planarian project survey (P3) yielded 3 pink planarians and lower than usual numbers of isopods. A few additional pink planarians were

found at other locations on other trips. From the Rollercoaster side passage, we collected specimens that we hope will help experts document a new species of isopod. Also collected for identification were two specimens of a large amphipod that is different than our two familiar species. Anthony Orazio successfully led his first trip and was certified as a trip leader! Members of the Cave Institute received more training and three people new to Devil's Icebox Cave experienced it for the first time. We had a trip for the purpose of taking photos and recording video and audio and have plans to share these beautiful scenes and tranquil sounds with the public. Members of the Missouri Speological Society mapped passages in the Water Passage and Crossarms which had not been mapped previously. We removed data loggers for a researcher who is studying flood waters.