

# 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](mailto:FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com).

**The next board meeting is Tuesday, July 11, 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

In lieu of a personal message this month, please find the following information concerning the Boone County Master Plan Stakeholders meetings. Enjoy the Park!

Boone County is creating a new County Master Plan, which will help guide growth and development in the County over the next 10 to 20 years. The current Boone County Master Plan was adopted in 1996, so it has been over twenty-five years since the last Master Plan update.

As part of the planning process, the planning team is conducting a series of stakeholder and small group meetings during the week of July 10<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of these meetings is for the planning team to learn about important issues in the County and to raise awareness of the Master Plan.

I serve on the Advisory committee for the planning process. The planning team has encouraged us to invite board members/stakeholders to sign up for one of the small group meetings. Each meeting is expected to last approximately 45-50 minutes and is limited to three to five attendees per meeting to ensure good conversation. Meeting locations that week include:

Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup> (Starting at 1:00 pm):  
Harrisburg School District Community Room

Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> (Starting at 10:00 am):  
Ashland City Hall

Wednesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> (Starting at 8:30 am):  
Boone County Government Center

Thursday, July 13<sup>th</sup> (Starting at 10:00 am):  
Centralia City Hall

Meetings will commence promptly on the hour throughout the day, so multiple meeting times are available each day. The final meeting of each day will be held at 4:00 pm. You can sign up for a meeting time slot at: <https://BooneCountyStakeholderMeetings.as.me/>

To gain a better understanding of the plan, you can visit the plan website at [www.OurBoone.com](http://www.OurBoone.com) for more detailed information about the planning process.

Yours in Conservation,  
Kevin Roberson



FoRB Board Members Jim Gast and Sue Tillema and Park Superintendent Ben Nagy attended Inside Columbia Magazine's "Best of Columbia" banquet on June 28th. Rock Bridge Memorial State Park was voted Best Outdoor Park/Recreation Area. Photo by Lelande Rehard. Used by permission.

## Naturalist's News

### Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

It was rewarding to see our work of preparing the Water Festival pay off with the smiles on kids' faces and the happy relaxation on parents' faces as they enjoyed the Water Festival. We had a record number of people attend – 450! This event is an outreach of the Bonne Femme Watershed Project administered by Boone County Resource Management Program and included tables staffed by partnering agencies/organizations. So, the park has responsibility for just part of the event, yet it took 18 park staff and volunteers to accomplish our parts: tables and other supplies, stream, turtle table, Connor's Cave tour stations and the shuttle service. Also, maintenance staff put in extra hours sprucing up the park.



*A boy holds a crayfish at the Water Festival. Photo by Barb Elmore used by permission.*

It was neat to witness the difference these activities can make in the lives of a children. A boy of about 4 years old, before the cave tour said he was afraid to go into the cave. By the time we were walking out from the far reaches of Connor's Cave, I got to hear his comments and the sense of accomplishment he felt. His Dad and I had told him that he did a good job with exploring and with being ok when we turned the lights out for a few seconds. He said things like:

“I LIKE this cave! I got to see EVERYTHING! Dad, when will we come back?”

Bonne Femme Creek Bridge Cave – MODOT gave us the cave map, biological inventory, pictures and information about their bridge construction plans which we will archive at the park office and among MDNR staff. We learned that the main vertical shaft that was open to the surface during construction was covered previously by the old bridge. MODOT's plan involves covering that open shaft with a steel plate and concrete spread footer. What's most important is that the cave passages that lie below will continue to serve as conduits of water moving from the losing Bonne Femme Creek into Devil's Icebox Cave. From what I understand of the hydrology and cave map, the majority of water flow was and will continue to be well below the surface. There are probably many small passageways/conduits of water that permeate the limestone between the one-mile long losing section of Bonne Femme Creek and the known Devil's Icebox Cave passage, about one mile away.

Parkside Homeowner Meeting – As was agreed upon several years ago when the Parkside Subdivision was created, park staff were invited and provided an informational program for homeowners at their meeting. On June 20, about 12 people received a program from Roxie about what trees and plants TO PLANT and which ones NOT to PLANT (and why those invasive plants are a problem).

Stewardship Crew – We are pleased that we have funding again this year for a stewardship crew. The crew consists of four MU college students working on degrees in natural resources and one high school student. They have been working tirelessly in the heat of summer to control several species of invasive plants in the park.

## Nature Detective Notes

### Sara Jimenez, Coordinator

We know that playing in nature is strongly associated with a wide range of positive impacts on children's health, including increased physical activity and cognitive abilities. But beyond

promoting healthy child development, it's important to hold space for children to wonder at nature. Cultivating wonder is an essential part of growing the next generation of protectors and stewards, both of our beautiful park, and of our planet.

This year, Nature Detectives will continue to help make the connection for families that the park is a fun, accessible, and wonder-filled place. Blending nature based learning activities with opportunities for imaginative play, each month we will explore different areas of the park.



*A Nature Detectives participant learns about items found in a grassland. Photo by Hilary Myers Used by permission.*

Our first session was recently held at Grassland Trail, where families braved both the heat and the ticks to focus on pollinators, as part of National Pollinator Week. Next month we will hike and explore a portion of the High Ridge Trail. Program information will continue to be updated regularly on the Friends of Rock Bridge Facebook page. Thank you to our volunteers for sharing knowledge and time with our Nature Detectives families!

### **UPOP Update**

#### **Suzan Schuetz, Coordinator**

We started programs in June, working with schedules of community youth agencies. So far, programs have served nearly 100 youth and agency staff, with multiple programs scheduled weekly into August. What eager explorers we have hosted thus far! Highlights include calmly observing a snake in its habitat, watching a bunny munch on greens, seeing an inchworm travel, quietly watching woodpeckers play, sitting in darkness in the cave, identifying creatures in the creek, and feeling differences in native plant textures. Our biggest obstacle so far has been the summer heat; we're working to accommodate reschedules, as the predicted heat index nears 100° in our beloved Missouri summer.

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