

# THE BABLER BABBLE

Official Newsletter of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park

## The Moths of Fall

BY HOLLY MORRIS

Here in the St. Louis area, you've probably just said "farewell" to this year's cohort of Monarch butterflies as they make their way down to their wintering grounds in Mexico. But did you know there are still plenty of species of butterflies and moths that stick around in Missouri in the coming months? Let's take a look at a few species that you might spot as the days get shorter.

### Woolly Bear:

Here in the Midwest, caterpillars of the Isabella tiger moth, typically called woolly bears or woolly worms, are a familiar sight during the fall. Unlike many other species, woolly bears overwinter as caterpillars, freezing solid and thawing in the spring to continue their life cycle. According to folklore that's been around since colonial times, the severity of coming winter weather can be predicted by examining the woolly bears' coloration: the more black, the harsher the winter. However, this is just a myth and woolly bears' coloring depends more on the age of the caterpillar than any other factor. As you spot these guys marching across roads and fields as they look for the perfect spot to wait out the winter, remember that even though woolly bears are generally harmless, their woolly hairs can stick in the skin and cause irritation.



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Photo Credit University  
of Missouri



Photo Credit Steve  
Jurvetson, Wikimedia  
Commons

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Generations of Missourians have passed through Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park's massive stone gateway for cookouts and family get-togethers or to spend time with friends. The park's camping facilities, Civilian Conservation Corps architecture, and hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails help all visitors find their place to get away from it all, just minutes from St. Louis.



## Park Hours

APRIL-OCTOBER 7 A.M.-9 P.M.  
NOVEMBER-MARCH 7 A.M.-6 P.M.

## Visitor Center Hours

APRIL-OCTOBER 9 A.M.-4:30 P.M. WED-SUN  
NOVEMBER & MARCH 9 A.M.-4:30 P.M. SAT-SUN  
DECEMBER-FEBRUARY CLOSED

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park  
800 Guy Park Drive  
Wildwood, MO 63005

T: 636-458-3813  
F: 636-458-9105  
E: BablerStatePark@dnr.mo.gov

## Park Staff

PARK MANAGER: CHRIS FERREE

ASST. MANAGER: RICH LOVE

ASST. MANAGER: ANDREA GRANT

NATURALIST: DUSTIN HILLIS

SR. MAINTENANCE: ERIK VEENSTRA

MAINTENANCE: VACANT

MAINTENANCE: VACANT

RANGER: JONATHON THOMPSON







## Special Events Schedule

ALL PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

PLEASE CONTACT THE VISITOR CENTER AT 636-458-3813 FOR MORE INFORMATION OR CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE.

### National Public Lands Day

10 a.m. — Noon

Sept. 23

Join us in celebrating National Public Lands Day by helping the park remove invasive bush honeysuckle. All tools and herbicides will be provided. Meet at the Visitor Center; we will be working along the Virginia Day Trail.

### Stream Team Volunteering

Sundays from 10 a.m. - Noon

Sept. 10

Oct. 15



Are you interested in volunteering with the park for a one-time event (or more) that allows you to help the park with a stream team activity? If you answered yes, sign up with this event to be selected to help out. Seats are limited to 20. If you are not able to attend this program that's okay — we will have more opportunities like this in the future. All participants will need to plan to get wet. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sign up for these events via the link below:

[icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx](http://icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx)

### Babler Howl-oween Weekend

Oct. 28

10 a.m. Crawling Creepers

Meet at the Visitor Center



2 p.m. Slither Me Timbers

Meet at the Visitor Center

4 p.m.-8 p.m. Babler Howl-oween

(trick or treating event)

Meet at the Visitor Center



8 p.m. Camper Judging Contest

Oct. 29

10 a.m. Batty Business

Meet at the Visitor Center



## Explorer Program

Giving visitors a new appreciation and respect for the natural world and the historic setting around them along with an interest in preserving them is the main goal of the Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites Explorer Program. The patches and stars earned are visible symbols of a person's commitment to preserving the living environment.

The program has three parts to complete to earn the patches:

1. Interpretive Study — complete two programs learning about an animal, building or history related to the park or historic site.
2. Interpretive Programs — complete four programs: guided tours, evening programs, hikes,
3. etc. Identification — identify 10 significant things to a park interpreter (objects, people or other living things), giving the proper name and its importance to the park or historic site.







# The Moths of Fall ... [Continued]

## Fall Webworms:

Fall webworms have an interesting survival strategy as caterpillars. After hatching in late summer or early fall, they will spin webs over the tips of tree branches where they can gather together and eat the leaves of their host tree while having some protection from predators. Their webs can be pretty conspicuous, covering large sections of tree crowns as they “skeletonize” the leaves. If you’re looking for fall webworms, just look up! These not-so-picky eaters have been found on over 100 plant species in Missouri!



Photo Credit G. Keith Douce, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Photo Credit TampAGS, for AGS Media

## Hickory Horned Devil:

Perhaps the most striking of the season’s caterpillars is the hickory horned devil. The world’s largest caterpillar, these giant larva may look menacing, but it’s all an act. Their bright coloration and conspicuous horns are a clear signal to predators to stay away, but they’re totally nontoxic and harmless to people. As the name suggests, look for hickory horned devils chowing down on hickory leaves, though you might also have some luck looking in other nut-bearing trees like the black walnut. Later in the fall, they’ll find a place to burrow and pupate over the winter before emerging as the gorgeous regal moth in the spring.



Photo Credit Mcevan, Wikimedia Commons



Photo Credit Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren, Wikimedia Commons

*Happy 85th  
Birthday  
Babler Park!*



A state bill was passed to formally accept the land and was signed by Gov. Lloyd Stark on June 23, 1937. The park was formally dedicated on Oct. 1, 1938 at a ceremony in which Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, spoke before an assembly of 3,500 guests.



## Join us for our annual Public Meeting.

The public is invited to a town hall-style public meeting for Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park. Representatives from Missouri State Parks will be on hand to provide information about the park and answer questions. The public is invited to share comments about the park and its operations.

Saturday, Sept. 30  
2 p.m.

Meet at the Visitor Center.



## In their Own Words: William “Bill” R. Ellis

AUTOBIOGRAPHY FROM MAIL INTERVIEWS IN 2000.

William “Bill” Ellis was assigned to Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3763 from 1939-1940. Camp 3763 was located across the road from the present-day visitor center. “I do remember Camp 3763 at Babler very well, though 60 years have passed - 10- or 12-single story walkways, one separate building for bathing (showers and latrines), parade grounds with flagpole between roadway and the Babler monument. As you enter the park entrance--ascend the hill--driving west and level off, there to your left would be where the camp was.” Mr. Ellis continues saying, “The mess hall always had great food for great appetites. It had three great wood or coal stoves and may have held half the camp. There was also a trap door, which opened to a lower level of cellar inground; potato peeling took place down there nearly around the clock. You were either assigned this duty of peeling potatoes or it was your punishment for whatever.”

Bill reminisces about his favorite hangout, the recreational hall. “The rec hall had a canteen, table tennis, pool tables and a visiting center.” “The barracks were wood frame with many windows. The camp Commander and Officer Quarters were separate. The Night Watchman, kept wood fires in the Officer buildings through winter, which was a duty I had taken a turn at....no gravy there. We also had a make-shift boxing ring back in the woods. This was for those with grudges or just friendly fisticuffs.”

“Our days started by arranging, neatly, our bunks and quarters in the barracks at Reveille,

then be at attention for flag raising at sunrise. Next, you would go for breakfast, usually in the order of your barracks number. Afterward, you would report to your assigned truck to be transported to your worksite. Around lunchtime, you would return to camp for an hour, then reload and return to work. At the end of the day, you would shower/bathe to get ready for supper. After supper you could hangout at the rec hall or watch the occasional movie, before Taps was played around 10, which signaled lights out.”

Continued on page 6.

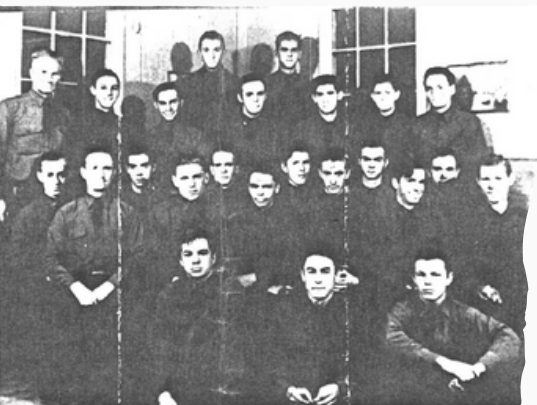
George Dunn, left, and Bill Ellis during their CCC days at Babler State Park, Missouri, in 1939-1940. Photo courtesy of NACCCA Journal.



Company 3763-Barracks #4 Dec. 2, 1939. “Each of these I remember well, most were close friends.” Photo courtesy of Mr. Ellis.

### Left to Right

Front row: Tim Crutchfield, Ward, Young.  
Second row: Chase, Duebray, Bill Ellis, George Dunn, Hudson, Alton.  
Third row: Conrad, Gosky, Fink, Fulk, (forgot their name), Bayless.  
Fourth row: Medley (crew chief), Dutch, Kassling, Neimeyer, Jew, Harvey, Tom Hatley.  
Fifth row: Summers, Helmer.



Thank you for your support by continuously voting to renew the 1/10 of 1% Parks, Soils & Water Sales Tax.

It is through this constitutional tax, in which half of the funding generated is earmarked for the Division of Missouri State Parks. This provides about three-fourths of the division's budget for the operation and development of state parks. All additional funding comes from revenues generated in the state park system and some federal funds.

Join us at the Celebrate Wildwood event on Saturday, Sept. 23rd from 11AM-6:30PM on Main Street in Wildwood, MO.



## We do off-site programs!

Contact Dustin Hillis, Senior Park Specialist, at Babler State Park to schedule your program(s). These can be for schools, assisted living facilities, fairs, etc.

E: [Dustin.Hillis@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:Dustin.Hillis@dnr.mo.gov)  
T: 636-324-7064





## In their Own Words ... [Continued]

"My job duties varied from pipeline, pick and shovel work for water and drain lines throughout the park, stone cutting and shaping for the park entrance. I also helped with landscaping and tree planting at the entrance. We also loaded sand and gravel for concrete projects throughout the park. I also helped with blasting and loading at the rock quarry. I helped to build the the water pump house for our camp (present-day ranger office in front of the visitor center), some of the shelters, the stone entrance and stone placements on the right after entering the park before you ascend the hill."

"On Saturdays, we would have camp clean-up days and general camp maintenance...unless it was your weekend away, usually every 3rd weekend. When I would go on leave, I would go home to St. Louis. One Saturday in the early morning, George and I walked to Pond, MO. Usually, we could bum a ride from there, but not this time. We had a cold walk until finally, George's dad picked us up at Manchester, MO at Lindbergh."

William "Bill" R. Ellis was discharged from the Civilian Conservation Corps, Company 3763, in October of 1940. He then enlisted in the United States Navy in February of 1941. Mr. Ellis passed away on Jan. 31, 2010.

### The kitchen almost blew because of low water in the boiler

by Bill Ellis

I served with CCC Co. 3763 at Babler State Park, southwest of St. Louis, from the fall of 1939 to the fall of 1940. The commander was Army Lt. Sharpe. My duties at Babler--no big deals--were mostly involved with conservation work such as maintenance of the park roads, tree planting and landscape work around the park entrance, and laying underground water pipes throughout the park. We also did stone work, cutting and shaping stone for the entrance, using chisel and hammer, and occasionally an air-powered stone chisel and jack hammer.

Each day a crew left by truck for the rock quarry around Glencoe where we thought most of the stone for the park entrance came from.

Our work week was normally six days, with Saturday reserved for general camp maintenance. But every other weekend we could leave camp and return on Sunday evenings.

On Fridays and Saturdays we were able to attend movies in nearby Kirkwood and on summer evenings some movies were shown in camp. We also had keen recreation hall and canteen, complete with pool and ping-pong tables. My toughest duty, for which I volunteered, was about three weeks of night watch during the cold months of 1939-1940. It was a very lonesome all night watch over the whole camp. My duties included keeping fires for the water pump house and officers quarters--and the kitchen stoves. I had to keep fuel handy for all the stoves which mean wheeling buckets from the supply area in the dead of the coldest winter in many years.

Our camp cooks made me aware that kitchen stoves had to be red hot by 5:30 a.m. During my first week of watch I failed to have the stoves hot enough for those guys, but after the first week, and constant scolding, I learned how to keep fires but loading the stoves with coal and wood.

One particular morning I had all the kitchen stoves--and the boiler for the morning's coffee--blazing before the cooks arrived. But I had failed to check the water level in the boiler. Who knows that a boiler must have a certain level of water before firing? Not me, a 16 year old. Should I guess? Guess I did not.

Well, you know what happened. In the galley around 6 a.m., I'm off duty, exhausted from the all-night watch, and sleeping soundly in my bunk.

Next thing I know someone shakes me awake and orders me to report to the company commander and explain how I almost burned up the kitchen when the boiler blew.

Would you believe?--within four years, I was the first class boilerman aboard my U.S. Navy ship in the mid-Pacific.

Anyway--soon after that blunder, Commander Sharpe relieved me of those gruesome nights and I went back to good old pick-and-shovel pipeline digging, something I did with lovin' care after that watch duty.

Then--another experience, not related directly to CCC conservation work, but an unforgettable memory of the time.

In the spring of 1940, I had developed a severe case of athlete's foot, something most everyone in the camp experienced at one time or another. Mine got so bad, though, I was admitted to the sick bay for attention.

We had two companies at Babler--2729 and 3763--but only one doctor between us. As I was healing nicely, almost ready to return to work, I was made acting hospital orderly, helping with corpsman duties. Then my good friend George Dunn was admitted to sick bay with severe stomach pain.

It was late at night and we had to bring up the doctor from the lower camp to examine Dunn. He ordered us to transport him at once to the Jefferson Barracks Hospital. It seems he was suffering from acute appendicitis.

Another of my buddies, Jim Crutchfield, drove our Chevy panel truck ambulance while I tried to support George, relieve him any way I could. There was no traffic, but it was a long (perhaps 60 miles), rough ride. He was in such terrible pain and we were frightened. We just didn't think we could make it in time.

When we finally arrived, the alerted staff was waiting. Our company doctor had informed the staff about George's condition while we were en route and they were prepared for us.

George was taken to surgery immediately, and he recovered well, as a 17 year old should. When we went back to camp he was given an easy job, working with the surveyors. Did he love that!

We both go discharged in October, 1940. I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in February, 1941.

*This article is courtesy of the NACCCA Journal, issued September 1999.*

## Volunteers in Parks

VIPs provide invaluable assistance to Missouri State Parks on a wide variety of tasks and projects around the state. Volunteers assist people in visitor centers and contact stations. They help catalog historic items and documents, and they serve as natural history interpreters and tour guides. Some VIPs perform maintenance or light construction tasks, or help with constructing or renovating trails. There is almost no limit to the types of work that volunteers can perform. The main requirement is a willingness to serve.

Contact the park for more information at  
636-324-7064.

Or signup at the following:  
[mostateparks.com/page/57872/volunteer-parks-program](http://mostateparks.com/page/57872/volunteer-parks-program)





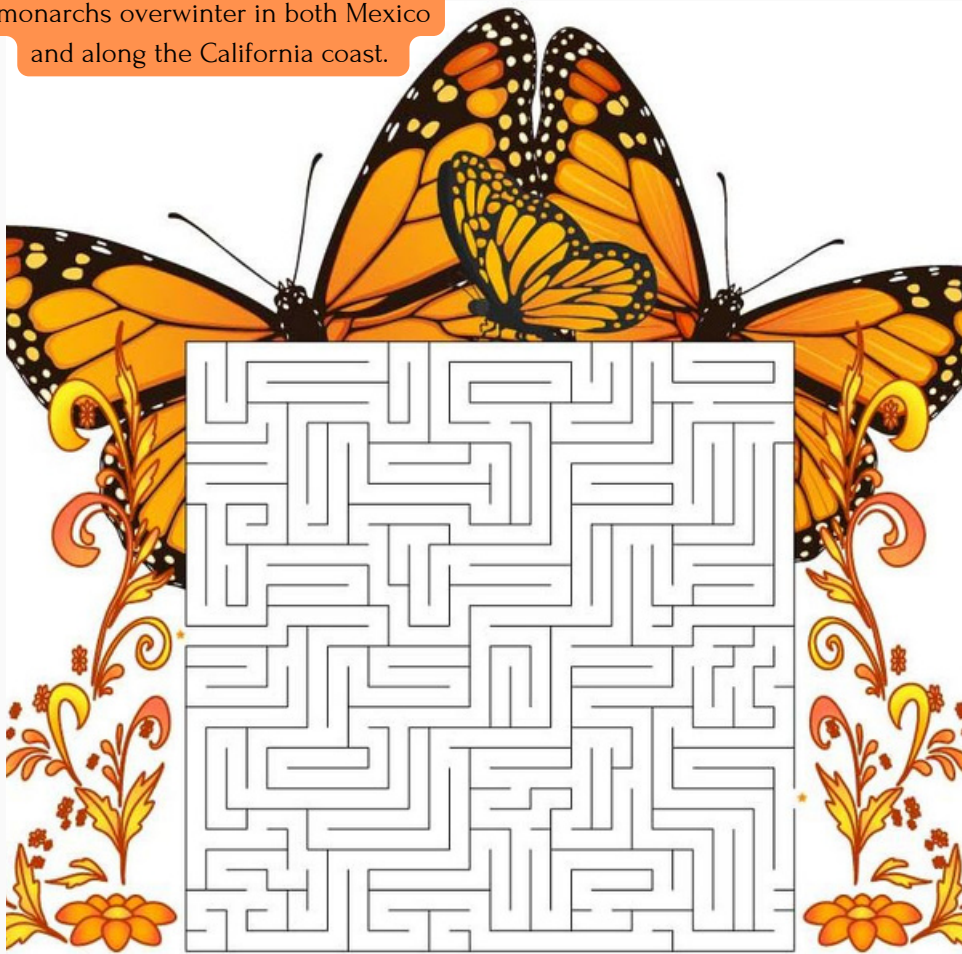


## Explorer Corner

Can you guide your butterfly through the maze to make to the wintering grounds?

### Did you know?

Monarchs have a remarkable long-distance migration. In North America, monarchs overwinter in both Mexico and along the California coast.



### Did you know?

The bright patterned orange and black wings of monarchs advertise that they taste bad to predators. Monarchs retain toxins (known as cardiac glycosides) from the milkweed they eat as caterpillars (or larvae), making them poisonous to most vertebrates.

### Did you know?

Butterfly wings are densely covered with scales that improve their aerodynamic efficiency. The upper surface of the thorax is covered with long hair-like scales that help retain heat.

## The Naturalist Journal

### MONARCH WATCH

Monarch Watch is a nonprofit education, conservation and research program based at the University of Kansas that focuses on the monarch butterfly, its habitat and its spectacular fall migration. Monarch Watch was founded in 1992 by Dr. Orley "Chip" Taylor and the monarch tagging program was launched in the fall of that year. The Monarch Watch Tagging Program is a large-scale community science project that was initiated to help understand the dynamics of the monarch's spectacular fall migration through mark and recapture.

To learn more about the Monarch Watch program, use the link provided.

[monarchwatch.org/](http://monarchwatch.org/)





# Burning Down the Woods

BY DUSTIN HILLIS

The fall and winter are the best times of year for natural resource work. The park will be continuously working on our invasive plant reduction and removal, but we will also be working on prepping two of our prescribed burn units in the park. Babler is a very dissected park, with steep hills and deep ravines. This topography aided fire progression on our ridgetops. Whether started by lightning strikes or historically by Native Americans, Babler's ridges would have historically been more open due to fires. This is represented well when walking the Hawthorn Trail or the western section of the Equestrian Trail in the park. This area is in our smallest burn unit at 98 acres.



Park staff start lighting below the Hawthorn glade, pictured in the top left photo. The fire moves slowly through wet bottoms and occasionally needs help. Pictured on the right, the fire is moving away from the fireline at a mild height and eventually needs help to continue moving interior into the unit.

The hawthorn burn unit was originally only 10 acres and was based at the middle point on the Hawthorn Trail where the Hawthorn Glade can be found today. Former naturalists and ecologists with the park worked to restore the glade complex by removing native, but aggressive, eastern red cedars and sugar maples to encourage native grass and wildflowers to regain the glade's territory. The reason that cedars and sugar maples were removed is due to them not being in their appropriate ecozones. Cedars should be only found on cliffsides, where fire cannot reach them and the same can be said for maples down in the wet bottoms at the base of the ravines here at Babler. Both of these native trees can cause disturbances and disruptions in other ecozones found within the state.

Continued on page 7.

## Scout Projects

Park staff have compiled a list of potential scout projects for the park. These projects include a variety of skill and time requirements, from a few hours to a full day, ongoing, group and individual projects. Scout projects are available now.

Contact the Visitor Center for more information!

636-458-3813



## Thank you to our Park Rangers.







# Burning Down the Woods ... [Continued]

Over time, the park extended the unit to around 30 acres and continued to actively remove maples from the ridgetops where our open woodlands once called home. It wasn't until 2021, when the park extended the unit once again to include a new glade and woodland complex just to north of the existing unit. The park is still actively removing cedars from the new glade, which was deemed Bluebird Glade due to the large flocks of eastern bluebirds flying through the area during a cleanup day. Hawthorn and Bluebird glades are home to the following plants: white oak, chinquapin oak, big bluestem, little bluestem, green milkweed and of course white hawthorns. The Hawthorn unit is scheduled to be burned this 2023/2024 burn season. So stay tuned and enjoy the beautiful wildflowers of 2024 on the Hawthorn Trail next spring.



**Top left:** Park naturalists burning cedar piles in the new glade.  
**Middle left:** Park employee lighting along the fireline, sending fire into the unit.  
**Bottom left:** Park staff have to traverse the unit afterward to check for smoldering dead trees that may pose a threat to the fireline.

# Park Closure Notice

Babler State Park will be closed Friday, Nov. 3 through Sunday, Nov. 5 for a managed deer hunt. The park will reopen for normal business hours Monday, Nov. 6 at 7 a.m.



## Why does the park manage deer?

Managed deer hunts allow the park to harvest deer off the landscape and for the surrounding ecology to have a chance to recover from being over browsed. Missouri State Parks works with the Missouri Department of Conservation to help manage the population of deer in our parks, specifically the parks near larger populations of people, such as Babler, Cuivre River and St. Francois. A healthy deer herd is usually around 15 to 20 deer per square mile. Babler is around four square miles and through rigorous spot light counts, browse surveys, helicopter counts and roadkill counts, we have determined that the population at Babler is over 80 deer per square mile. That's a lot of deer. This causes disturbances in the local ecology because the deer eat everything they can, sometimes causing high floristic quality areas to become invaded or overgrown with invasives, such as bush honeysuckle. This also has a massive downside, as the invasives encroach and deer numbers spike, so does the tick population. By managing both invasives and deer populations, we hope to also bring down the number of ticks that can become a nuisance to park users but also a health issue for our users.





## Manager's Notes

BY CHRIS FERREE

The end of summer is always a turning point for us here at the park. School is back in session, the nights turn a bit cooler and the sun doesn't get as high in the sky as it used to.

With fall we have quite a few changes occurring at the park as well.

As of writing we are hiring two new maintenance staff for our two open positions. Look for specific announcements in the future on our new hires. The paved trail project is about halfway completed (slated to be finished early October 2023).

We have requested to amend our Conceptual Development plan (CDP) for two areas of the park. One is to change designated use at the Babler Lodge area to event/lodging use and the area by the old pool from day use to day use/equestrian use. We are very excited to see the old pool area start to transform into our new equestrian trailhead and parking area. We hope to have final approval by the end of September.

The other major project is our campground improvement project. We are nearing final design. Some tentative improvements will be full hookups for current sites 1-33 and the addition of 2 new full hookup sites, which will increase our overall campsites to a total of 77 from 75. Campsites within the project are blocked from reservations through next spring. The possibility exists that some of our campsites will get renumbered to accommodate the new sites. So when reservations open back up please be aware the sites you might have gotten used to reserving may have a different number. We hope to have tentative construction and completion dates soon. We are all looking forward to expanding our campground offerings as I am sure many of you cannot wait to make a reservation.

I would also encourage you to visit the park this fall. Our awesome naturalist staff have many events scheduled. Our public meeting is scheduled for Saturday Sept. 30 at 2 p.m. here at the park's Visitor Center. It is also my favorite time of year to just be outside. My personal spot is walking or driving along Wirth Drive (or on the equestrian trail) by Alta Shelter in the late afternoon when the sun is shining through the upland forest while the leaves are changing late September into October.

## River Hills Gift Shop

Start your fall adventures inside our store. We have beverages, collapsible dog bowls, snacks, hiking sticks, apparel, plush toys, Frisbees, kids wristbands, souvenirs, insect spray and so much more!

