

THE BABLER BABBLE

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

The Papaya of Missouri

BY DUSTIN HILLIS

Did you know that Missouri has papayas? Well, not quite. It was a Portuguese explorer who noticed that Native Americans were eating this sweet smelling fruit that resembled a papaya. They later called the fruit pawpaws.

This small fruiting tree can be found all over Babler State Park, from the bottoms to some of our northern slopes. The pawpaw fruits in late summer through early fall. The fruits are green on the outside, yellow on the inside and grow to a length of up to six inches. The flavor profile has been described as a cross of a banana, mango or a kiwi. The flowers of the pawpaw can be found in spring and are a dark maroon. These flowers are pollinated by flies, this is due to the flowers sometimes smelling like rotting meat.

Missourians of all ages will hunt for these fruits in the fall trying to beat the critters to the cache. However, just remember that you may eat the fruits within the park but they cannot be taken out of the park.

Mushrooms are the only fruiting body that may be removed from the park per Missouri State Statutes.

Try your hand at finding these small trees the next time you visit the park.



Photo courtesy of Juliaeats.com



Photo courtesy of the Missouri Secretary of State website.

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

Visitor Center Hours

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

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park
800 Guy Park Dr.
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: HOLLY MORRIS

MAINTENANCE: VACANT

RANGER: ROBERT LALK





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.

Stream Team Volunteering

Sundays from 10 a.m. to noon

Sept. 15

Oct. 13

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, then sign up for 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.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx

Learn2 Aim

Sundays from 10 a.m. -noon

Sept. 22

Oct. 20

Begin your archer journey by attending a hands-on workshop this summer!

Take a step back in time and join Missouri State Parks for the Learn2 Aim event. This is a great opportunity to learn new skills with joint instruction on the basics of archery and atlatl throwing. The program is free and available to ages 10 and up.

Missouri State Parks provides the equipment and expertise in a safe environment – you bring your enthusiasm to learn a skill that ties back to Missouri history.

All participants will need to sign up via

icampmo1.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx

Honeysuckle Round-Up!

Sunday, Sept. 8

10 a.m. to noon

Join us for two hours of volunteer service in removing invasive bush honeysuckle from around the Virginia Day Trail. We will supply the loppers, gloves, glasses, and chemical needed for treating these highly invasive plants. Participants are not required to stay all two hours, however, we would love all the help we can get in protecting our park from this invader. Meet at the Visitor Center.



Honeysuckle Round-Up!

Sunday, Oct. 6

10 a.m. to noon

Join us for two hours of volunteer service in removing invasive bush honeysuckle from near the Dr. Babler statue parking area. We will supply the loppers, gloves, glasses, and chemical needed for treating these highly invasive plants. Participants are not required to stay all two hours; however, we would love all the help we can get in protecting our park from this invader. Meet at the monument field near the Babler statue, follow program directional signage for event site.

Celebrate Wildwood "Off-site Program"

Sunday, Sept. 21

10 a.m. Parade

11 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Booths & Food Court

Join us in celebrating the City of Wildwood. There will be artists, information booths, live music, and food trucks/tents. Meet at the Wildwood Town Center on Main Street.



Babler Howl-o-ween

Saturday, Oct. 26

10 a.m. Wile-E. Coyote

Speed on over to the park to learn about Missouri's wildest mammals yet, coyotes. Meet at the Visitor Center.

2 p.m. Slither Me Timbers

Slither on over to meet one of Babler's resident snakes and learn about snakes. Learn why they are beneficial to you. Meet at the Visitor Center.

4-8 p.m. Howl-o-ween Event

Trick or Treating at the Visitor Center only.

8 p.m. Camper Judging

Sunday, Oct. 27

10 a.m. Batty Business

Join an interpreter in learning about Missouri's only flying mammals. 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, etc.
3. 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.





Historical Scavenger Hunts

BY CARLEY WRIGHT

Scavenger hunts are fun: You receive a list of things to find, and have an adventure searching for them. Tracking down historical facts and documents is rather like a scavenger hunt, but in this case your list is

- Probate from 1867 ✓
- Army records from 1942-1945
- A Deed from 1894

My hunt began with trying to find any records from ‘Camp Babler’, when the army took over the park, specifically records pertaining to Jefferson Barracks’ use of the park as a convalescent camp. So I went to the source, Jefferson Barracks, where I found that the Visitor’s Center has been closed for two years after some water pipes broke during a freeze. (I was told that they hope to reopen next year, FYI) While walking around the area, I heard an alarm inside a closed building and called the number on their website. It just so happened that the Museum Curator, Kelly Plunkett, answered my call. We spoke, and she offered to look through the records she could access, but also pointed me in the direction of Soldiers Memorial.

A week or two later, I went downtown to Soldiers Memorial. They have a great museum, and I spoke to an employee, Andrew Schleicher, who didn’t believe they had anything but suggested I try the Carondelet Historical Society, as he had cataloged some things pertaining to Jefferson Barracks there.



Above is Carondelet Historical Society, in the Des Peres School building.

(Left) Soldiers Memorial (via Missouri History Museum)



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. 21 from 11 a.m.-6:30 p.m. 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
T: 636-324-7064

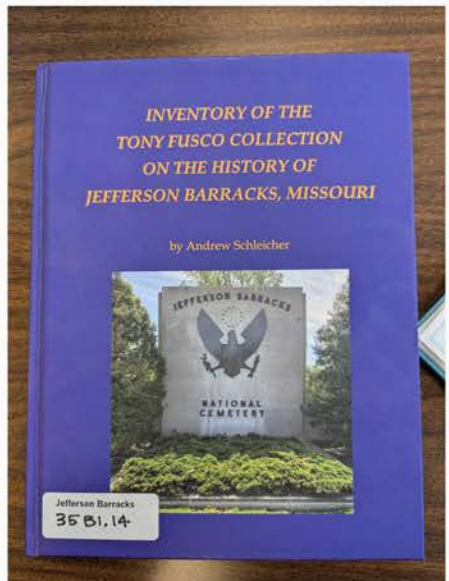


Historical Scavenger Hunts ... [Continued]

Another week goes by, and I drive to Carondelet Historical Society to look through an entire book, made as a finding aid for the Tony Fusco Collection. Tony Fusco became interested in the history of Jefferson Barracks when he joined the National Guard in 1959. After trying to find a comprehensive history of the base and failing, Mr. Fusco decided to start compiling his own. His research was later donated to the Historical Society. Unfortunately, I didn't find any entries that seemed pertinent to Babler State Park.

What I did find was that the Carondelet Historical Society is housed in the same building where Susan Blow had the first successful public kindergarten in the United States. And they have recreated the classroom, along with an extensive museum of the area. How cool is that!

So I'm still trying to find the records of Jefferson Barracks' convalescent camp at Dr. Edmund A Babler Memorial State Park, and a land deed from St. Louis County (after the Great Divorce which split the city from the county), but you just never know where you will end up during an intricate scavenger hunt!



Author's Note: The day after writing this article, I found the deed!

(Left) Finding Aid for the Fusco Collection

Below is Susan Blow's Classroom.



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 type 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





Explorer Corner

Can you fill in all of the activity mat?



Did you know?

Missouri has 93 state parks and historic sites?

Did you know?

Missouri State Parks turned 100 in 2017! Our humble beginnings started in 1917 just a year after the U.S. National Park Service was established.

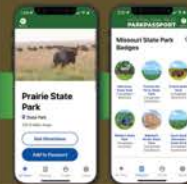
Did you know?

Missouri's first state historic site was Arrow Rock State Historic Site.

The Naturalist Journal

MISSOURI STATE PARK PASSPORT PROGRAM

Missouri State Parks has partnered with the National Park Trust to use its digital app to create the newest Missouri State Parks Passport Program. Visitors first need to click the appropriate link below to download the app onto their device. Once the app is installed, you can "check in" and earn a badge each time you visit a Missouri state park or historic site. Other badges can be earned for hiking, bird-watching, fishing and many other activities.



The Passport Program is back at Missouri State Parks— and now it is digital! Download the app today!

<https://www.missouristateparks.org/missouri-state-parks-passport> #ParkPassport

2. CAMPING ACTIVITY MAT

1. **CROSSWORD**

3. **WORDSCRAMBLE**

NETT _____

RENLATN _____

STEROF _____

4. **SPOT 5 DIFFERENCES**

5. **HOW MANY OAK LEAVES CAN YOU SPOT?**

1 light blue 2 green 3 white 4 dark blue 5 red 6 pink 7 yellow

6. **DOT MATH**

7. **DOT MATH**

8. **DOT MATH**

9. **DOT MATH**

Wild Edible Recipes

4-Layer Persimmon Spice Cake

- | Ingredients: | Frosting: |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • 2 boxes of yellow cake mix | • 16 oz. cream cheese (softened) |
| • eggs and oil required on cake mix box | • 2 lb. powdered sugar |
| • 2 cups persimmon pulp | • 1/2 cup soft oleo |
| • 2 tsp. vanilla | • 1 tsp. vanilla |
| • 1 tsp. ginger | • 2 cups orange slices |
| • 2 tsp. cinnamon | |
| • 1 cup crushed wild pecans | |



Instructions:
Puree persimmon pulp until smooth. In a large bowl, mix eggs, oil vanilla, and persimmon pulp. Mix thoroughly. Add cake mixes and other dry ingredients. Mix well and pour batter into 4 round cake pans. Bake according to cake mix package time and temperature. Allow cake to cool before removing from pans.

Frosting:
Mix softened cream cheese and powdered sugar. Blend in soft oleo and vanilla. Blend mixture until smooth and spreadable. Apply to cake layers generously. Sprinkle with crushed pecans and garnish with orange slices.



Recipe can be found at mdc.mo.gov

Pawpaw Cheesecake

- | Ingredients: | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| • 1 1/2 c. graham cracker crumbs | • 1/2 c. sugar |
| • 1/3 c. confectioner's sugar | for topping. |
| • 6 T. melted butter | |
| • 10 oz. Ricotta Cheese | |
| • 16 oz. cream cheese, softened | |
| • 4 eggs, lightly beaten | |
| • 3/4 c. pawpaw pulp | |
| • 2 tsp. vanilla | |
| • 1/4 tsp. salt | |



Instructions:
Mix together crumbs, confectioner's sugar and butter; press over bottom and sides of a 9-inch springform pan.

Mix together cheeses then add eggs and sugar. Stir in pawpaws, vanilla, and salt. Mix until smooth. Pour into springform pan.

Bake at 450 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Loosen sides when done and let cool for 30 minutes in pan. Remove and serve with fresh fruit topping.



Please harvest responsibly.

Persons may collect for personal consumption within the state park or historic site small quantities of wild edible fruit, berries, seeds and nuts (excluding below-ground plant parts) in quantities not to exceed a 1-gallon container. Any such edible fruit, etc. so collected shall not be transported outside the state park or historic site. Every person is permitted to collect by hand edible mushrooms for personal consumption outside the state park or historic site providing that the quantity collected does not exceed that which fills a 2-gallon container.

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.





The Cycle of Fire

BY DUSTIN HILLIS

It's the time of year again where Missouri State Parks will be prepping and implementing fire to the landscapes of our parks. Babler is no exception. Babler has three prescribed burn units: Hawthorn (98 acres), Alta Central (114 acres), and Alta North (112 acres).

This fall, it is our hope that all natural factors fall in place for us to burn both Hawthorn and Alta Central. Both of these units are dry mesic hillsides that support woodland/glade grasses and forbs and are dominated by white oaks and hickories. Historically, Native Americans used fire to open the prairies and woodlands for easy travel but also for the benefit of hunting and gathering.



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.

However, Native Americans weren't the first to use fire on the landscape. Mother Nature has used fire for millions of years to change and manage her landscapes. Far back in time, even further than the dinosaurs, we can find evidence of ancient fires! This cycle of rebirth and death is one of the ways that Mother Nature brings a balance to the ecosystems of Missouri and beyond.

At Missouri State Parks and even here at Babler, we try to remain a part of this cycle by applying fire to the landscape to encourage new growth from native plants and keeping the threat of wildfires to a minimum.

Stay tuned to our Facebook page for any updates on when these prescribed fires will be happening in your Missouri State Park.

Park Closure Notice

Babler State Park will be closed Friday, Nov. 1 through Sunday, Nov. 3 for a managed deer hunt. The park will reopen for normal business hours Monday, Nov. 4 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 4 square miles and through rigorous spotlight 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

So far into 2024, things have been moving along at Babler.

We have had a very busy year so far with our interpretation programs, added some new Babler specific retail items, finished off numerous small projects, larger capital projects are still moving along, and even managed to keep the grass cut in between all the rain we have had thus far.

Unfortunately, with the wet weather our campground upgrade project has gotten delayed numerous times. It looks to now be completed around the 1st of November 2024. That just gives us some extra time during the winter to get them all looking great for spring of 2025. The loss of the 2024 on-season will be worth it with the 38 new full-service sites coming. Announcements will be made when reservations will open for those.

Another disruption you may start seeing in the park will be construction in various parts of our drinking water system. Currently the park is served by a local well, but we will be switching to a municipal water source. With funds secured through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) parts of the original (circa 1936) water system will be rebuilt or repaired and the water tower and well will be taken off-line. This will help with our overall water quality and pressure throughout the park. This work is currently out to bid, and work should be completed by end of 2025.

Keep an eye out for our annual public meeting. This year we will be trying something different. In lieu of an in-person meeting, we will be posting a video that will run throughout the month of October. It will give an overview of the park, accomplishments and challenges this past year, and look of things on the horizon. We always welcome your feedback or additional questions this might generate.

Oncoming fall is also a great time to visit the park, whether it's hiking, camping, horseback riding, celebrating with family and friends at one of our reservable shelters, or just (slowly) cruising through the park. Cooler days and the first hint of color change in the woods always puts me in a better mood.

Also take a second look at those recipes in the newsletter. I'm not the most adventurous in food but I have tried those and they are delicious!

We hope to see you out there.

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!



Park Staff Highlight

Richard Love,
Assistant Manager



I have worked for Missouri State Parks for 38 years total with 15 of those years here at Babler. Missouri State Parks has been a rewarding experience. Just think about it, you get to work at one of the most picturesque and historical places in the State of Missouri! I have met many fascinating visitors and worked with many dedicated staff members. For me, I love the variety of things that I have been involved in. Even though there are many repeat duties, every day is different. Babler is a special place; the dogwoods that fill the woods every spring with bright flowers, the orange and red of the changing leaves in the fall not to mention the shelters, buildings, tunnels and walls built by the CCC in the 1930s. If you need reconnection with nature in the midst of a large urban area, this is your place.