

The Bridge

Volume 36 Number 2 February 2023

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, February 14, 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,

The beginning of the year is great time for looking forward and planning. I have found that if things are not planned for, they usually don't happen. The road to hell is paved with good intentions and with that in mind I will state now that we will be having 2 Rock Bridge Renews this year: one in the Spring and one in the Fall. The exact dates will be locked in at our next Board Meeting on Valentine's day. If you ever want to attend a Board meeting, you are always welcome to. They are mainly business, but some informational also.

In the coming month, get in the park and see if you can spy the animals "waking up" as Spring approaches. The male cardinals will be setting up territories with their calls, the American Woodcocks will be peenting at dusk in the old fields, the squirrels will be bearing their first litters and Mourning Doves will begin their courtship flights. You may even see an armadillo rooting in the soil.

So, get out and enjoy. The Park is a great resource, and we are lucky if we can get to enjoy it. Thanks for your continued support and take care.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Superintendent's News Ben Nagy

January has been a busy month for us here at Rock Bridge. There have been a few major

projects that have wrapped up and we have been busy with several off-season maintenance duties. In addition some brave runners had a spring-like day to run the trails in the park.



Park Naturalist Roxie Campbell leads a group of hikers down Gans Creek for one of several First Day Hikes on January 1st. Read about the highlights of the day on the next page. Photo by Ben Nagy. Used by permission.

In the valley heading down to the Devil's Icebox off of 163, you may have noticed some flagging crews directing traffic and some huge heavy equipment down by the creek. There had been a portion of a pipeline that had become exposed due to erosion caused by Little Bonne Femme Creek. This needed to be addressed to protect the integrity of the pipeline. Crews worked on installing concrete "pillows" to cover the pipeline and to reinforce the banks to prevent this from happening again. Roxie and I are a little concerned about a large Sycamore tree that is across the stream just a little ways upstream from the jobsite. Our concern is that this tree is large enough to become a major blockage during a flood event. If this were to happen, it could potentially divert the stream from the area where

all of this work has just taken place and then we might have to do it all over again! We are discussing plans to possibly cut up some of this tree ourselves or at least the parts most likely to cause a blockage.

Another contractor has been busy clearing vegetation from under the power lines near the Special Use Camping Area. This work is taking place completely within their right of way and is part of routine maintenance. Some of our trail users in the Gans Creek Wild Area may have been hearing a bit more machinery than usual while it was getting completed.

Speaking of the Wild Area, on Martin Luther King day, two crews consisting of myself, and two of my maintenance staff, Brian and Evan as well as several volunteers from the COMO Trail Association (COMOTA) took advantage of the opportunity to run chainsaws in our ten day winter period to clear dozens of hazard trees from the trails there. Personally, I cut at least 12 trees in eastern half of the Wild Area. Several of these were across the trail or were going to be in the very near future. One tree in particular, near the Special Use Area, was a true "widow-maker." This took a considerable amount of work and several cuts to fell safely. I feel so much better knowing that my trail users will be safe out there.

One more brief note, it was a warm day on the 16th and we encountered several groups of hikers out there, many of them with dogs. Would you believe 100% of the dogs were on a leash?! Surprising, right? I made sure to heap praise on the dogs AND the owners for that fact! Seriously though, I know that unleashed dogs in the park can be a huge problem. I always remind people of the rules when I encounter this situation. We've had complaints about people walking their leashed dog being charged by an unleashed dog and it is really unacceptable. Just the other day, when we were conducting the field portion of our prescribed burn training, an unleashed dog came running out of the grasslands into the parking area. I love dogs, probably more than most normal people, but I recognize that unleashed dogs in the park are a big problem and I will work to get this point across to irresponsible owners. We've been in touch with our rangers to find

ways to get people to take the park rules seriously.

Finally, on Saturday, January 28th, the park hosted a large group of trail runners for the Runner's Choice race. The runners were greeted with an unseasonably warm day and they had a great time on the Deer Run and Spring Brook trails. I know many of these runners and they would have been out there in zero degree weather with a foot of snow as well. As always thank you to our volunteers and the Friends of Rock Bridge for all of your time and effort!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

Highlights of Visitor Experiences First Day Hikes, January 1, 2023

We had four different hikes, conducted six times for a total of 97 people, ten of whom were kids.

"It looks a lot different hiking in winter. I like it. You can see more."

Seeing bats in the Rock Bridge and Connor's Cave.

Seeing a hornet's nest high in a tree.

Exploring Shelter Cave.

Scenery: bluff top views, open woods.

Hearing a pileated woodpecker and an owl.

Learning about history.



Bird watchers had a great day. They saw 26 bird species including two bald eagles flying over and four black vultures (unusual sighting as they are expanding their range north). Photo by Joanna Reuter, Used by permission.

Beautiful sunset seen from the Grassland.
Great weather.

FORB
P.O. Box 7642
Columbia, MO 65205