

**Dr. Edmund A.
Babler Memorial
State Park**

River Hills Current

Volume 4, Issue 2

Spring 2011

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Volunteers In Parks: The Importance of V.I.P.s

Missouri state parks have long recognized the value and necessity of volunteers through the Volunteer In Parks (VIPs) program. Most of the 85 state parks and historic sites in Missouri utilize and rely upon their assistance. Throughout the years, Babler State Park has had many volunteers dedicating their time and effort, but a formalized volunteer program wasn't established until the summer of 1998. Since the completion of that first training, volunteers have gone on to assist Babler State Park by disseminating information at the visitor center, performing trail and park maintenance, assisting with special events, acting as campground hosts, and conducting interpretive programs. Volunteers interact directly (for the most part) with the public. Volunteers meet and talk to a great variety of people. The

questions may be as simple as "where is the bathroom?" or more thought-provoking like "what is the brown bird I keep seeing in my back yard?" Volunteers are the main conduits for educating visitors and for sharing our commitment to conservation with thousands of people. The impact volunteers have is tremendous!

When asked how they came to dedicate their time, one will hear similar answers from our volunteers. They donate their time, skill, and knowledge because they like to "introduce people to the park", "help people", and "conserve and improve the resources of the park". Today, more than ever, volunteers are our lifeline to caring for the park's resources and visitors. The skills and

knowledge they hold are priceless. We could not meet the public demand for information, interpretation, nor maintenance without them. They truly are Very Important People!

Are you concerned about state parks and the outdoors? Do you have skills or talents you would like to share with others? Do you like to meet and work with people?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, Babler State Park's volunteer program may be just right for you. The types of work are almost limitless! If interested please join us at **Babler State Park's Volunteer Open House March 19 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.** or contact the park office to learn more about the volunteer opportunities available.



Seeing Green- Ready for Spring?!

With February coming to an end, many (if not all) of us are ready to shed our parkas, winter boots, and hide the snow shovel at the back of our garage. Our thoughts are turning to the warm days of spring and the first sight of green...a sprig of grass, a shoot of clover, or the tiny green buds on the awakening trees. Not only will

we soon be seeing green, but many of our native flora and fauna are "green" by name. Here's a few to get your "green" spring bug in full swing!

Green Heron: These solitary, secretive birds capture fish along wooded streams and



ponds. They can be heard giving an explosive, sharp **SKEEW** call in flight. When nervous they give a low, irregular series of "knocking" calls similar to *kuk kuk kuk*

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Program & Special Event Schedule

Volunteer Open House

March 19

5 p.m. -8 p.m.

- Are you interested in nature?
- Do you like meeting & working with new people?
- Do you have skills or talents you would like to share with others?

If you said YES to any of these... Stop by the Park's Visitor Center to learn more about volunteering for Missouri State Parks and what opportunities are available at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park!

Night Sky Over Babler

April 16

8 p.m.-10 p.m.

Join the St. Louis Astronomical Society (SLAS) at Babler State Park for Night Sky Over Babler. Telescopes will be set up near the Dr. Edmund A. Babler Monument for viewing the moon, Saturn, and its moons as well as double stars, clusters, and galaxies. SLAS members will also point out constellations such as the Big Dipper, Gemini, Leo, and Virgo. The public is encouraged to bring binoculars, lawn chairs, blankets, and flashlights. No reservations required!

Earth/Arbor Day Celebration

April 30

10 a.m. -3 p.m.

Join Babler State Park for a day of fun, earth-friendly activities to celebrate Earth Day and Arbor Day! There will be lots of "tree"rific things to do such as paper-making, games, crafts, and exhibits. The United Nations General Assembly designated 2011 as the Year of the Forest! To celebrate the importance of trees, free trees will be available for participants to take home! Trees will be in limited supply so plan to attend early! No reservations are required!

Park Notes

New Campground Booth-

The campground has received a new addition! A check-in booth has been added to the Babler State Park campground. Located by the shower house and woodshed, all campers will complete campground business through this booth. The booth will be manned by campground hosts and State Parks Youth Corps volunteers.



New Campground Booth

Tornadoes Hit Babler State Park

Personnel from the National Weather Service Forecast Office in St. Louis investigated the storm damage that occurred across parts of western St. Louis County on Sunday evening February 27th. The damage was a result of two short-lived tornadoes.

The first tornado touched down at 11:08 p.m. on Wild Horse Creek Road near the far southwest part of Babler Memorial State Park. The tornado
(continued below)

Park Notes Continued

skipped and caused tree damage southwest of the intersection of Theodore Wirth Drive and Guy Park Drive in the park, where several large trees were either snapped or uprooted. This tornado was rated EF0, had a path length of 2.3 miles and a maximum width of 50 yards.

The second tornado touched down at



Intersection of Woodbine/Bike/Equestrian Trails

11:09 p.m. near the end of Edmund Babler Memorial State Park Drive over the far southern part of the state park. Several large trees were either snapped or uprooted at this location and revealed a convergent damage. The width of the damage area ranged from 40 to 70 yards and was rated EF1. The total path length of the tornado was two miles. *(cont'd on next page)*

Park Notes Continued

The park received extensive damage throughout the trail system and campground. Hundreds of trees have been uprooted, snapped off along the trunks and bases, and treetops twisted and splintered. Currently sites 1 through 35 of our 75 site campground are open and usable, but the trails are still closed due to the presence of hazardous conditions. It is the hope of the park staff to begin opening a few trails within the next two weeks. It will be some time before all trails are open and ready for hikers, bikers, and equestrians. Please check our website (mostateparks/babler) or contact the park office at (636) 458-3813 for updates.



Virginia Day Trail



Equestrian Trail



Valley along Virginia Day



Campground

Volunteer Spotlight: V.I.P. Leon Shields

Leon Shields started as a campground host at St. Francois State Park summer of 2003. In 2006, he increased his hosting to fall and winter at Babler State Park. Shields is a jack-of-all-trades: helping with campground maintenance, collecting fees, but most of all, he is there to help campers and improve the quality of their experience.

Leon Shields began volunteering as a campground host because "he likes to help people"

On or off duty, he can often be seen walking the campground and talking with guests. The idea of hosting was first suggested by staff at Sam A. Baker State Park. His first reaction was an emphatic "no", but quickly changed his mind since "he likes to help people." When asked why he chose Babler and St. Francois State Parks he said "both parks are beautiful,



the staffs are super and the clientele are friendly." In his own words, Shields is a "flatlander" originally from Waterloo, Ill. where he worked in construction. He spends his down time line-dancing and baking.

He has become well known to anyone visiting the campground at Babler for his kind, helpful, gentlemanly ways.

Ask the Interpreter!

Q: Do salamanders have teeth?

Briana, age 5

A: Salamanders, like other amphibians, do not have teeth. Instead their strong jaws are covered in skin that can seem scratchy or sandpaper-like. Their strong jaws provide all the power they need to eat small insects, crustaceans, aquatic macro invertebrates, and worms. Missouri is home to a variety

of fascinating salamanders. The hellbender, a giant aquatic salamander that is endangered in Missouri, has only two relatives that live in Asia! Lungless salamanders, like their name suggests, lack lungs and often lack gills. They take in oxygen through their skin and the membranes of their mouth. Most of Missouri's salamanders require moist habitats or a water source to live and

Questions for "Ask the Interpreter" can be submitted via email to kendra.swee@dnr.mo.gov



Marbled Salamander

breed. Breeding occurs in the spring with eggs laid in moist soils, fishless pools and ponds. Protecting and preserving

these habitats is extremely important to the survival of our wonderful salamanders!

Missouri Department
of Natural Resources

Visitor Center Hours

April - October 8:30 am - 4 pm Wed - Sun
March & November 8:30 am - 4 pm Sat & Sun
December - February CLOSED

Park Hours

April - October 7 am - 9 pm Daily
November - March 7 am - 6 pm Daily

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We're On The Web!

www.mostateparks.com/babler

Save The Date!

(more information will be available in the Summer 2011 newsletter)

May 28 – Wildheart Concert

Weekends May 2 - Sept. 2 – Explorer Hours

Aug. 13 – Babler State Park Bug Day and Open House

In The Next Issue:

Year of the Turtle

Birding 101

Babler State Park's Historic Past

Check out Missouri State Parks newly renovated website and Babler State Park's new webpage at mostateparks.com

Don't Forget! Babler State Park's Visitor Center has re-opened for the season! In March, the center is open Saturday and Sunday 8:30 a.m.—4 p.m. and will re-open Wednesday through Sunday in April!

Seeing Green

Green Dragon: This odd-looking wildflower is found growing from April to June in rich moist woods, including those of Babler State Park. It's numerous, tiny light green flowers are found at the base of the tail-like spadix.



Rough Green Snake: This brilliantly-colored green snake can be found most often among the low branches of trees and shrubs along creeks, rivers, and ponds. Their diet is restricted to insects and spiders. They rely on their coloration to camouflage among the leaves and will often

sway with the leaves when a breeze blows.

Green Ash: This medium to large opposite branching tree is found in bottomland forest of Missouri. The green ash is the most widely distributed native American ash. It is often easy to identify in winter due to the bark's interlacing ridges which produce an overall diamond pattern. The green and white ashes are often associated with the growth of morel mushrooms close to their base and are threatened with destruction from the invasive Emerald Ash Borer.



(continued from page 1)



This is just a short listing of all of Missouri's "green" plants and animals. With a little research you can be well versed in the "green" life found in around you!

Seeing Green to Going Green! Join us for our Earth Day/Arbor Day celebration on April 30 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.!