

The Bridge

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (FoRB)

Send your submissions to Jim Gast, editor at FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com.

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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.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Melissa Hutchens Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Steve Ferguson, Meredith Donaldson, Robin Rotman, Board Members.

President's Column

Dear FoRB Members,

Welcome to the Dog Days of Summer! I am enjoying this brief intermission of semi-bearable weather with the highs in the mid-80s today and yesterday, before we plunge back to the mid to upper 90s again. I truly don't understand how we were able to survive in Missouri before the age of air conditioning, even though I can remember that time.

This time of year reminds me of what we did in the Ozarks when it was this warm, we went to the nearest spring branch and "creek-sat". Usually with cheap folding chairs, a cool drink of soda and a book to read. As I learn more about our past park community, I find that they did much the same. During the intense heat of Summer, all of the locals would go to the Rock Bridge and sit near the cool spring branch. The water and the air flowing from the cave were their natural air conditioning. I appreciate the work that Steve, Roxie, Jan, and others have done to make this information available to the public and bring the time period alive to the present-day Park lovers.

Just as the Rock Bridge spring branch was an attraction for the local community, the rest of our Park is an attraction for native wildlife. With this reservoir in the neighborhood, we are the lucky recipients of a multitude of birds and mammals, year-round. This goes from the woodcock attracting mates and the Cardinals setting up territory in the early spring to the deer mating in the fall and all things in-between like bobcats' hunting and an occasional otter crossing from one waterway to another.

Please remember that your support of FoRB and our support of the Park helps to make our community better and stronger in many ways.

Happy Summer to you all and I hope to see you in the Park!

Kevin Roberson

Superintendent News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

We've had a busy July here at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. I'm continuing to learn the ins and outs of all of the administrative duties needed to keep this park running. There has been less graffiti, but, unfortunately, there have been a few vehicle break-ins. One, I rolled up on at the Gans Creek trailhead just shortly after it had happened. There wasn't much we could do to help this poor person other than file a report with the rangers and advise them to cancel all of their cards as soon as possible. This happened on a Sunday at around 3:00 in the afternoon. My advice is to empty your vehicles of anything valuable. Take your valuables with you when you hike and don't give thieves any reason to break your window. We are working on tracking these individuals down, but it seems to be happening all over Columbia.

I helped Roxie out at the Water Festival (*See the next article*). All I can say is I was happy to get into Connor's Cave to lead a few tours and get out of the heat!

I've had several meetings on Katy Trail projects and I'm anxious to get our full maintenance crew, as well as all of our trucks, healthy and ready for a busy fall riding season.



Young racers enter the main part of the race loop after a short paved loop to thin out the field. Photo by Nate Smith. Used by permission.



Podium for the 12 and under kids race. They sure seemed to have fun, even in the heat! Photo by Nate Smith. Used by permission.

July was an extremely hot and dry month which has meant that the trails have been getting well used. The COMOTA folks have been busy trimming vegetation to prepare for the Show Me State Games mountain bike race that happened on Sunday, July 24th. We had about 80 competitors ride their hardest in the hot and humid conditions. I was especially excited to see a large number of younger riders competing which makes me hopeful for the future of the sport. I always try to educate them on proper trail etiquette and I'm hopeful that they will all become future stewards of our wonderful natural

resources.

I continue to be impressed by all of the hard work our staff and volunteers put into this park. Thank you!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

We had the highest turnout ever for our Water Festival event. We used a counter and got to 273! We estimated that about 150 people took guided Connor's Cave tours; 100 visited the live box turtle and about 60 drivers used our shuttle service (first time to provide this; necessary due to high visitation and packed parking lot).



People of all ages enjoyed exploring Connor's Cave during the Water Festival. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

Other partnering agencies also had activities. Boone County presented water color art and had a stream table flow and erosion activity; Missouri Stream Teams talked about invertebrates; and Quail Forever had a seed craft activity; The Missouri River Bird Observatory; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Daniel Boone Regional Library also had tables with lots of information.

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FoRB's Bethany Haid holds the attention of children and adults alike as she gives the opportunity to touch the recently molted shell of a crayfish. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

We received a lot of thank yous and positive comments such as this one: "I took my 4 year old and 2 year old to the Water Festival today. Everyone there was so nice and interacted with both kiddos really well. The kids loved petting the turtle, making binoculars out of TP rolls, learning about streams and touring the cave... It was a great memory that my 4 year old can't stop talking about! A huge thank you to all involved!!"

Education Update

Bethany Haid, Youth Educator

Nature Detectives was hoppin' this month, from hosting six sessions of the always-popular Stream Explore program to being featured on two local news media outlets.

I was out in Rock Bridge Spring Branch creek July 11th, 14th, 15th, and 16th leading Nature Detectives programs and helping at the Water Festival. It was fun watching children splash in the chilly stream and figure out how to locate macroinvertebrates living under rocks. I enjoyed watching the parents stoop down to help their child and see the world from their perspective. It was REALLY fun to watch kids and dozen adults reach an important Mid-Missouri Summer Milestone - a catch and release of a crawdad. For most, it was their first time netting any stream creature and getting a chance to compare how different species move and where they lived.

We had 48 family groups sign up, with 41 using a sign up link they found on the FoRB Facebook page or another linked Facebook event. More than 2/3rds had never been to an educational program at the park; and for many of these families, it was their first time stepping off the path to touch, listen, and experience the park with more than their eyes and feet.

One of the questions on our sign up page asks if the adult is a member of FoRB. Only a handful are. However, most of the adult participants indicated they clicked onto the FoRB website and read about its history. Forty out of 48 adults who signed up their kids indicated they are interested in FoRB membership.

The *Columbia Missourian* Sent a reporter and photojournalist to the second July Nature Detectives session. This was a first for our program!

(https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/kids-explore-ecosystems-and-catch-critters-at-rock-bridge-state-park/article_b2c493d8-00aa-11ed-8cdf-0bcb95198fa1.html)

The following week, Lincoln University's KJLU radio station in Jefferson City interviewed me. (https://www.kjluradio.com/newsroom/program-to-expose-kids-to-nature-at-rock-bridge-memorial-state-park-expands/article_a52d3fea-0384-11ed-a73c-ef3a139711f7.html)

Another first for Nature Detectives was having a majority of the youngest kids attending a program. 9 out of 16 participating children in one program were 2! And for each session we held, we had a younger average age when compared to previous programs. One parent told me, "My kids have had very few opportunities like this in their lives. They haven't had storytimes, face to face playdates, or scheduled activities. We haven't found any programs for 2 or 3 year olds for us to attend. I'm so happy to do this with my daughter."

Thank you for supporting these programs. I've mentioned this in each of my newsletter submissions, but I'll repeat it. We really do need volunteers to keep these programs growing. Specifically, we need 3 volunteers who will accompany elementary-aged children on a theme hike during the same time as the preschool Nature Detectives Program. A willingness to listen to kids' ideas and questions, ability to hike a mile or so, and three hours of time on a Sunday afternoon or Monday morning are all the prerequisites required.

Upcoming Programs and Events

We hope you'll share the August outreach program: **Bats Under the Bridge** with those in your sphere of influence. The programs run on Sunday, August 14th in the afternoon and Tuesday, August 16th in the morning. You can use this link to sign up or find the link on our website: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAKnA-fXhd_VuqoAMQ2LxzoTRt9myv7ZRLmf7EM9DzsyViOg/viewform

Membership dues are due on November 1st. If you need to renew your dues, you'll receive the first reminder in early September. Watch your email.

CoMoGives, our annual fundraising campaign, starts on Tuesday, November 29th and ends Saturday, December 31st. November 29th is Giving Tuesday. There will be five "Happy Hour" giving days this year of the one that happened in 2021.

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