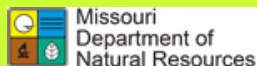


Spring 2010



ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK

# Nature Notes

## From the Naturalist



It has been a cold winter, but spring has finally arrived at St. Francois! The water is on in the campground, and eager campers are already starting to arrive.

I'm often asked what it is I do during the winter months. While a big part of my job is to interpret the natural resources of the park through programs and events, I am also charged with managing those resources. Much of the winter is spent in resource management.

If you are ever driving by a Missouri State Park in the southeast part of the state, and see a large plume of smoke-that's us. There is a resource stewardship crew based out of St. Francois State Park, and we spend



**Prescribed burn at Meramec State Park.**

much of the winter around our district putting in firelines and conducting prescribed burns. While it may seem like fires could be destructive, they are actually beneficial and necessary for a healthy natural community.

Based on extensive research, it was found that fires occurred naturally

about every 5 years. These fires help reduce brush, add vital nutrients to the soil and even stimulate certain types of plants.

Our district is the St. Louis area south to the bootheel, and west to Onondaga Cave State Park. In that area, we have over 10,000 acres of burn units that we try to burn on a rotating basis every 3-5 years. Our objective is to take the dense overgrown forests and restore them to the open woodlands they once were-with lots of grasses and wildflowers.



**Prescribed burns make wildflower displays like this possible.**

## PEEP! Spring is Here!

For me, one of the greatest sounds in the world is the "peep, peep" of the Spring Peepers on that first warm night of early spring.

When you start hearing their calls on the first warm evenings in March, you know spring has finally

arrived. It is only the males who make the calls-



hoping to attract a female. The females will go to water and lay 1,000 eggs-an amazing feat for a frog about the size of a paper clip!

Next time you visit the park, listen for this little harbinger of spring.

### Inside this issue:

May Program Schedule	2
The Most Unappreciated Weed	2
June Program Schedule	3
"Get Out and Play" at Play Day	3
Missouri's "Children in Nature Challenge"	4

### Missouri State Park Mission

- To preserve and interpret the finest examples of Missouri's natural landscapes
- To preserve and interpret the finest examples of Missouri's cultural landmarks.
- To provide healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences to Missourians and visitors to the state.

# May Interpretive Program Schedule

Date	Programs
<b>Saturday, May 1</b>	2pm: Explorer Hour  8pm: The Raptor's Role
<b>Saturday, May 8</b>	<b>10am-2pm Get Out and Play event at Washington State Park</b> (See story on next page)  8pm: Whose Mom is it, Anyway?
<b>Saturday, May 15</b>	2pm: Explorer Hour  8pm: Bats: Myth and Reality
<b>Saturday, May 22</b>	11am: Join us for the grand reopening of Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park!  8pm: Nature Jeopardy
<b>MEMORIAL WEEKEND</b> <b>Saturday, May 29</b>	2pm: Herpetology Hour  8pm: The Demise of Frederick T. Frog
<b>MEMORIAL WEEKEND</b> <b>Sunday, May 30</b>	2pm: The Incredible Journey  8pm: Animal Grossology

## The Most Unappreciated Weed

Many people cringe when they see the familiar yellow dandelions pop up in their yards. Some will spend money to remove these "weeds" from their lawns. But is the dandelion so foul?

Dandelions are not native to the United States. They are originally from Asia. But today, this little yellow flower can be found just about anywhere in the world!

It is actually one of the most useful plants in the natural world. For thousands of years, it has been used for food and medicine. Arabian physicians were using these plants for medicine before the year 1000! It appeared in Canada in the 1700s when the French brought it over for use in salads and as a health remedy.

In the 1800s, dandelions appeared in the United States. The English and Germans both used it for food and for cures to liver problems and other illnesses.

Because the dandelion is one of the first flowers to bloom in the spring, it provided people with a early spring infusion of nutrients and vitamins.



Today, the dandelion is still widely known as one of the most versatile wild edibles. The leaves can be used in salads or even tossed into scrambled eggs. The flower heads can be made into fritters, or as extra flavor in your pancakes and waffles. And, of course, who could forget the dandelion wine?

So before you groan at the sight of the dandelion in your yard, remember all that it has contributed to human society. And pick a few for breakfast-you might be pleasantly surprised!

### Fun Dandelion Facts:

- ☼ The word dandelion comes from the French name for the plant: **dents de lion**. This means **teeth of the lion** and refers to the jagged leaves.
- ☼ The other French name of the plant is **pis-en-lit**, which means "wet the bed". Dandelions deserve this name because the leaves, when eaten, remove water from the body. So eating enough of them could make a person well....you know. Not recommended as a bedtime snack!
- ☼ As many as 93 different insects depend on dandelions for food.

—from [www.naturewatch.ca](http://www.naturewatch.ca)



# June Interpretive Program Schedule

Date	Programs
<b>Saturday, June 5</b>	2 p.m.: Herpetology Hour  8 p.m.: Awesome Amphibians
<b>Saturday, June 12</b>	2 p.m.: Explorer Hour  8 p.m.: The Trials of a Snake's Life
<b>Saturday, June 19</b>	2 p.m.: Creek Walk  8pm: Missouri's Most Extreme Dads
<b>Saturday, June 26</b>	2 p.m.: Explorer Hour  8 p.m.: Nature Jeopardy

- The "Awesome Amphibians" program will include a short walk to listen to frogs and toads calling at a nearby pond. Bring a flashlight!
- Creek Walks will meet at the Mooner's Hollow Trailhead near Shelter #1. Bring water shoes and prepare to get wet!

## "Get Out and Play" at a Family Play Day

Join park staff as we encourage everyone to "Get Out and Play!" in Missouri State Parks! In this new techno-savvy world we live in, sometimes we forget how refreshing getting outdoors is for the mind and body. It is important to take time to "unplug" every once in a while and get out for some fresh air.

St. Francois and Washington State Park are teaming up to hold "Play Day" events. These events will give families ideas of

activities that they can enjoy

outdoors together. The first Play Day will be held at Washington State Park on Saturday, May 8, 2010.

This free event is open to visitors of all ages, and will include family-friendly games, activities, and crafts. Special



**The Play Day at St. Francois was a huge success last summer.**

booths will be set up around the Thunderbird Lodge and in the Big River Day Use area from 10:00 a.m. through 2:00 p.m. for this event. Each booth will feature an activity or subject for visitors to explore and learn more about, including Missouri Stream Team, bass fishing, nature crafts,

rock climbing, birdwatching, face

painting, etc. Visitors are also encouraged to hike the park's trails, explore the history of the petroglyphs, and even wade in the Big River! Join us for a fun-filled day at Washington State Park!

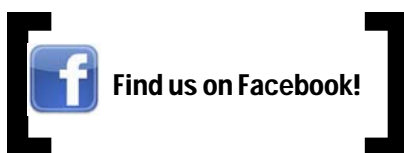
Washington State Park is located on State Highway 104 off Highway 21 between DeSoto and Potosi, Missouri.

The second Play Day will be held at St. Francois State Park in September. We will announce the date in the Summer newsletter, so stay tuned! Last year's Play Day here was a huge success, so we can't wait to hold the event again.

Join us at one (or BOTH!) of the Play Day events as we encourage families to "Get Out and Play" together!

## ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK

8920 U.S. Highway 67 North  
Bonne Terre, MO 63628  
Phone: 573-358-2173  
[www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm)



## New Camping Rates for the 2010 Camping Season (On Season Rates)

Basic Campsite- \$13.00

Electric Campsite- \$21.00

Electric/Water- \$23.00

Sewer/Electric/Water- \$26.00



\$2 discount for seniors and persons with disabilities.

\*Note that at St. Francois, we only have BASIC and ELECTRIC campsites. To make a reservation, call 1-877-422-6766.

## Missouri's "Children in Nature Challenge"

Gov. Jay Nixon recently announced that attendance at Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites increased by 6 percent in 2009. This increase, from 14.9 million visitors in 2008 to 15.9 million in 2009, bucks a 10-year decline in parks attendance and moves the state toward the Governor's goal of attracting 20 million visitors a year.

Joined by First Lady Georganne Nixon, the Governor announced the statewide **Children in Nature Challenge**. Created by Governor's Executive Order last month (EO 10-18), the "Children in Nature Challenge" directs state agencies to encourage Missouri communities to give children more opportunities to learn about and experience nature first-hand in all parts of the state.

"Generations of Missourians have grown up camping, hiking, bicycling, hunting, fishing and bird-watching,"



Gov. Nixon said. "I did that with my father and with my sons. Every child needs to experience and learn about

nature. Our efforts to connect kids with the outdoors, including promoting State Parks and the Children in Nature Challenge, will make sure that resources and opportunities are available for kids to explore Missouri's many beautiful state parks, trails and streams, whether they live in the city, the country or the suburbs."

Mrs. Nixon, who chaired the roundtable, will help lead the efforts in the Children in Nature Challenge.

"Connecting with nature improves children's physical, mental and emotional well-being. Besides that, it's fun," Mrs. Nixon said. "I'm looking forward to helping all Missouri kids get back to the great outdoors, at our beautiful state parks and other destinations."

For more information visit  
[www.mo.gov/childreninnature](http://www.mo.gov/childreninnature)