

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, October 10, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Park Office.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Melissa Hutchens, Treasurer; Jim Gast, Assistant Treasurer; Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Steve Ferguson, Meredith Donaldson, Robin Rotman, Board Members

President's Column

Dear Friends,

We continue to broil in this hot weather. I had hopes that by the end of September, we would be able to get a respite from the heat and be a little more comfortable working outside. This has been a miserable summer and early fall. I can't wait for the first frost. Even though the temperature has not been ideal, I did get 4 hours in today on our farm. I was cutting Callery Pears and wiping the stumps with Tordon and spraying Sericea Lespedeza with glyphosate. The work we do to try and keep the property looking tended and cared for.

It reminds me how much Roxie and her team care about the Park and the natural environment. She spends countless hours planning and executing ways to keep the invasives at bay. Her hard work has made a big difference, but she can always use some help. Your time to help is coming on November 4th, when we have the second Rock Bridge Renew of 2023 at the Park (9:00 AM-12:30 PM; Devil's Icebox Parking Lot). A large portion of the crew volunteering that morning will be working under a plan devised by Roxie to address an invasive species issue that she selects. Please come and help and stay for pizza and friends for lunch.

Take care and be kind. I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Park News

Ben Nagy, Park Superintendent

I was going to post about how nice the cooler weather had been for September, but we are in the middle of a week of unseasonably warm temperatures! Cooler weather is coming, I promise. Much of our time has been devoted to caving this last month and I am preparing to go in for my 4th trip this season. Roxie will say more about that, but I am starting to be familiar enough with the cave that I should be able to lead my own trips soon.

A large group of us have been working on a Wild Area Management Plan that is making progress. We will be including plans for trails, invasive species management, prescribed burns and general management all with the guiding principle of maintaining a wilderness setting. Committee members include several local, state and federal agencies and includes former superintendent and current Friends of Rock Bridge board member Scott Schulte. His input has been extremely valuable. We are currently working on refining the plan and I will be sure to let everyone know when it is available for public comment.

In other news, the park is gearing up for a busy season of removing hazard trees. You may have noticed the dead and dying Ash trees in the picnic area. They, along with any other hazard trees, will be removed this winter. We recently received some guidance on planting native trees and we will be replacing the ones that we fell with other locally sourced, desirable native species.

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We have been hosting the Thursday night trail running series and they have been going off wonderfully. For the last three weeks, we've had 30-40 runners competing on our trails and they are reporting great conditions back to me. In addition to these smaller races, we are getting ready for the annual Rock Bridge Revenge long distance running race on October 14th. All of these events are thanks to the Columbia Track Club and especially Heather, Rob and Shawn.

Speaking of trails, the Deer Run Trail trailhead is being relocated slightly to avoid the severely eroded area that is currently there. We have approvals to proceed and our local youth mountain biking team, along with volunteers from the COMO Trail Association (COMOTA) will be working on cutting in the new section of trail very soon

If I haven't mentioned it lately, we are extremely grateful for all of the volunteer help that we get from the Friends, COMOTA and others. We couldn't do it without you. THANK YOU!

Naturalist's News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

We're having a great 2023 Devil's Icebox Cave trip season, with 11 trips between September 1st until October 8th. The dry weather is helping us get trips in. The cave trips have several purposes: research like counting the pink planarians and collecting water samples; training DI Cave Institute volunteers; mapping and interpretation/recreation. This is our second year to invite interested members of the public who haven't been in the cave before to participate on a few "open" interpretive/recreational trips. We provided three orientation sessions to help them prepare.

Those who went on their first trip included twenty members of the public; eleven Chouteau Grotto members and five friends and family for a total of 36 people. In addition, fourteen descendants of Dennis and Naomi Ingrum (who willingly sold the land containing the Rock Bridge to become part of the park) will be participated on September 30th. The Missouri Speleological Survey returned with a smaller group this year (nine people). They and Chouteau Grotto mapped about 1,000 ft. of cave passages including the leads off of

Chert Bridges, Jeanette's Folly and Crystal Palace. Eighteen members of the Devil's Icebox Cave Institute (DICI) went on at least one cave trip. In total, 77 people have participated in a Devil's Icebox Cave trip this fall. Of those, several who went on their first trip are joining the DICI.



Paddling through the Water Passage is a special part of exploring the Devil's Icebox Cave. Photo by Justin Owens. Used by permission.

One of the primary purposes of the DICI is to monitor cave animal life. As part of our training day on September 9th, we enjoyed watching a large number of gray bats fly out of Devil's Icebox on their nightly hunt of flying insects. Last year's video monitoring estimated the population of this maternity colony at 5,000 to 6,000! Our survey of pink planarians and their prey animals yielded low numbers compared to fall counts in other years. It's hard to say why. We have noticed that while the cave stream still flows, the water available in the stream for habitat is less than in past years and there have not been as many rains to wash nutrients into the cave system. This weekend, we plan to collect water samples that Boone County Resource Management staff will have analyzed for *E. coli* levels and other water quality standards.

Nature Detectives

Sara Jimenez, Coordinator

Childhood is an opportunity for both children and caregivers to explore the natural wonder of the world. Rock Bridge Memorial State Park offers a plenitude of places where that is possible. This year with Nature Detectives, we showcased several of the locations where folks can experience nature. From hiking wooded trails, to discovering grassland habitats, to exploring the creek, the Nature

Detectives program sought to share many of the unique features of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. We are truly fortunate to have such a beautiful natural resource in the “backyard” of Columbia, and we must do what we can to care for and preserve such a treasure. The seeds of this care and preservation are planted in the children who participate in our programs. On a scavenger hunt you can find trees and birds and insects, and you can also find a sense of place and wonder and connection.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, November 4th: Rock Bridge Renewal, 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Meet at the Devil’s Icebox Parking Lot. Bring gloves, water and sturdy footwear.

Friday, November 24th: Second Annual Black Friday Hike. Details in the November Bridge.

Tuesday, November 28th: CoMoGives campaign begins and lasts until December 31st.

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