

# The Bridge

Volume 36 Number 5 May 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](mailto:FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com).

**The next board meeting is Tuesday, May 9, 2023 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 Column

Dear Friends,

Hello fellow tree huggers! I hope this message finds you healthy and happy with your lot in life. I am well and my family and friends are well. It has been a great week and month of enjoying the Spring weather, even with not enough rain. I have seen many nice birds and reptiles this month. I have seen and heard Red-shouldered Hawks, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinals, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Tree Sparrows, and a crow that is mimicking a hen turkey. I have also seen a Black Rat Snake, Worm Snake, Ring-necked Snake, Prairie King Snake, and Ground Snake. I hope that you too have been able to get out and about in this nice weather.

We conducted the spring portion of the semi-annual Rock Bridge Renew on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was very chilly, but we still had a great crew of 15 volunteers and two staff show up to the clean-up along Highway 163 and to remove invasive plants. The road looks great, and the invasives have been removed. All had Shakespeare's Pizza donated by Shakespeare's again this year. Be sure and thank them if you get a chance to.

I also bring sad news of the passing of Red Leighton on April 27<sup>th</sup>. Red was instrumental in the founding of our Park and was known far and wide for the good works that he did with and through the Downtown Optimist Club. He played a big part in getting me to the FoRB Board and for that I will always think of him in a kind way. His obituary is at [https://www.columbiamissourian.com/obituaries/family\\_obituary/forrest-red-leighton-may-2-1925-april-27-2023/article\\_f7a50006-e6c2-11ed-9cf3-6bf3837c6975.html](https://www.columbiamissourian.com/obituaries/family_obituary/forrest-red-leighton-may-2-1925-april-27-2023/article_f7a50006-e6c2-11ed-9cf3-6bf3837c6975.html).

Do good, take care and get outside. It does your insides good, as a friend often states.

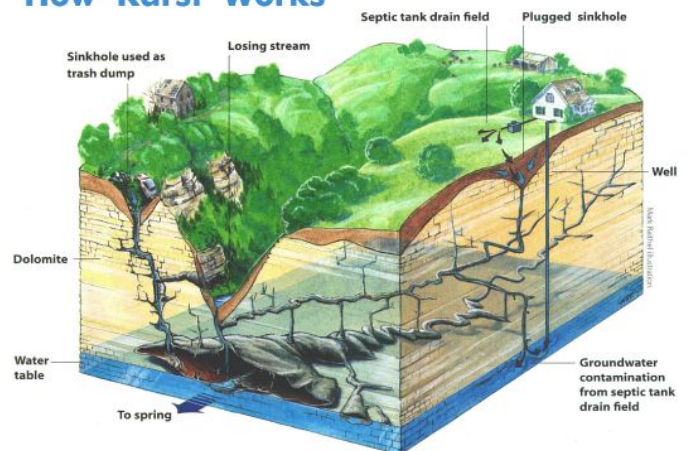
I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,  
Kevin Roberson

## Naturalist News

**Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**

### How Karst Works



*Illustrations like this one help people “see” how water flow happens in areas such as ours that have karst geology. This illustration was developed by the Missouri Department of Conservation.*

On April 11<sup>th</sup>, Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT) workers discovered a hole in the ground about where they had hoped to place one of the supports for a new bridge on Highway 163 over Bonne Femme Creek. It had been concealed by the concrete wall at the northwest corner of the old bridge. It's exciting to discover a new cave and learn more about this section of Bonne Femme Creek, a losing stream. It was proven through dye tracing studies conducted in 1988 and 2003-2004, that water from about a mile section of Bonne Femme

Creek both upstream and downstream of the Highway 163 bridge flows through Devil's Icebox Cave. MODOT staff are aware of this hydrological connection and are trying to protect the quality and quantity of water.

This discovery halted their work and forced them to do more testing and "to go back to the drawing board" as they try to figure out how to proceed with the bridge to determine how to handle the new cave. When they come up with some potential plans, then a meeting will be held with state park staff.

The cave was explored by members of the Cave Research Foundation (CRF). They rappelled down a vertical pit of 23 feet straight down. Then passages go both north and south, parallel to and under the creek. There are about three rooms where cavers could stand and they are connected by crawl ways. Beyond there, the cave channels water into passageways too small for the cavers. CRF recorded photos and videos and will be returning to map the cave. The cave has been named Bonne Femme Creek Bridge Pit Cave. It appears to have about 120 feet of passages, but that will be refined when they do the mapping.

This has garnered media attention which I have tried to use to further the understanding of how water travels through cracks and cave passages of various sizes in the limestone bedrock beneath our feet and roads and how this influences water quality for the pink planarian and other aquatic animals living in the water of Devil's Icebox Cave. Here are two links to media reports:

[https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/cave-found-during-construction-on-route-163-bridge/article\\_c4fd6e98-e390-11ed-9e03-838ac41fe5f0.html#tncms-source=Top%20Story](https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/cave-found-during-construction-on-route-163-bridge/article_c4fd6e98-e390-11ed-9e03-838ac41fe5f0.html#tncms-source=Top%20Story)

and  
<https://abc17news.com/news/boone/2023/04/28/cave-discovered-during-bridge-construction-near-bonne-femme-creek/>.

Seasonal employees working part-time accomplished a well-defined project of invasive plant control work in a part of the Gans Creek Wild Area southwest of the Wagon Wheel Trailhead. The methods and timing of the work were conducted in ways to protect the wild area experience of visitors. Species targeted were Tree of Heaven, multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle and others. The Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive insect native to Asia that we are expecting to arrive from the East, is attracted to Tree of Heaven and uses it as a host plant.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, eleven members of the Devil's Icebox Cave Institute conducted the spring survey in search of pink planarians in the cave stream in three five-meter survey plots and four timed count locations. Eleven pink planarians were found, which is a good number in comparison to other spring counts. One egg cocoon and one small planarian were also seen.



*The Pink Planarian is endemic to the Devil's Icebox Cave. Photo by William R Elliott.*

School groups are coming out to the park for field trips and park naturalists, staff and volunteers are guiding them in experiencing nature and learning about caves, bats, streams and habitats.