

# 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](mailto:FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com).

**The next board meeting is Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 PM at the Gilbert Shelter.**

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,

Well Fall is finally here! The weather has finally become seasonable (and reasonable), the sumacs have turned their bright red, the mulberry trees' leaves are yellow and dropping, the persimmons are almost ripe and their leaves are turning yellow too. Now is the time to try and beat the squirrels to the hazelnuts and beat the foragers to the mushrooms that will come if we get some rain.

I find this time of year energizes me with ambitions far beyond my capacity. I hope to work on the farm, help some in the Park, and help neighbors when they need it. I am glad that I have the opportunity to make a difference around COMO. Not only do I get to help with some Park projects, but I also have almost learned how to set up a website for FoRB. Our newly updated website is: [www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org](http://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org). You can check it and email me with any suggestions for updates and ways to make it more relevant and helpful. It is a work in progress and will be better as we learn.

We have much happening in the remainder of this year, keep tuned to this newsletter, and our website. Please be thinking of how you can make an impact for our CoMoGives fundraiser, maybe through matches at work or a rich uncle or aunt. Thanks for whatever you are able to give or do. Keep moving and keep your eyes open.

I hope to see you in the Park.

Kevin Roberson

## Naturalist News

**Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**

A Devil's Icebox Cave Institute group conducted the Fall trip for monitoring pink planarians and their associated aquatic life on September 17<sup>th</sup>, and reported counting 18 pink planarians! That is the highest number we have recorded since 2007, 15 years ago! We have long suspected that Fall is when they mate and reproduce, so a theory is that in mid-September they gather and are easier to see whereas they are still present at other times of year, but are more dispersed or hidden. Kayla Heady also recorded a high-quality video of the pink planarians moving around.



Three large pink planarians were seen gathered together on one large rock in the cave stream on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Wonder what they are doing?! Photo by Kayla Heady. Photo used by permission.

September 1<sup>st</sup> through October 8<sup>th</sup> is our primary season to do Devil's Icebox Cave trips. Several trips have been conducted for training, research and interpretive purposes. See next month's Bridge for more.

A follow-up on the video monitoring of gray bats done by staff of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: They worked through software issues to refine the estimate to 5,000 to 6,000 gray bats flying out of Devil's Icebox Cave on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Staff spent considerable time recording bats in both sinkhole openings and evaluating the best methods to employ.

Staff and volunteers worked on several days in September in the Grassland area to control invasive plants including *Sericea lespedeza*, black locust, autumn olive and bush honeysuckle and to prepare firelines. We are working toward burning the eastern and western parts of the Grassland this November to March. We burned the middle last year.

Visit the Grassland Trail for fall color in the prairie grasses and for prairie flowers that continue to bloom well past frost and the bees, butterflies and other insects that visit them.

### **Black Friday Wild Area Hike and Campfire**

Join FoRB for a hike on November 25<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at the Special Use Area at 3:00 PM. We will have guided hikes of the Gans Creek Wild Area until around 4:00 and then have hot dogs and s'mores around a campfire. Don't want to hike, you can still come at 3:00 and sit around the campfire.

The Special Use Area is located at the end of Raylea Lane which is on Highway 163 between the Pierpont Store and Bonne Femme Church Road. If you're coming from Pierpont, Raylea Lane is on the left about 9/10ths of a mile from the store.

For more information, please contact Robin Rotman at [robin.m.rotman@gmail.com](mailto:robin.m.rotman@gmail.com).