

# ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK

## Nature Notes

SPRING 2009



8920 U.S. Highway 67, Bonne Terre, Mo.  
[www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm) 573-358-2173

### From the Naturalist

The days grow longer, the spring peepers are calling and the flowers are in bloom. Spring is upon us! It has been a busy winter at St. Francois State Park, and when you come and visit you will see what we've been up to during this off-season. If you drive through the park and see a lot of it looks burned and charred—don't worry! We did that on purpose! Prescribed burns are but one of the management tools used to maintain the park's woodland habitats. If you want to learn more about prescribed burning, see page 2.

We have a lot planned for this upcoming camping season. You will see some changes, but some things will remain the same. As always, park staff is here to make your visit enjoyable and fun. I have included the program schedule through the month of May so that you can see what we have going on in the park. Stay tuned, there's much more to come!

*Jamie Hubert—Park Naturalist*

### Bluebell Bonanza!

Every spring, the ground at St. Francois State Park is awash in purple and pink. The Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*) carpets the Swimming Deer Trail, creating one of the most beautiful wildflower shows in the area. This year promises to be a great show—so come to the park around the third week of April to view the bluebells and other wildflowers such as wild sweet William, rose verbena, columbine, dwarf larkspur, indian paintbrush and many more that make the park the place to be this spring! Don't forget your cameras!

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### New Camping Rates for the 2009 Camping Season

Basic Campsite- \$11

Electric Campsite- \$19

Electric/Water- \$21

Sewer/Electric/Water- \$24

\*Note: St. Francois State Park only has BASIC and ELECTRIC campsites. To make a reservation, call 877-422-6766.



Bluebells along the Swimming Deer Trail



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## Get Out and Play in Missouri State Parks This Summer!

In this age of television, video games and the Internet, children are not spending as much time outside as they used to. Studies are showing that being outdoors and engaging in free, imaginative play is beneficial for their health and can even help them do better in school!



**GET OUT AND PLAY**  
IN MISSOURI STATE PARKS!

Enjoying green spaces is easy when you visit Missouri state parks! As part of a nationwide initiative to get children and families back outside together, the Division of State Parks is launching our "Get Out and Play!"

campaign. Watch for activities and events coming up in Missouri state parks that will provide opportunities for your family to "Get Out and Play."

### Critter Corner

#### Spotted Salamander



During the first warm spring rain, spotted salamanders migrate by the hundreds to fishless ponds to breed. One female may lay 300-400 eggs each year. In a month, the eggs hatch and the young have gills. They will remain in the water until they transform in the fall and leave their ponds.



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## S.O.S? (See Our Smoke?)

While driving down Highway 67, did you ever notice a large plume of smoke coming from the direction of one of the parks in the area? If you did, don't worry—we set the park on fire.



That's right—park staff purposefully set fire to the woods in Missouri state parks. As part of the mission to preserve the finest examples of Missouri's natural landscapes, park employees use different tools to manage these areas—including fire.

Fire was a natural process in Missouri at one time—whether from lightening strikes or from American Indians who set the land on fire to create better hunting grounds. Studies have shown that fire often burned the woodlands in Missouri about every three to five years. When settlers arrived in Missouri, they recorded that they were able to drive their wagons between the trees. It is hard to find woodlands that open anymore in Missouri!

Fire helps reduce the brush, and encourages native grasses and wildflowers to grow in the understory—maintaining the open woodland that the settlers found when they arrived in the state. If you visit St. Francois State Park, you will see evidence of the busy burn season this past winter. If you go for a walk in the woods, the fruits of our labor will be apparent in the carpets of wildflowers and grasses found throughout the park.



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### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Grow Native! Challenge Kickoff

Two years ago, a group of local citizens in St. Francois County organized a contest called the Grow Native! Landscape Challenge. The mission of Grow Native! is to educate landowners about the benefits of using native plants in their landscape.

The Grow Native! Landscape Challenge is a contest open to residents of St. Francois County. The winner will receive a free landscape makeover from a professional designer worth \$1,000!

The kickoff for the Parkland's Grow Native! Landscape Challenge will take place on April 18, 2009, at the park. You can view the native wildflower garden that participants helped plant two years ago and attend a wildflower walk at 10 a.m. led by the East Ozarks Audubon Society that will meet at the Mooner's Hollow Trailhead. Another walk will be led by the park naturalist at 2 p.m. and will meet at the amphitheater.



Don't forget your cameras, as the spring wildflowers will be in full bloom!

Details and contest rules will be available at the kickoff or online at [www.mydjconnection.com](http://www.mydjconnection.com)

## Become a Missouri State Parks EXPLORER!

Last year, the Junior Naturalist program became the Missouri State Parks and State Historic Sites Explorer Program. The requirements for earning this new badge are similar to the Junior Naturalist requirements, but a little different. As always, each weekend's program schedule at St. Francois State Park is designed to allow you to earn your badge during your stay at the park. Ask the naturalist about how you can earn the Explorer badge!



"Not all those who wander are lost."

--J.R.R. Tolkien

## Park Offers Recycling in Campground



Last year, park staff started a pilot program to offer recycling bins in the campground. With the help of some very dedicated Explorers to help spread the word, the recycling program was a HUGE success!

Last year, the park recycled 194 pounds of aluminum cans and nearly 400 pounds of plastic! The goal is to do even better this year. The park will continue to offer recycling in the campground, so make sure to bring a bag to separate your recyclables. You can collect aluminum cans, any recyclable plastic (look for the recycle symbol) and tin cans. The park has even placed recycle bins in the day use areas near the picnic shelters.

Help be good stewards of the Earth when you visit St. Francois State Park by recycling. Together, we will work to make the park just a little bit greener.



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# ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM SCHEDULE



## APRIL 2009

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
3	4	5
10	11	12
17	18	19
	10 a.m.: Grow Native Kickoff and Walk 2 p.m.: Wildflower Walk 8 p.m.: Owl Prowl*	9 a.m.: Explorer Hour
24	25	26
	2 p.m.: Energy Olympics 8 p.m.: TBA	9 a.m.: Explorer Hour

## MAY 2009

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	2	3
	2 p.m.: Herp Hour 8 p.m.: The Raptor's Role	9 a.m.: Explorer Hour
8	9	10
	2 p.m.: Nature Crafts for Mom 8 p.m.: MO's Most Extreme Moms	No Programs
15	16	17
	2 p.m.: Herp Hour 8 p.m.: Bats: Myth and Reality	No Programs
22	23	24
8 p.m.: Nature at Night Hike*	2 p.m.: Energy Olympics 8 p.m.: Nature Jeopardy	2 p.m.: Explorer Hour 8 p.m.: Owl Prowl*
29	30	31
8 p.m.: Bugology	2 p.m.: Herp Hour 8 p.m.: Spider Sniff	9 a.m.: Explorer Hour

\* Bring a flashlight

- Friday night programs will begin on Memorial Day weekend.
- All programs meet at the amphitheater in the campground, except the 10 a.m. Wildflower Walk on April 18, which meets at Mooner's Hollow trailhead.



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