

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

Greetings fellow Friends of Rock Bridge. I hope that this missive finds you happy and healthy. I have been doing well and I am definitely ready for some warmer weather and a little less rain. We have needed the rain, but we must get into the gardens and all that. The frogs and the woodcock have been calling in the evenings and the Red-shouldered hawks have been setting up their territory for the year with their loud, "Keeya, Keeya!" I hope that some year I will find their nest, but I haven't yet. My next walk in the woods will be to look for shed antlers and mushrooms. We should get to push-out some Oysters if it gets warm enough.

We potentially have a Rock Bridge Renew set up for Saturday, April 9, 2022. We will let you know for sure soon. Speaking of that, there are always many ways to help the park. If you have time or money, just let us know and we will get you in touch with the right staff member.

We have been scrambling to fill the large shoes of one of our most active board members, Jan Weaver, PhD. She is moving to Iowa in May, and will be truly missed. She has been the glue that has held us together for many years. We are committed to do the good work that she and others have done here and we have brought on new Board members and redistributed the tasks to carry on in her absence.

Get out and enjoy, if you are able. See you in the Park!

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

After a long haul of preparing firelines and waiting for winter weather to end, we were finally able to burn off two units, thanks to an assemblage of staff and volunteers. These prescribed fires are good medicine for our native plants which in turn provide for wildlife. Grassland habitat is needed by several species of birds that are in decline as well as for insects, mammals, and reptiles. Fire prevents trees from getting large and taking all of the sunlight from grassland plants beneath them and also removes thatch allowing sunlight to reach the ground where prairie plants are ready to grow from their roots as they do each spring. Fire also helps control invasive plants.

On March 3rd, we burned about 64 acres in the middle of the Grassland Trail area. On March 10th, we burned about 65 acres in the eastern part of the Karst Trail area. We hope to burn two additional units this spring: the eastern part of Grassland and the High Ridge Trail area. Early summer would be a great time to hike these areas to see the new growth of warm-season grasses and prairie wildflowers.

Volunteers are Active: Park volunteers surveyed for the American woodcock and reported six in the Grassland area on March 14th and seven in the High Ridge area on March 19th. These birds have a neat courtship display that they do in our area; then most migrate further north.

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Volunteers who coordinate with other volunteers geared up for doing frog and toad surveys and butterfly surveys and held two meetings to introduce volunteers to opportunities at the park. Thank you! If you want to volunteer, call the park office at 573-449-7400.

Upcoming Park Events

Water Monitoring Blitz: Saturday, April 9th, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Be a member of a small team led by an experienced Stream Team volunteer and monitor a section of stream in the park by catching aquatic animals and conducting chemical tests of the water quality as part of an ongoing citizen science project. Please sign up in advance to help us form teams. Sign up at <https://forms.gle/L4H7iFymPvy4wCno9> or by calling 573-886-4330. A free sack lunch will be provided afterward for those who helped. This stream monitoring blitz is held each spring and fall and is co-sponsored by Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, Boone County Stormwater Management and Missouri Stream Teams.

Rock Bridge Renew: Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 9th. More detail will come in an email.

Informational Meeting

Saturday, April 23rd from 9:00-9:30 a.m. Meet at the kiosk/table area next to Devil's Icebox parking lot. Staff will present news about the park, and attendees can ask questions and give suggestions.

An optional **wildflower walk** will follow the informational meeting from 9:30-11:00 a.m. on the Spring Brook Trail. Call 573-449-7400 to reserve your spot. Space is limited.

Water Festival

Saturday, July 16th, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Devil's Icebox parking lot area. Registration not needed.