

# 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, August 8, 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

Welcome to the Midwest in the middle of Summer! This has been a rough few weeks for getting anything done out of doors. Think about our dedicated Park Staff that are hard at it, every day, maintaining and protecting our Park. I was able to escape for most of last week to another of our State Parks, Echo Bluff. We floated the current for two days and spent the rest of the time "creek sitt'n." A lawn chair in the shade and in the water, however deep you want, to just relax and pass the time away. Sinking Creek is perfect for this, and the availability of this activity is sorely missed by me in this area.

In other news, the second meeting of the Boone County Master Plan Advisory Committee will be in August. I hope that some of you were able to attend one of the Stakeholder meetings and let your voice be heard. Any advice for me, as to action on this committee would be welcome.

Our Fall Rock Bridge Renew will be reactivated this November on the 4<sup>th</sup>. We will be switching back to the Devil's Icebox Parking lot to meet up. This will be a great opportunity to meet with like-minded conservationists and make a difference in the park. Not to mention the free pizza that will be donated by Shakespeare's Pizza.

I will be providing volunteer support this next month to help control the *Sericia lespedeza*. This work keeps the plant from being so thick that people and animals can hardly traverse the stands. Every little bit we do to support the Park makes a difference and shows the staff and our community that we care.

I hope to see you in the Park, when it cools a little, and I hope that you have a great time with

this jewel of a resource in our back yards.

Yours in Conservation,

Kevin Roberson

## Superintendent News

### Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

Things continue to stay busy at the park, in spite of the extremely hot month we just had. Speaking of hot... and dry, Governor Parson announced that state agencies would make hay and water available to local farmers. We don't have any water to share, but we do have two areas that we can offer for hay. We had more than 20 people sign up on our waiting list and we started at the top and showed folks what we had available. The two areas are the eastern side of Grasslands and much of the eastern half of High Ridge. The first 6 or so farmers that came by to look decided that they weren't THAT desperate just yet. The reasons that they rejected the offer mostly had to do with the roughness of the ground and the many woody plants present that would either have to be mowed around or removed.



*Superintendent Ben Nagy flags exclusion zones for the hay contract east of the Grassland trailhead. Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.*

We did finally get a young farmer interested in it and they signed the contract. Mowing and baling began right at the end of the month and will continue for a couple of weeks. Please give them a wide berth if you encounter them out there. They will not be doing any work on Saturdays or Sundays.

In other news, the Show Me State Games held their annual mountain bike race at the park on Sunday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. This event is near and dear to my heart both because I used to race it (SMSG Marathon MTB champ 2014!) and I used to be in charge of the race for about 6 years. The weather wasn't as brutally hot as it had been and around 80 racers competed on all of the trails in the western half of the park. I would also like to thank the volunteers from COMOTA, especially Nate Smith and Andy Schuette for all of their help in preparing the trails for this event.

Work on the Devil's Icebox boardwalk repair is progressing. We recently had an on-site meeting with folks from our Planning and Development program to identify the priority areas to be fixed with funding from a generous donation. As you all know, there are many areas of the boardwalk that need repair, but some of the viewing platforms are going to be prioritized while we continue to repair other areas in-house with our maintenance staff.

We are trying a "virtual" public meeting format for all of the parks and historic sites that we manage. These will be released in the very near future and available at the <http://mostateparks.com/> website. Any comments and feedback that all of you could provide is greatly appreciated. As always, we here at the park are extremely grateful for all of the work and support we receive from our volunteers. We truly couldn't do it without you. Thank you!

### **Urban Population Outreach Program Heats Up in July** **Suzan Schuetz, Coordinator**

Building on the established community partnerships, more nature programs were provided to at-risk youth through **collaboration**

with local agencies this month. Hotter temperatures led to many cancellations, though several young ones braved the sun's rays (safely) to participate in outdoor programming at the park. UPOP visitors explored stream creatures, learned about animal habitats and animal relationships, learned to identify trees in the forest and creatures in the leaf litter on the forest floor, toured Connor's Cave and learned about karst topography. Some groups participated in Camp Skills Day, where they learned about basic camping gear, packing a backpack, campfire safety, camp cooking, and tent set up / tear down. All groups were trained on how to read the park map, identify trails by blazes, and hike using proper trail etiquette and received lots of practice using park trails. Some folks even developed a fairly trained eye for spotting "man-made things that don't belong in our park" i.e. litter.



*Kids from Moving Ahead from the Columbia Housing Authority learn about stream creatures. Photo by Javion Jackmon. Used by permission.*



During July, the UPOP served 68 additional individuals, making the total, thus far, 183 people served through the Urban Population Outreach Program. Groups who were unable to attend scheduled events due to heat are being given the opportunity to reschedule through August and into September, weather permitting!

**Naturalist News**  
**Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist**



*This natural sinkhole pond located just East of the park north of Hwy. 163 before Bennett Lane, was down to a diameter of about 15 ft. of shallow water on July 8, 2023. It was even drier on July 11<sup>th</sup>, but rebounded a little after a rain received on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Normally, there would be water across almost the entire width of this photo, several feet left of the lone tree, but vegetation has grown where there once was water. The pond next door to the East was in similar condition. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, we counted 18 great egrets feeding there. This was a neat sight as they are beautiful birds (size and shape similar to great blue heron, but white), but they are normally not seen here. We saw a frog being eaten. It's been a rough year for frogs and toads! Photo by Roxie Campbell. Used by permission.*

**Nature Detectives**  
**Sara Jimenez, Coordinator**

In July, Nature Detectives hiked the High Ridge trail, providing children and their caregivers with a wide range of firsthand experiences with nature. Preschoolers used magnifying glasses and butterfly nets to play, explore, and learn about the flora and fauna of the park. As we wound our way up and back down the trail, our sightings included several different types of butterflies, bees, wildflowers and mushrooms.



*A Nature Detectives participant looks for stream critters in Clear Creek. Photo by Sara Jimenez. Used by permission.*

One group hiked down to Clear Creek, where we saw many crawdads, frogs and damselflies. For a few of the children, it was their first time ever playing in a creek. Despite differing hiking experience levels, for the majority of attendees, it was their first time ever hiking at the High Ridge Trail. Thank you to all our volunteers, and thank you to First Chance for Children and Missouri River Relief, for providing Child Carriers for anyone interested in trying one out at the event. Please follow the Friends of Rock Bridge Facebook page for information on future Nature Detectives events <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofrockbridge/>.

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