

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 Message

Dear FoRB Members,

It seems like just yesterday that I sat down at this keyboard and wrote last month's President's message, but it seems like this heat has been with us forever. Time is funny like that, when you are a kid the days before Christmas creep slowly by, but the end of summer, before school, zips like a rocket ship.

Speaking of time, it was about time we got some rain. I received 2.5" at Bobo Pierpont Farms, I hope that the Park received this much as well. It fell over a couple of hours and seemed to not run-off too much. I hope that we never get to the level of drought that is being seen in some areas of the West. That level of drought would be devastating to our flora and fauna. I have some hope that we are starting to make some changes that will put us on a more sustainable path. It feels like trying to turn an aircraft carrier, it takes a while.

I try to keep my days and weeks full and with that time moves as it will and should. I will be conducting what the Conservation Department calls "recreational mowing" in the Park, on my land and at a friend's farm. The mowing on the Park will be to help "control" the *Sericea lespedeza*. If I mow it before it goes to seed, it limits the spread and it seems to grow back less vigorous for a year or two. In the Park, I work closely with Roxie Campbell and make sure I follow her guidance on where I can do the most good. I mow my fields to keep the shrubs down and to give preference to the prairie grass over forbs. Over 20 years, I have slowly made my

fields into much better habitat. Still no bobwhites! I can only hope that they will move from the Grasslands over to the Karst area.

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

Yours in conservation,

Kevin Roberson

Superintendent News

By Benedict Nagy, Park Superintendent

August has been a hot and mostly dry month here at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. The trails have been well used by equestrians, cyclists and hikers alike. The equestrians have been using the Shooting Star trailhead most heavily and there are plans in the not too distant future to add some more parking there. Stay tuned for updates on that project.

On August 23rd, Kevin Roberson and I hiked most of the Deer Run Trail to look at an area where water is seeping out of the ground and soaking a section of the trail. We weren't able to locate a source for the water, but we are looking into it further. In the meantime, we are going to work with COMOTA to armor the trail to prevent erosion.

Our seasonal staff have mostly moved on and our maintenance person here at the park is on extended leave, so I have been busy with the day to day upkeep of the park. We welcomed a new group of volunteers with an orientation on August 13th, and we are so grateful for the help that they will provide. Thank you to all of our volunteers, we couldn't do it without you!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

We held Jr. Naturalist Day Camp once again with a lot of very positive feedback.



2022 class of Jr. Naturalists posing at the memorial rocks (with a coyote fur). Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.



The kids role-played ants, using sticks as props for antennae (worker ants) and trash grabbers as props for grabbing mouth parts (soldier ants) as they communicated and eventually carried back the big caterpillar (played by seasonal employee Abby Harper). Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

Staff of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Missouri Department of Conservation have been working on video monitoring of the gray bat colony that inhabits Devil's Icebox Cave in the summer months. They have been experimenting with methods and then had some technical difficulty, but preliminary estimates are that we've had around 3,000-4,000 gray bats which is higher than recent years (around 2,000).

Three male specimens of cave isopods have been tentatively identified by Mick Sutton of the Cave Research Foundation as *Caecidotea*

spatulata, a groundwater species, but he plans to send them to a taxonomist to be sure. We had hoped they were of an undescribed/new species of which he collected one specimen of in 2003.

Invasive plant control work continued. Our three college students who have worked this summer doing much of that work ended their employment to return to school. Roxie has several sessions scheduled in September for volunteers to help her with fireline work as well as invasive plant control.

We have seen signs of the presence of beavers along the Devil's Icebox Spring Branch this spring and summer. The latest was unfortunate... he cut down an oak tree we planted several years ago near the parking lot to prevent stream bank erosion! Oh well, beavers have to eat too! And the stump with the angled teeth cuts is handy for showing visitors. It's to the left of the kiosk about 20 ft.

Join us for a Black Friday Hike

FoRB Board member Robin Rotman will lead a hike in the park on Friday, November 25th. Look for more information in upcoming editions of *The Bridge*.

A reminder that **CoMoGives**, our annual fundraising campaign, starts on Tuesday, November 29th and ends Saturday, December 31st. November 29th is Giving Tuesday.