Missouri’s Department of Natural Resources strives to protect our land, water, air and minerals while simultaneously preserving specific areas of natural, cultural and historical value. These designated natural areas, which showcase examples of outstanding geological features and crucial biological processes, are managed to minimize human impacts. Natural areas remain mostly undisturbed, with exceptions made for removal of invasive species or mitigation of damage inflicted by natural disturbances. These practices allow natural succession to occur and provide excellent opportunities to observe how plant and animal communities interact and change over time.

Established on Sept. 25, 1978, Southwoods Hollow Natural Area spans 17 acres within Babler State Park. This east-facing hollow, with its ideal cool and moist growing environment, has been historically dominated by white oaks, some of which are estimated to be more than 200 years old. The massive girth and height of these trees is attributed to fertile topsoil derived from the deposition of loess, a silt-sized sediment originating from windblown dust.

However, white oaks are not the only trees that flourish in the extremely fertile soil of Southwoods. Sugar maples continue to expand their population and are a major competitor for space within this natural area. A shift in dominance from white oaks to sugar maples will result in less diversity in the types of ground cover present, and will change the abundance of plant and animal communities. However, this change will not be limited to Southwoods Hollow, as alterations within one community have a ripple effect on surrounding ecosystems.

Historically, fire was viewed as detrimental to the environment, and suppression was regularly practiced. However, it is now known that fire suppression actually increases ecological, human and economical damage by increasing fuel loads and causing fires to burn hotter and longer on a larger scale. Additionally, fire suppression allows species that pose serious threats to become well established, leading to new community dynamics.

Allowing fires to occur naturally, through events such as lightning, or establishing a burn plan for a managed unit will allow ecosystems to “reset” their processes and allow natural succession to occur. Fire is a valuable tool and a viable option in areas such as Southwoods Hollow, where the historic oak canopy will vanish when sugar maples become fully established.

-Kathy McCoy,
Seasonal Interpreter
Help Us Protect Our Resources

Pick up after your pet

People don’t always discuss the reason for this, but animal feces carries a lot of different viruses, bacteria and diseases. On rainy days, water that contracts the matter runs off, and enters local waterways. Both animals and people who use this water are exposed to these germs and become more vulnerable to illness. Not just in the park, but also those in the surrounding community who rely on water. You may think animal waste is a natural fertilizer, but not all shit is the same. The natural plant-based diets of most of the park’s animals are a bit easier on the land, versus a domesticated dog or cat that has an omnivorous diet and consumes highly processed foods. You may notice the lawn around your neighborhood has dead spots of grass. This isn’t because someone accidentally spilled some bleach or sprayed herbicides – this is most likely due to a pile of animal waste that was left for a period of time and ended up killing the surrounding grass.

By picking up pets’ waste, we can help protect the environment and protect the health of other animals and people. If needed, you can stop by the Visitor Center and ask for some animal waste bags, and we’ll be happy to oblige.

Pick up after yourself

When you tour through Babler State Park, you might not see all the different species of trees and animals, but one thing you will see that affects the environment is human litter. Glass, aluminum cans and single-use plastics are some of the biggest culprits. The glass left in the park is often from the mid-to early-1900s, but most of the plastics come from the mid-1980s to present day. The key difference between the three? Glass takes approximately 1 million years to decompose and is considered almost 100% recyclable if done properly. Plastic on the other hand is a different story. There are hundreds of different variants of plastic, ranging from shopping bags, pop bottles and fishing line to tougher forms like those used to store chemicals like bleach and laundry detergents.

For now, we’ll focus on bottles and shopping bags. Plastic bags take anywhere from 10 to 1,000 years to decompose, while pop bottles take upwards of 450 years. This doesn’t sound as bad as glass, but not all plastic can be recycled, and for some, after 2-3 cycles, the quality drops so much that it’s almost unusable. Unfortunately, a lot of this makes its way into our natural environments where natural factors begin the decomposition process. Things like sunlight, temperature changes and microbes in the Earth all affect this process. As plastics begin to break down, they release chemicals into the environment. In urban areas where we see more localized pollution, this can have an even longer lasting effect by releasing chemicals into municipal water systems that cannot remove these contaminants. Many of these act as “endocrine disruptors,” and change the hormonal balances of the body, not to mention the wildlife as well! Aluminum cans aren’t off the hook either. Despite being metal, most cans contain a thin lining that holds trace amounts of BPA that can affect the body. So while it may seem better to use cans versus plastic, they still need to be properly recycled.

How can you help?

- Be sure to collect your pet’s waste.
- Reduce your use of plastics (shopping bags, etc.)
- Reuse plastics (reusable water bottle, etc.)
- Recycle when you can.

Lastly, get outside and enjoy your Missouri State Parks and become an advocate for keeping our parks clean.

Recycling center caption

You can find the recycling center in the park behind the campground shower house. We are currently looking for a scout who could make the park a couple more to create other stations throughout the park. If you know of such a scout have them email dustin.hillis@dnr.mo.gov for more information.

-John Kruger
Seasonal Interpreter
**Explorer Corner**

Help the tree absorb water with its roots. Find the best path to provide the tree with nutrient-rich water.

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**Did You Know?**

In Missouri, there are around 119 common species of native Missouri trees! According to the MO Dept. of Conservation, the oldest bald cypress trees in Missouri can be found at Allred Lake Natural Area near Neelyville, where the trees range from 500 to 1000 years old. This is the last stand of old-growth bald cypress in MO.

**Did You Know?**

Missouri has a state tree, the Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*). This showy tree flowers in spring with white "blossoms". However, these blossoms are not actually the flower, they are modified leaves surrounding the yellow flower clusters in the center.

**Did You Know?**

The average life of a tree: in a heavily used city park is 25 to 30 years. By contrast, the average life span of a tree in a remote rural forest is 100 to 150 years.

**Did You Know?**

Missouri's largest known living tree is an American sycamore with a score of 457, a tree that also holds the largest circumference -- 333 inches. The greatest crown spread (200 feet) belongs to a different sycamore.
Feeding Frenzy
Saturdays from 10 a.m.-11 a.m.
March 7
March 14
Feeling hungry? Ever wonder what it takes to keep all of the Visitor Center’s reptiles, amphibians, and fish happy? Drop by to visit with the park interpreters as they feed the hungry critters. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Spring Wildflower Hikes
Saturdays from 9 a.m.—11 a.m.
March 28
April 4
April 11
April 18
April 25
May 2
May 9
Join us for a Spring Wildflower Hike! We will be hiking the Hawthorn Trail. The Hawthorn Trail is approximately 1.25 miles long. We will explore the trail in search of the first flowers of spring 2020. Meet at the Alta Shelter Parking Lot.

Babler Rocks
Sunday, April 5th
10 a.m. - Noon
Join us in celebrating Geologist’s Day by exploring the geologic history of Babler. We will have a fossil hunt, explore Babler Spring, an interactive stream table, and so much more. Meet at the Guy Park Trailhead. We will be stationed out of the Walnut Grove Shelter.

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 or check our Facebook page!

MO State Parks 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.

World Migratory Bird Day
Sunday, May 10th
10 a.m. - Noon
Join us in celebrating World Migratory Bird Day! We will be hiking the Virginia Day Trail and recording any and all bird species that we come across. Bring your best pair of binoculars and your enthusiasm to look for our temporary avian guests. The Virginia Day Trail is about 1.5 miles long and is moderate terrain. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Follow us on Facebook to check for program updates and the Memorial Weekend holiday programs.

Babler will be showcasing local artists from the Wildwood/ Chesterfield area during the month of April. All the artists’ work will be on display in the lobby and theatre at the Visitor Center.
Babler State Park is on Facebook!

It is a great way to stay up-to-date on current program offerings, stay in contact with park staff, and post comments about the park. Please check us out on the social networking site at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park and “Like” us.

Service Projects Available for Scouts

Park staff have recently compiled a new 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!

Military Discounts Now Available!

In 2019, Missouri State Parks started offering a military discount on camping stays. For stays beginning on April 1, customers who are retired, veteran or active-duty military personnel (including active-duty family members) are eligible for a $2 per night camping discount. Like the Senior/ADA discount, there are acceptable forms of identification for the Military Discount, including CAC card or the DD Form 1173. The proper military identification must be shown at time of check-in. This discount applies to camping only. The discount does not apply to lodging (i.e., cabins, yurts, etc.). The qualifying party must show proper identification upon check-in.

Volunteers Wanted:

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park is looking for people to help in the Visitor Center. Volunteers will help with nature hikes, educational camps, school groups and so much more. Contact the park for more information at 636-458-3813.

2019 Deer Hunt Results

The results from the 2019 deer hunt allowed the park to remove 28 deer from the rapidly growing herd. During the hunt, park naturalists sampled 12 yearling and adult harvested deer for Chronic Wasting Disease. The 12 samples came back negative for Chronic Wasting Disease infection, meaning that our deer herd inside the park is healthy.

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.
Babler’s First Families: the Bates

Magdalena Kayser and her younger brothers, Alexander and Henry, journeyed to the St. Louis area in 1833 from Germany. Their father was a magistrate, and one must assume that his position afforded them the luxury of travel to the United States. The trio purchased 150 arpents of land on August 14, 1833 for $670 in what was then called “Butler’s Valley.” Around this time, Magdalena met and married Martin Bates, who had immigrated to this country from Prussia with his mother, Elizabeth Bates (née Hinkel). The two had a son, Heinrich (Henry) Elias Bates on Feb. 21, 1836, and the family lived in a small cabin. Between 1847 and 1849, Alexander and Henry signed their interests in the land over to Magdalena for $1 each. Sometime before 1850, the cabin burned down, and the family of three lived with neighbor William Tyler while rebuilding. At this time, Elizabeth lived with a Henry F. Bates in St. Charles. On June 14, 1860, Heinrich “Henry” married a neighbor, Henriette Gaehle. The Gaehles lived south of the Bates, on property now contained in the park. Henry and Henriette went on to have six children - Martin Alexander, Friedrich Theodor, Margarethe Eloise, Henry Edward, Johann “John” Lorenz and Katherine Henriette. Martin and Magdalena built another home where Babler Lodge currently sits, and the younger Bates family lived in the cabin. By 1870, the Bates farm was worth $4,000. Henry Bates & Sons also ran a pony saw mill, located in either Butler’s Valley or the Centaur area. Elizabeth Bates was the first person interred in the Bates Family cemetery, which is located on park property, in 1872. Magdalena succumbed to cholera in 1881, and Friedrich Theodor followed in 1891 at the young age of 22. The remaining graves belong to Martin, Henry and Henrietta. Martin A. Bates married Serena Elebeck in November 1899. They had one daughter, Grace, and Martin was the director for the Wild Horse Creek school in 1911. Eloise married George Glock in 1902 and had Arnold, Arnolia, Henry and Theron. Henry Edward “H.E.” lived in Centaur for a time, boarding with Joseph Leiweke and Joseph Gaehle, and working as a store clerk. Eventually he owned a general store on the end of the Bates property, north of Wild Horse Creek Road. H.E. married Bertha Corliss (her mother was Luella Eatherton) and they had three children - Violet, Henry Elroy and Marland. John Bates married Alvina Kessler (her mother was Catherine Kroenung) in 1907 at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Orrville. He was a photographer, and in 1910 had a studio on 14th St. in St. Louis. They had two daughters, Clara and Amy. The final sibling, Katherine, lived with the Glock family and in 1930 was a seamstress in a dress factory in St. Louis. The cabin that the Bates family lived in was renovated by the CCC workers to house the stable managers, but was destroyed by lightning. Very little remains of the Bates family homestead. Perhaps a piece of foundation here, the faint outline of a road there, but their legacy survives in Bates Road, the only road in the park named for a “First Family.”

-Carley Wright
Park Volunteer
It is the start of a new year, and change is ever a part of that ongoing cycle. With that in mind, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Chris Ferree, and I am the new park superintendent here at Babler State Park. I started in mid-January and come from Mastodon State Historic Site, where I was assistant site superintendent for the past seven years. I am excited to be part of the great team that is already here at Babler.

We are currently in the off-season, but lots of work is still going on. The Visitor Center is getting a fresh coat of paint and a reworking of some of the exhibits. Research continues on historical aspects of the park, and budget and project planning for next fiscal year are in full swing.

We are all getting ready for the return of spring, which brings our campground fully open, while education programs increase and those first glimmers of green start showing outside. I am eager to see the park wake up from its winter slumber.

The Visitor Center reopens on weekends starting Feb. 29 (it’s a leap year!) and will be open five days a week starting in April (Wed-Sun 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.).

I encourage you to stop into our offices and say hello. My continuing education on all things Babler is made that much easier by talking with people who come and enjoy the park and all of Missouri State Parks. We would not be here without your past and continuing support and visits. I look forward to seeing all of you out and about in the park.

-Chris Ferree,
Park Superintendent
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.

**River Hills Visitor Center Hours:**
- April-October: 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m.—Wednesday-Sunday
- November & March: 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m.—Saturday & Sunday
- December-February: CLOSED

**Park Hours:**
- April 1 – Oct. 31: 7 a.m.-9 p.m.
- Nov. 1—March 30: 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

*We’re on the web!*
mostateparks.com/babler
https://www.facebook.com/DrEdmundABablerMemorialStatePark/