

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, March 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 Column

Jim Gast, The Bridge Editor

I'm substituting for Kevin this month.

Mark Foreman, secretary of the board for the original Rock Bridge Memorial Park, Inc., died on February 19th. He was 91 years old. I got to know Mark when he came to park to do his oral history recordings. I also worked with him on the placement of a bench near the kiosk in the Devil's Icebox Parking Lot. He truly loved the park, and I'm glad he donated his time and effort to create it. Here is a link to his obituary:

<https://www.columbiatribune.com/obituaries/pclm0434218>



Mark Foreman, left, with David Stoerker, Carol Stoerker's older brother; Red Leighton, another original board member and Carol Comer, then Director of the Department of Natural Resources at the 50th anniversary celebration of Rock Bridge Memorial Park. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.

Male cardinals are beginning to be territorial. In winter, they shared the bird feeders, but not now. Harbingers of Spring should be blooming shortly. These small white with black flowers are some of the first wildflowers of the year.

I encourage all of you to get out to the park.

Superintendent News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and Katy Trail State Park crews have been working hard getting prepared for what will surely be a busy on-season. We have been working with our team and dedicated volunteers to tackle some maintenance activities while we have the time. With the unseasonably warm February temperatures that we've been having, I'm starting to wonder if the whole on-season/off-season distinction is still relevant.

With the help of crews from the Como Trail Association (COMOTA), we have conducted two work events in February in the Gans Creek Wild Area. Much of the work being done there is simple maintenance to get rid of berms that tend to accumulate on the side of the trail. This berm will then tend to channel water onto the trail where it can pick up velocity and cause erosion. COMOTA crews have done some de-berming on White Connector 9 quite close to the Special Use Camping Area (SUCA.) In addition, some other trail maintenance work has been completed near the western end of White Connector 8. In this area, in addition to some de-berming, there was a short reroute completed to have a dry trail as opposed to the one that was falling into Gans Creek. We have several areas where the trail is basically on top of the cut bank of the stream. Given enough time, these sorts of trails will always end up being eroded away. Our reroute moved the trail about 25 feet which should buy some time.

Also in the park, Brian has been working on installing a couple of memorial benches. One of them is located near a small pond on the south side of the Grassland Trail, just a little bit west of

White Connector 2. A second has been temporarily installed on the landing just outside the entrance to Devil's Icebox and Connor's Cave. We will install a more typical memorial bench in this location once we can expand the landing a small amount as part of our boardwalk maintenance project.

Out on the Katy Trail, our crews have been busy repairing the trail surface, putting down fresh gravel, and fixing gates and culverts. I recently spent a day with my counterpart that manages the western quarter of the Katy and the Rock Island Trail. Daniel does an excellent job on his trail with it looking consistently good from one end to the other. One device that he uses to accomplish this is a combination drag and roller. The front half is a heavy steel grid that removes debris and does light smoothing of the gravel. This is then followed by a steel drum that smooths it out immediately. Basically, one pass removes debris, breaks up ruts and smooths the surface. We are looking to modify our roller this way to expedite trail maintenance.

One last note, we hosted a small Ameri-Corps crew that was mainly working in Graham Cave State Park doing stewardship work. They needed housing, in a hurry, so we cleaned up one of our shop bays and made it work for them. In return, when they had a rainy day, they helped us get started on cleaning and organizing our storage building. It looks SO much better over there and I am extremely grateful to them.

As you can see, it takes a dedicated group of people to keep this park and trail operating. From volunteers to staff to folks outside of our immediate organization, it is truly a team approach. I always want to be appreciative and give a big thank you to the Friends of Rock Bridge, staff and other volunteers. We need each and every one of you!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

Region 6 of the National Association of Interpreters held a conference in Columbia February 20th - 22nd. Eighteen of them visited Rock Bridge on a field trip where Steve Ferguson, FoRB board member and park

volunteer, and I led them on the Sinkhole and Devil's Icebox Trails. We shared about history of the park and area, tips for exhibit sign development, what we do for school group programs and about karst geology and cave animals. They also explored Connor's Cave. We saw six big brown bats under the Rock Bridge and three bats in Connor's Cave. In the afternoon, we visited Three Creeks Conservation Area and learned about the Boone County Nature School and glade restoration work going on there. Buildings are being constructed and staff are working on planning.



On Feb. 21st, interpreters from several states enjoyed a field trip at Rock Bridge about caves, history and how we've done our exhibit signs. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by Permission.

Mark Foreman: We're sorry to have lost Mark. We're very thankful for all he did to help create the park; for sharing that history in recent years so that it is on file with the park and being such a kind and extraordinary person! He thoroughly enjoyed the 50th anniversary of the park celebration held in 2017.

Invasive plant control continued as seasonal staff worked in the north part of the Gans Creek Wild Area on species we often don't find time for: Tree of Heaven and multiflora rose (in addition to bush honeysuckle). While Tree of Heaven hasn't spread too much for us, it is the host plant of the spotted lantern fly, an invasive insect that is spreading from the Eastern U.S. and kills native trees such as sassafras. We don't want to attract it.

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Hiring seasonal workers for next summer: I have been interviewing and have lined up four young people to work next summer on invasive plant control, fireline prep and interpretive programs. One will split his time with maintenance work.

Woodcock surveys: Several volunteers, led by Becky Bohlmeier, conducted surveys to count the American Woodcock. These birds are more numerous and easier to see in early spring when the males do an interesting courtship display. Most migrate through Missouri while some will stay here during the summer. Counts were higher than usual this year: Picnic area had 9; Grassland had 13 and High Ridge had 15. Thank you volunteers! Spring is here!

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