

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.

The next board meeting is Tuesday, January 10, 2023 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

Dear Friends,

I hope you all are well and well protected. Winter will be upon us, and we all need protection from the cold weather. There are three items necessary for life: Shelter, Food, and Water. I know that most of us are well-off enough that we don't need to worry about these elements, but it is important to acknowledge that the Park provides these three elements to many different life-forms. Life-forms from pink planaria to bobcats and coyotes. This is part of the reason that we think that FoRB is so important, because we work to support and preserve the Park and therefore also the wildlife that is dependent upon the Park. This and the good work that we provide to support the children and youth of our community.



Participants in the Black Friday hike enjoy s'mores at the Gilbert Shelter. Photo by Kevin Roberson. Used by permission.

One of our Board members went out on a limb and came up with a new idea for us and the community. It was a Black Friday Hike. It was well-attended, and everyone had a good time

and enjoyed the fire and the s'mores at the end of the hiking. Thanks Robin! Even a very busy person can make a difference, for the Park and the Community.

Please help us with our CoMoGives fundraising, <https://comogives.com>.

Have a great Holiday and I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Superintendent News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

The past month has been a busy one in the park and especially on the Katy Trail. In the park, a huge priority was interviewing candidates for the park's maintenance worker position. After interviewing several qualified candidates, one was chosen and they accepted our offer! Brian will be starting here soon and we are super excited to have this position filled. With my being relatively new and Brian being brand new, we are looking at this as a wonderful opportunity to organize our maintenance area and to develop his position into something that will truly benefit Rock Bridge. When you see him around, please introduce yourselves and make him feel welcome.

In other news around the park, we are continuing our war on invasive plant species and making plans for our first day hikes. For Black Friday, FoRB hosted a guided hike event with a campfire and s'mores. I really enjoyed participating in this event and my kids loved the snacks! They didn't love trudging up the hill to get back to the shelter after our hike, but they made it!

On the Katy Trail, 'tis the season for major maintenance projects. We have been contacted by several neighbors regarding issues such as ditches being silted up and clogged with brush and debris. Several of our neighbors have the equipment and the person-power, and we are working on getting them all of the proper permission. Just like in the park, we couldn't do it without the help of our wonderful volunteers. In other trail news, our seasonal maintenance person has spent the last several weeks filling in the drought-caused cracks. From what I've been able to gather, these cracks show up every year as it rains and dries. This year was especially bad with the exceptional drought conditions most of our area experienced. The timing was especially bad since we weren't able to start this work until after the leaves had started falling. The long and linear cracks were right in the cycling groove in some areas and the leaves made them nearly impossible to see. Although we heard a few complaints, we got the cracks fixed as soon as possible and avoided anyone experiencing a major crash.

I am continuing to learn more and more about the care and upkeep of Rock Bridge, the Katy Trail and my two historic sites. As always, I am greatly appreciative of the work of our volunteers and staff. We couldn't do it without you!

Naturalist News
Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist



View below and north of Coyote Bluff. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

These two bluff-top views are similar in several ways, both show Gans Creek and our native trees/woodlands but they differ in the amount of



This bluff-top view can be seen from the trail East of the Wagon Wheel trailhead. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

green – green being the bush honeysuckle that retains green leaves after our native trees have lost their leaves. Brown is beautiful, I like to say... because it's what our native woodland should look like in November! In the photo with the green bushes, volunteer Debbie Christensen is there working to cut them and treat the stumps with herbicide during one of several work sessions we held that joined the efforts of staff and volunteers. It is to our advantage that bush honeysuckle stays green later because it makes it easier for us to spot them, however their continued growth is yet another way that they can gain an advantage over our native species. Bush honeysuckle also secretes chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants and kills mycorrhizal fungi that help trees absorb more water (studies have confirmed slower growth rates for mature oak trees with bush honeysuckle growing in the understory).

This month, as is often the case, there are a variety of things going on such as:

Conducting interpretive programs for groups such as MU Ecology classes, Stephens College writing class and orienteering for Boy Scouts.

Planning and preparing for interpretive programs. We made plans to provide five First Day Hikes on January 1, 2023, wrote descriptions and got registration set up on our website. Volunteers met with me and are working on developing better visual aids, one about streams and another is a map of Devil's Icebox Trail.

Training Trail Patrol members. Volunteer Coordinator Steve Ferguson trained other volunteers in trail patrol, checked on some features in the park that I didn't have time to do and continues to replace trail blazes as needed.

Events Calendar

CoMoGives Campaign now until 11:59 PM on December 31st. To donate visit: <https://comogives.com/product/friends-of-rock-bridge-memorial-state-park-5/>.

January 1, 2023: First Day Hikes. Registration required. Call 573-449-7400 or click on <https://mostateparks.com/FirstDayHikes> for more information.

Tuesday, January 10, 2023: Board meeting at 6:00 PM at the park office.

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