

The Bridge

Volume 35 Number 11 November 2022

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.

The next board meeting is Tuesday, November 8th, at 6:00 PM at the Park Office.

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

Happy Fall! It looks like we have finally left the Summer behind and fully embraced all that is fall. The leaves have passed their prime here and were actually quite nice this year. I was afraid that the drought would hinder the colors, but that was not the case up here. We also received a very nice rain earlier this week, 2.6 inches here at the farm. That will help a lot to ease the stress for our trees and shrubs as they ready themselves for their winter slumber.

October is my favorite month. I can get back into the woods without the ticks and chiggers, it is the month of the birth of my first born, and the deer begin chasing each other around heralding the coming of deer season. I hope that you, too, are able to get out into the woods and fields of our Park to enjoy this respite between the sweltering summer and the wicked winter weather.

On the Protecting the Park front, we have an opportunity to present input to Jessica Hardy with the Climate and Energy Commission. She is working on Sensitive Area Protections for the upcoming Columbia Comprehensive Plan and Natural Resource Inventory. Dee Dokken has been facilitating presentation of ideas/documents that FoRB members have sent to her. Dee's dedication to the Mother Earth and our community seems to have no boundaries. We live in a better place because of her actions and the actions of like-minded people.

Take care and I hope to see you in the Park!

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Superintendent News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

The park has managed to stay busy as the seasons are changing. So much of the activity in the park is based around that theme. We finished up our caving season in early October and had several large groups from the Devil's Icebox Cave Institute and the Missouri Speleological Society join us for mapping and surveying trips. I joined a mapping team and we made it all the way back to Jeanette's Folly. This was some of the tighter passages that I've encountered in the cave in my two trips in. We were not quite able to map this passage since we could not completely make the connection. I'll admit to having a slightly scary moment as we scouted ahead. The ceiling just kept getting lower and lower until it was less than two feet high with no opening in sight. At this point, I thought that it would be best to back out a bit and get my heart rate down! We ended up spending about 12 hours in the cave that day that never seemed anywhere nearly that long. Other teams found pink planarians, spotted salamanders and a previously unknown room. A good time was had by all and, most importantly, everyone had safe experiences thanks to the excellent leadership of Roxie and others (**Editor's Note: See Naturalist News on the next page for more details**).

Speaking of seasons, the tram tours on the Katy Trail went off without a hitch. In addition to a couple of smaller tours, on October 19th and 20th, state park staff conducted a total of four tours with six trams on each tour. We managed to provide tours to about 240 people! I luckily got to drive a tow vehicle on both days while the interpreters were out in the cold and dusty conditions. Special thanks go out to Roxie for coordinating the interpretation staff from throughout the region that helped drive and

interpret and especially to Cassie Brandt, our Katy Trail Coordinator. With the freezing weather on those days, Cassie had to deal with many cancellations and contacting folks on the waiting list. She put a tremendous amount of work into organizing the tours and they went off beautifully!

We are preparing for our “off-season”, but with the trail and the park, we manage to stay pretty busy year-round. I’m looking forward to having some time to work on some projects around the park over the next few months. As always, I am extremely grateful for all of the hard work of our staff and volunteers. Thank you!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

On October 1, 2022, the Missouri Speleological Survey (MSS) gathered from around the state to devote their skills to mapping portions of Devil’s Icebox Cave that had been discovered but not yet mapped. Mapping involves sketching the shape of the passage, showing features like stalactites, and taking compass bearings and measurements of passageways. Holding this event not only accomplished mapping but also provided opportunities for younger people from around the state to get training and experience in an art that few in the state know how to do. This fits in perfectly with the goals of the Devil’s Icebox Cave Institute.



Ben Geisert is perched between the first and second rooms of the Devil’s Roost side passage. Photo by Kirsten Alvey-Mudd. Used by permission.

Both the Institute and the work of updating the map printed in 1960, started in 2019. The mapping progressed slowly with just one team doing a few of short trips per year. In contrast, this time, we had 25 people divided into five

teams with two of the teams spending about 12 hours in the cave in order to reach and map distant sections of the cave, namely the “Left Fork of the Left Fork” and “Jeanette’s Folly.” Other areas mapped were “Northeast Passage,” “Devil’s Roost” and stream meanders. They mapped a total of 1,803.5 feet which brought the official amount of mapped passages up to 6.79 miles! Currently, Devil’s Icebox Cave ranks as the seventh longest cave in Missouri among over 7,000 caves. Park staff are thankful for the skills and efforts of the MSS volunteers!



Crystals line rimstone dams surrounding a small pool of water in the room named Crystal Flats Palace. Photo by Kirsten Alvey-Mudd. Used by permission.

Something I love about caves is that sometimes there will be a room or passage essentially hidden from view from the main passage. For example, you will find Devil’s Roost only if you climb up a muddy embankment and find a hole in the ceiling that you “chimney up” into. Then, you climb down between two walls (out of view of the main passage) into a series of three rooms/dome pits. After mapping Devil’s Roost, that group kept poking their heads into holes off the main passage in the “Mother Nature” area and found one that “went.” It wasn’t very big around and went up at a steep angle, but rewarded its explorers with a room at the top that had a lot of calcite deposits. This room seemed like a new discovery yet cavers found dates written on the walls of 1955 and 1988. Probably, 1988 was the last time anyone had been in the room. One reason to create a map is to document and communicate to others what does exist so cave passageways can be found again. Otherwise, it is easy for these out-of-view rooms and passages to remain hidden and unknown.

Black Friday Hike and Campfire

Join FoRB for fun and festivities on Friday, November 25th. We will meet at the Gilbert Shelter in Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. *(Please note the updated location.)* Come anytime between 3:00-5:00 PM for guided hikes of varying lengths, a campfire, and s'mores. All are welcome. Invite your friends and family! No need to sign up in advance. For more information, contact Robin Rotman at robin.m.rotman@gmail.com.

CoMoGives Starts Tuesday, November 29th

The annual CoMoGives campaign starts on Giving Tuesday and lasts until New Year's Eve. This year we have a goal of \$7500. To find out more information or to make a donation, please visit <https://comogives.com/product/friends-of-rock-bridge-memorial-state-park-5/>.

Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership

All memberships expire on October 31st. If you have not renewed your membership, you can do so using PayPal at https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=6ERN2ES922VKJ. Dues are just \$10 per person. If you're not sure if you need to renew or if you want to pay by mail, contact Jim Gast at FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com.

If you have already renewed, THANK YOU!!

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