

The Bridge

Volume 37 Number 5 May 2024

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, May 11, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the Gilbert Shelter.

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

President's Message

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, we are in the middle of a beautiful spring day in the middle of beautiful Spring. We have had several days of good rain, with minimal damage from wind or hail. This will help all of the flora and fauna of our Park to flourish into the Summer. It is a great time to get out and enjoy what nature and the Park have to offer. Get out by dawn and hear the turkey gobbler searching for another mate, hear and see the warblers in the treetops and bushes as they forage, many as the follow the emerging insects North to their nesting grounds. Lizards and snakes are out sunning and I have seen several box turtles foraging in the "wild field" edge, looking for bugs and an early fruit. The water turtles, sliders and cooters, are doing their Russian Roulette with the traffic as they pass from one pond or creek to another, going back to their home site to lay their eggs. I hope that you can make the time to get out and see what is in the Park now, what flowers are blooming, what birds, what amphibians and reptiles. If you can, take a youngster with you, open their eyes to nature all about them and turn them into converts and allies.

A couple of weeks ago, we had our first 2024 Rock Bridge Renew. It was held on April 13th. We had one of the largest groups ever assembled to help with road clean-up and invasive plant eradication. There were 40 total attending, which included a group of Engineering STEM students from Mizzou. We cleaned more miles of roadway than we ever have before, and Roxie's group did great work also. We appreciate the Park partnering with us to put on this event, that we started over 10 years ago.

Keep safe, be happy, and I hope to see you in the Park. Keep up with what is going on at <https://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>. I hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in Conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Nature Detectives

Sara Jimenez, Nature Detectives Director

This month we have two exciting events planned for our youngest park goers. On May 18th, we will celebrate Kids to Parks Day at the Billy Gilbert Memorial Shelter. According to the National Park Trust, this event is "a national day of outdoor play that connects kids and families with their local, state and national parks." Our second event this month is our traditional Nature Detectives program for preschoolers, which will be held on May 28th at the Rockbridge Mills Shelter. If you are interested in learning more about Nature Detectives or would like to volunteer for our programs (see next page for dates and topics), contact us at naturedetectives23@yahoo.com. We look forward to seeing you out at the park!

Naturalist News

Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

Members of the Devil's Icebox Cave Institute (DICI) went into Devil's Icebox Cave, one group on Saturday and another group on Sunday for the joint purposes of monitoring the pink planarians and providing training to DICI members. We conduct the Pink Planarian Project (P3) every spring and fall. This spring's survey yielded a count of 11 pink planarians in the survey plots and three in a timed count for a total of 14. That is a good number for a spring count. It was very exciting for Sunday's group to see,

photograph and video record a pink planarian eating an isopod. While we had an observation years ago of a pink planarian eating an amphipod, and have long held that they also eat isopods, it is very good to now have evidence that pink planarians eat isopods.

The group enjoyed The Wade and of course, the sparkling beauty of The Waterfall. We talked about how wonderful it is to absorb the quiet atmosphere of the cave and about how it's up to us to discover the cave's hidden secrets and reveal them to other people who don't venture in. Seventeen members of the Cave Institute participated, received training and had fun!



The P3 survey in progress at The Shark, 4-21-24. Photo by Bethany Haid. Used by permission.



A pink planarian is wrapped around an isopod and is feeding upon it. Photo by Julie Macy. Used by permission.

We also saw salamanders, frogs, fish, crayfish at various places and over 2,000 gray bats clustered in the Water Passage. Roxie led an interpretive trip to The Waterfall.



NATURE DETECTIVES UPCOMING EVENTS

for preschoolers and their families



May 28th-9:00-11:00

Magical Metamorphosis

Learn about the incredible process of metamorphosis through stories, games, and crafts.

June 28th-9:00-11:00

Nature Detectives Hike

Find out more about how to be a Nature Detective and go on a short nature hike.

July 19th- 9:00-11:00

Camp Crustacean

Play and explore the at the creek while learning about crayfish and the other creatures that live in and rely on the water.

WATCH FOR REGISTRATION DETAILS @
[FACEBOOK.COM/FRIENDSOFRCKBRIDGE](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofrockbridge)