

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

River Hills Current

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Spring 2012

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Fungi Fun

Take a walk along a trail at Babler State Park in the next few weeks and you will notice the first glimpses of spring: buds on the ends of twigs, dainty wildflowers covering the forest floor, and people walking slowly through the woods, heads down and carrying mesh bags or baskets. Although this last sighting may not seem like a sign of spring's arrival, for mycophiles (fungi enthusiasts) it is the sign they have been waiting for all winter! Many Missourians are mushroom hunters. Most start out as foragers for edible species such as morels and chanterelles. Later, some are "bitten" by the mushroom bug and begin to search out mushrooms, edible or not, purely for the joy of seeing their beauty and being outdoors.

Fungi 101

Missouri's climate and habitats provide the perfect growing conditions for dozens of edible, and just as many interesting non-edible, species of mushroom. Fungi are masses of hairlike filaments, called hyphae. These hyphae germinate from a spore and grow in

the soil, on decaying logs and leaf litter. The filaments grow together and form a white, cobweblike substance called mycelium. The mycelium act as decomposers; feeding on dead plant matter and leaving behind nutrients the living plants need. When conditions are perfect (such as temperature, light, and water), the fungi produce a fruiting body, or mushroom, which eventually releases spores back into the environment to create more fungi.

How to Get Started

Between late March and early November, conditions are perfect for mushroom production. After a couple rainy days, take a trip into Missouri's woodlands, especially those with older trees, and see what you find. Under the right conditions mushrooms will grow almost anywhere! They may even be

growing on mulch piles, tree stumps, and garden beds in



your own yard. Mushroom hunting is an inexpensive hobby, requiring gear many people already own and only a small investment in a good field guide. The following items are essential to an enjoyable hunting experience:

1. Long pants and a long-sleeved, lightweight shirt - Most mushrooms are found off trail, meaning encounters with thorns, poison ivy, ticks, and chiggers. Many people will also tuck their pant legs into their socks as added protection from invading pests.
2. Bug Spray - Another line

(cont'd on page 6)



Pioneer Profile: Magdalene Bates and Family

Unlike the Coleman and Tyler families, the Bates family were farmers of more moderate means. In 1833, Prussian native Maria Magdalene Kayser along with her two brothers, Alexander and Henry, purchased 150 arpents (roughly 127 acres) of land east of Wildhorse Creek located in what was commonly called "Butler's Valley". Martin Bates, also a native of Prussia, came to the United States in 1820 with his mother, Elizabeth Bates. In the early 1930s, Martin moved to St. Louis where he met and married Magdalene. Between 1847 and 1849, Magdalene acquired sole interest in the property she purchased with her brothers and on which she and her husband resided. Their residence was destroyed around 1850 and the Bates family lived with their neighbor, William Tyler, for a short time while they rebuilt their home atop another ridge on their property near what is now the family cemetery.

Around 1860, Henry E. Bates, Martin and Magdalene's only son, married



Bates Family Cabin

Henriette J. Gaehe. Shortly after their marriage, tensions between the North and South began to escalate and the Bates men (Henry and Martin) enlisted in the Pacific Battalion of the Union Missouri Home Guards. They were responsible for guarding bridges along the Missouri Pacific Railroad in St. Louis and Franklin counties from July to September 1861. This affiliation with the Union army was in direct contrast with their Confederate neighbors, the Tylers and Colemans. After the war, Henry and Henriette had six children and built a small log cabin at the base of the ridge on which his parent's cabin sat. The family continued to farm the land and by 1870 it held a

worth \$4,000. By 1880, Henry Bates's family had moved in with his aging parents atop the ridge. Magdalene passed away in 1881 and Martin in 1902.

Around the turn of the century, Henry's son, Henry E. Bates Jr., worked for Anton Leiwke's Centaur Lime Co. Anton had purchased large tracts of the Tyler

and Coleman estates for his limestone quarrying company. He did not stay there long though. By 1909, he had married, moved back into the family homestead with his parents, and built a general store on the family property just north of Wildhorse Creek Road. He and his wife later built their own home near the store.

In the 1930s, the majority of the Bates family property was sold to Jacob L. Babler and became part of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park. Martin and Magdalene's homesite became the location of the lodge constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1930s. The ruins of a cabin still persist below the ridge along Wildhorse Creek. It is unclear whether this cabin is the relocated home of Martin and Magdalene or the original homesite of Henry E. and Henriette. This cabin was renovated by the CCC and was home to a family who maintained the stables until it was destroyed by a lightning-ignited fire.

Stay tuned for more pioneer profiles throughout the year as we count down to the park's 75th anniversary in 2013!

2012: A Year of Amazing Opportunities

(Part Two)

March 14: Conjunction of Venus and Jupiter – The two brightest planets will be within 3 degrees of each other in the evening sky. On March 25, the crescent moon will also be close to these planets creating a dazzling display!

April 6: Missouri Arbor Day – Spend the day enjoying a forest or plant a tree!

April 22: Earth Day - Celebrate at Babler with Earth Day of Service!

April 22 and 23: Lyrids Meteor Shower at its peak – This is an average meteor shower of 20 meteors per hour. Meteors may be seen from April 16 - 25. With no moon to interfere, this could be a really good show. Look for meteors radiating from the constellation Lyra.

May 12: International Migratory Bird Day – Looks for parks holding a celebration and learn to bird!

May 5 and 6: Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower at its peak – This is a light meteor shower of only 10 meteors per hour. Meteors may be seen May 4 - 7. The full moon will most likely make viewing difficult.

May 20: Annular Solar Eclipse - This solar eclipse will be visible throughout much of North America.

Program and Special Event Schedule

All programs are FREE and open to the public

Please contact the visitor center at 636-458-3813 for more program details!

March 2012

Birding for Beginners

Saturday March 24

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

River Hills Visitor Center

Birding, formerly known as bird-watching, is one of the most popular pastimes in America. Human culture is also steeped with bird references. Join a naturalist to learn more about the importance of birds to people and nature, bird biology, and how to become a birder. This program will begin indoors with an introduction to birds then participants will head outside to practice their newly found birding skills! Bring your own binoculars or borrow a pair of ours and dress for the weather. No reservations required!



April 2012

Night Sky Over Babler

April 14

7 p.m. – 10 p.m.

River Hills Visitor Center and Babler Monument Field

Meet the “STARS” of the night sky at Babler State Park! Discover the myths and legends of the constellations at 7 p.m. in the visitor center. Then join the St. Louis Astronomical Society (SLAS) for stargazing at 8 p.m. 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 Day of Service

April 22

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

and

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Are you interested in protecting our natural resources? Are you looking for a way to give back? Join park staff on Earth Day to participate in a day of invasive species eradication! Groups, families and individuals are welcome to participate. Registration is required so we can better supply tools and organize staff. Please contact the visitor center at 636-458-3813 to sign up!

May 2012

Spring Wildflower Hikes

Saturdays in May

10 a.m.

Scheduled Trailheads

Enjoy the beauty of Babler State Park on a spring wildflower hike! Join the park's interpretive staff to learn more about Missouri's forest wildflowers and other spring occurrences along the trail. Hikes will last approximately one and a half hours and vary in degree of difficulty. All ages are welcome!

May 5 – Hawthorn Trail

May 12 – Paved Bike Trail

May 19 – Woodbine Trail

May 26 – Virginia Day Trail

Memorial Day Weekend

Saturday May 26

10 a.m. – Wildflower Hike

2 p.m. Explorer Hour: Flower Press

7 p.m. – Evening Program: Camp Cooking (Amphitheater)

Sunday May 27

2 p.m. – Nature Bandanas

8 p.m. – Evening Program: Night Hike (Amphitheater)

For more details, please contact the park at 636-458-3813.

Explorer Hours and Saturday Evening Programs begin Memorial Day weekend and run every weekend through Labor Day weekend. Program topics and activities will change weekly. Please check park kiosks, the park's Facebook page, or contact the visitor center to learn more.

The Importance of Being a Birder



Birding is one of America's top pastimes. In 2001, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported an estimated 46 million people, 16 years of age and older, were birders—a little over one in every five people! During the 1990s, though, birding declined in popularity. This has led to

a rejuvenated effort to recruit new birders and teach the skills of birding at a younger age. Ironically, this renewed enthusiasm for birding comes at a time of decline in bird populations due to degradation and destruction of habitat.

What is a birder?

A birder is defined as someone who has taken a trip a mile or more away from their home with the primary purpose to observe birds and/or closely observed or tried to identify birds around their home. Birds are our most visible form of wildlife. They are observable year-round in almost every habitat. They are more than willing to perch close to our windows at feeders for extended periods of time, providing a chance to not only admire their beau-

tiful colors and markings but their behaviors as well.

What are the benefits of birding?

Not only can birding be an activity that builds familial and social bonds, but it reaps a number of mental benefits for young and old alike. For children, the act of birding packs a powerful developmental punch. When actively birding, children are using both visual and auditory observation skills. Analytical skills are honed as children critically observe and subsequently try to identify a bird. As children work together to spot birds, they develop social and communication skills. The best part is these skills are being developed while the children are actively enjoying being in nature. Older adults gain many of the same advantages from birding, keeping their analytical and observational skills sharp.

Birding and birders are also extremely important for the economy. In 2006, Americans spent \$12 billion on trip expenditures and \$24 billion on birding equipment. These birding expenditures led to the creation of 671,000 jobs and \$28 billion in employment income. The economical benefit along with an awareness of bird species decline has led to an increased effort to preserve, reclaim, and restore important bird

habitats and a decrease in activities and products detrimental to birds.

How can I get involved?

Observing birds at a feeder is great, easy way to get into birding and can cost as little or as much as you want to spend. Building feeders, constructing recycled feeders, and making bird treats like suet cakes are also a great way to get everyone working together toward a family hobby. After spending a few hours observing birds at a feeder, a person may develop the interest to take their birding skills on the road! Purchasing a pair of binoculars and a good field guide will get you on your way. Babler State Park and the surrounding parks, conservation areas and reserves serve as integral parts of spring and fall migration for birds and offer great opportunities for new birders!

Want to learn more about birding? Join a park naturalist on Saturday, March 24 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. for a Birding for Beginners Program!

Ask The Interpreter!

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

Q: What are the first flowers of spring?

A: Two of the first flowers to emerge each spring can often be seen before March 20! Harbinger of Spring, also called pepper and salt, can be found as early as January at the bases of wooded slopes and along streams. The small white florets contain red-brown anthers thus giving it the name "Pepper and Salt." These members of the carrot family begin flowering once they are 2-3 inches above ground, but the fernlike leaves do not emerge until later in the spring.



Harbinger of Spring

Another early bloomer is Spring beauty. This plant can begin flowering in February in a variety of habitats statewide. They are identifiable by the pink veining of the five white petals.

It begins flowering once the plant has reached 5 inches tall, but can grow twice that tall after the flowering season ends in May. It is noted that Native Americans ate the roots of this plant and the leaves are also edible.

Although a few flowers



Spring Beauty

bloom early, March begins the wildflower season with a vast number of flowers in a plethora of shapes, sizes, and colors. Flowers are most abundant on the forested hillsides of Babler through the spring, but some can be seen in the park until December.

Come to Babler State Park this May for naturalist-led spring wildflower hikes. Hikes will be held Saturdays in May at 10 a.m! See the program schedule on page 3 for more details!

Park Notes

Alta Shelter Update

Milling of the logs from within the park was completed this winter and have been stacked to season for the spring. Work is scheduled to begin at Alta Shelter in mid-March!!! No completion date has been set at this time, but progress is being made.



New Additions in Gift Shop

Starting in March, the River Hills Visitor Center Gift Shop will showcase new

Missouri-made and park-themed items! New park patches have arrived and are



a very colorful replacement for the previous Babler trails patch. Other new additions to come will be trail mix from St. Louis company Grandma's Nuts, bison jerky from Prairie State Park, new Missouri State Parks logo lapel pins, park postcards, new books, and much more. If you are looking for "wild" recipes, check out the Missouri Department of Conservation's book

Cooking Wild in Missouri. It showcases recipes for a variety of native plants, animals, and fungi!

Missouri State Parks Logo

Although Missouri state parks and historic sites are still a division of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, you will notice a new logo being implemented this year. The new logo (seen below) will be displayed on all new signage, employee uniforms, and any correspondence and literature from our division of the agency.



Volunteer Spotlight:



Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Visitor Center Hours

April - October: 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Wed - Sun.
 March and November: 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sat - Sun.
 December - February: CLOSED

Park Hours

April - October: 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. Daily
 November - March: 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Daily

DR. EDMUND A. BABLER MEMORIAL STATE PARK

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We're On The Web!

www.mostateparks.com/babler

Save The Date!

(more information will be available in the Summer 2012 newsletter)

- Summer Explorer Hours every Saturday and Sunday
- Summer Evening Amphitheater Programs every Saturday Night
- Aug. 11, 2012 – Bug Day

In The Next Issue:

- Going Batty!
- Pioneer Profile: Kelpie
- Aquatic Adventures

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

&

Follow us on Facebook!

Looking for a place to share your talents and time? Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park is looking for volunteers! Please feel free to stop by or call the visitor center to learn more about the opportunities available.

Fungi Fun...

of attack for invading pests. Bug sprays that work well are 15-25 percent DEET or citronella and eucalyptus for a non-chemical based alternative.

3. Basket or mesh bag - These allow air flow to reach the mushrooms and for spores to be released while hunting (meaning more mushrooms in the future). Be cautious not to put too many mushrooms into the same container; they bruise easily.
4. Knife - A locking, wide blade knife works best for digging up mushrooms. It is best to collect the entire fruiting body for positive identification.



taking notes, and a couple of good field guides for proper identification.

There are NO old, bold mushroom hunters...

As part of the old adage goes, it is EXTREMELY important to have 100 percent positive identification on any mushroom before eating it. Symptoms from the ingestion of poisonous mushrooms can

run the gamut from mild intestinal upset to death. This is not meant to scare a person away from mushroom hunting as a hobby, but as a reminder to be cautious and seek consultation with an expert if you are unsure. If you are interested in mushroom hunting as a hobby, want to learn more about the mushroom species of Missouri,

(continued from page 1)

or just want to meet other individuals as enthused by mushrooms as you may be, consider contacting the Missouri Mycological Society (MOMS). MOMS is one of about 100 amateur mushroom clubs affiliated with the North American Mycological Association (NAMA). MOMS hosts events, classes, and forays throughout the year (even at Babler!) and offers its members the support they need to be knowledgeable mushroom hunters. Visit their website for more information www.momyco.org

Missouri's State Parks are a great place to hunt for mushrooms. Although other items (flowers, fruit, etc.) cannot be collected, mushrooms can be harvested!