

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, Meredith Donaldson, Board Members.

President's Message

Dear Tree-hugger,

It is a beautiful January day. The sun is shining, it will be near 50 degrees, and the days are noticeably longer. All is right in the world and here is to hoping it keeps that way. I hope that you all are able to get outside today and enjoy the Park.

We have been finalizing our budget for next year, and I am happy to report that because of the carry-over from Covid years and because of the generosity of the COMO public and the generosity of the MO Parks Association, we have budgeted the largest amount ever for our youth education activities. This will be a glorious year for our youth if we are able to dodge another Covid wave.

No big news on the protecting of the Park and other sensitive areas in our work with the City and County. Jan and I are looking into ordinances used in other cities to protect these types of areas. We hope to use this information to help guide the new comprehensive development plan for the city.

Keep smiling and I will see you in the Park.

Yours in conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

On January 26th, four Cave Institute members, two Missouri Department of Conservation staff and one park staff went into Devil's Icebox Cave and surveyed the hibernating bats in the first 1200 meters of main cave passage and in Devil's

Graveyard and the Bat Room. Here are the initial results (they might be refined after careful analysis of photographs): 34 tri-colored bats, 13 big brown bats, 11 little brown bats, 9 gray bats, and 3 unidentified *Myotis* sp. for a total of 70 bats. Two of the little brown bats showed signs of having White Nose Syndrome (WNS). The total number of hibernating bats pales in comparison to similar surveys in years prior to WNS when the total was around 1,500-2,000. However, it is good to see that some are surviving and we hope they are building up a resistance to the disease. These numbers are pretty similar to what we found in 2019, about 6 years after WNS came to our area. The real bright spot is that gray bats seem to be unaffected by WNS, so our summer-time population of gray bats remains good.

FoRB Outreach

Bethany Haid

Editor's Note: Bethany Haid is FoRB's program director and will be writing monthly columns for The Bridge starting with this edition.

Hello! I'm Bethany Douglas Haid. I've been FoRB's Program Director since 2019, and I have a lot of outreach programming planned for 2022. Each month I will contribute to *The Bridge* and share some photos and highlights, but for this month, I will introduce myself and share a little about why I love Rock Bridge Memorial State Park.



My first interactions with the park began as a new science teacher with Columbia Public Schools in 2005. At that time, it was a long standing tradition for all CPS students to learn how to read topographic maps and use a compass to navigate an orienteering course. We took our free-spirited 8th graders into the park, gave them a compass, a map, and said, "See

ya later!" They had a mission to find 10 of the candy-cane striped orienteering markers scattered through the terrain, but came away learning much more. These small groups of students had a whole day outdoors with a low level of supervision. Most of them had never been off of a trail or enjoyed this level of risk-taking. They returned to school covered in mud, laughing, and with a pleasant memory of our park.

Several years later, I had children of my own. I returned to the park for casual hikes and learned about Nature Detectives, the program for preschoolers and their parents. Our kids looked forward to doing the crafts and songs with Ms. Meredith (Donaldson). They connected with the park, so much so that it has become part of our family rhythm to return to the stream to catch crawdads each summer and play crack the ice in the winter, to listen for spring peepers and the echoes inside Connor's Cave, and to examine rocks under the natural bridge for evidence of bats. The photo above is of me and my five kids on the day last fall that they taught our toddler to catch frogs.

Its my wish for more families and community groups to enjoy Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and to experience a connection with this place. 2022 outreach programs seek to color childhood with the wonder of nature.

SNOWFLAKES by David McCord

Sometime this winter if you go
To walk in soft new-falling snow
When flakes are big and come down slow

To settle on your sleeves as bright
As stars that couldn't wait for night
You won't know what you have in sight -

Another world - unless you bring
A magnifying glass. This thing
We call a snowflake is the king

Of crystals. Do you like surprise?
Examine him three times his size:
At first you won't believe your eyes.
Stars look alike, but flakes do not;
No two the same in all the lot
That you will get in any spot

You chance to be, for everyone
Come spinning through the sky has none
But his own window-wings of sun:

Joints, points, and crosses. What could make
Such lacework with no crack or break?
In billions, no mistake?