

THE BABLER BABBLE

Official Newsletter of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park

Here's the Buzz

BY CLAIRE HUMES

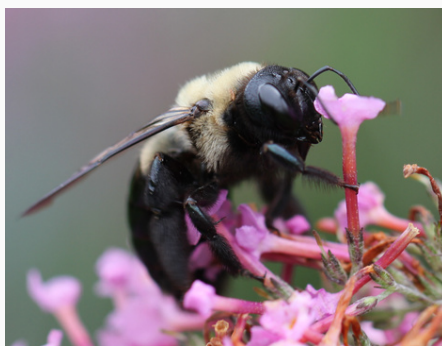
When we think of bees, we often think of highly social animals that live in busy hives with hundreds of other bees and a queen. This is the life of honeybees and bumblebees, which are only a few out of about 425 bee species in Missouri. More than half of these bees actually live in solitary, meaning they spend most of their lives alone. There are some bee species like leafcutter bees and sweat bees that live in solitary but will nest close to one another.

Like social bees, solitary bees play a big role in pollinating our crops, flowers and trees, but even more so than honeybees. Honeybees and bumblebees have pollen baskets, which are tightly packed balls of pollen on their back legs. This allows them to not lose as much pollen when they fly. Solitary bees have hairs that the pollen sticks to. When they fly, a lot of what they collected still falls off. This does make it so they have to go back and forth more than honeybees and bumblebees, but in doing so, it increases the spread of pollen.

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Honeybee collecting pollen, has pollen baskets on back legs.
Photo courtesy of Pexels.com



Carpenter bee gathering nectar from flower
Photo courtesy of Julia Wilkins, Wikimedia Commons)

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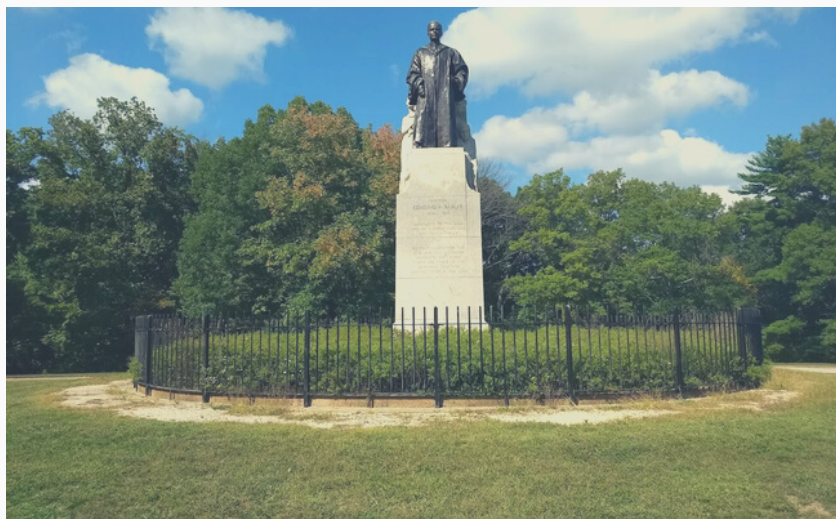
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Generations of Missourians have passed through Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park's massive stone gateway for cookouts and family get-togethers or to spend time with friends. The park's camping facilities, Civilian Conservation Corps architecture, and hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails help all visitors find their place to get away from it all, just minutes from St. Louis.



Park Hours

APRIL-OCTOBER 7A.M.- 9P.M.
NOVEMBER-MARCH 7A.M.- 6P.M.

Visitor Center Hours

MARCH & NOVEMBER 9A.M.- 4 P.M. SAT-SUN
APRIL-OCTOBER 9A.M.- 4:30P.M. WED-SUN
DECEMBER-FEBRUARY CLOSED

Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park
800 Guy Park Drive
Wildwood, MO 63005

T: 636-458-3813
F: 636-458-9105
E: BablerStatePark@dnr.mo.gov

Park Staff

PARK MANAGER: CHRIS FERREE

ASST. MANAGER: RICH LOVE

ASST. MANAGER: ANDREA GRANT

NATURALIST: DUSTIN HILLIS

SR. MAINTENANCE: ERIK VEENSTRA

MAINTENANCE: HOLLY MORRIS

MAINTENANCE: JASON LECLERE

RANGER: JONATHON THOMPSON





Special Events Schedule

ALL PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

PLEASE CONTACT THE VISITOR CENTER AT 636-458-3813 FOR MORE INFORMATION OR CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE.

Spring Wildflower Hikes

Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon

April 6
April 13
April 20



Join us for a Spring Wildflower Hike! We will be hiking the Virginia Day Trail, 1.5 miles in length. We will explore the trail in search of the first flowers of spring 2024. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Stream Team Volunteering

Sundays from 10 a.m. to noon

May 12 Aug. 11
June 9 Sept. 15
July 14 Oct. 13

Are you interested in volunteering with the park for a one-time event (or more) that allows you to help the park with a stream team activity? If you answered yes, then sign up for this event to be selected to help out. Seats are limited to 20. If you are not able to attend this program, that's okay—we will have more opportunities like this in the future. All participants will need to plan to get wet. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Sign up for these events via the link below:

icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx



Spring Tram Tours

10 a.m. to noon
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

April 27 May 4
April 28 May 5

Join us in celebrating Spring by touring Babler State Park through a Tram Ride. Each tour will host approximately 25 people. An interpretive guide with a PA system will provide a presentation on the history of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park and give commentary on the local natural and cultural history. Meet at the Visitor Center.



All participants will need to sign up via the link below:

icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx

Learn2 Aim

10 a.m. to noon

April 14 Aug. 4
May 26 Sept. 22
June 16 Oct. 20
July 7

Begin your archer journey by attending a hands-on workshop this summer! Take a step back in time and join Missouri State Parks for the Learn2 Aim event. This is a great opportunity to learn new skills with joint instruction on the basics of archery and atlatl throwing. The program is free and available to ages 10 and up. Missouri State Parks provides the equipment and expertise in a safe environment – you bring your enthusiasm to learn a skill that ties back to Missouri history. We will be meeting at the Monument Field. Parking is available at the Visitor Center and limited parking behind the statue.



All participants will need to sign up via the link below:

icampmo1.usedirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx



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.





What's the Story ...

BY CARLEY WRIGHT

Camp Babler

Did you know that Dr. Edmund A Babler Memorial State Park was used for an innovative convalescent program during WWII? Brainchild of Lt. Col. Howard A Rusk, the Army Air Forces Convalescents Training Program began at Jefferson Barracks in December 1942, and at the former CCC camps in Babler Park the following spring. First in the nation, Camp Babler allowed injured or sick soldiers to continue their recovery in an outdoor environment, leaving them in better shape to re-join their colleagues on the front lines faster. The training began at Jefferson Barracks with neck and finger exercises as soon as the patient no longer had a fever. After the patient was mobile, they would start with more strenuous things like gardening and volleyball, progressing eventually to long hikes (which we all know how difficult that can be in the hills of Babler Park!) and similar feats of endurance.

The soldier's mind was not forgotten in this regiment, as there were courses in math and foreign languages, lectures on the identification of different aircraft, training on camouflage, booby traps, and map reading. Models of different aircraft were even hung above patients' beds and changed daily. The Army and Navy Journal of April 17, 1943, likened Camp Babler to a baseball team's Spring Training camp. Eventually men who had been drafted but were not in good enough physical condition to start boot camp were also sent here to receive conditioning.

I know that the photos aren't the best quality (they were taken from scanned newspapers at Newspapers.com), but I thought our good readers would enjoy seeing some scenes from the park's past.

As always, if you have any information on the history of Babler State Park, please get in touch with me at parkpool20@gmail.com

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Gas recognition drill, part of the educational program for convalescents at Jefferson Barracks (this is at the Camp Babler hospital annex) and other basic training centers of the Air Forces. The men run through weak samples of poisonous gas to learn to identify the various kinds by smell.

Photo courtesy of the St. Louis Post Dispatch.



An outdoor class in submachine gun operation. The instructor is a sergeant who is one of the patients. Many of the convalescent classes are taught by patients.

Photo courtesy of the St. Louis Post Dispatch

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.



We do off-site programs!

Contact Dustin Hillis, Senior Park Specialist, at Babler State Park to schedule your program(s). These can be for schools, assisted living facilities, etc.

E: dustin.hillis@dnr.mo.gov
T: 636-324-7064



What's the Story ... [Continued]



A group of convalescents who are almost ready to return to duty. Brought along gradually to physical fitness by the convalescent program, they present energetic appearance near the end of a 15-mile hike.

Photo courtesy of the St. Louis Post Dispatch

Here's the Buzz ... [Continued]

If you look in our native wildflower garden at the front of the visitor center, you may notice small birdhouse-like boxes with hollow tubes and holes in them on a few of the trees nearby. These are solitary bee houses. They give these bees nesting opportunities near flowers. Female solitary bees nest in the ground or in small wood cavities. This is a great setup for housing, as they don't need to travel as far from their nests to collect pollen.



Solitary bee house example on wood siding
Photo courtesy of pixabay.com, Picryl.com



Female Leafcutter bee with pollen stuck to hairs on abdomen
Photo courtesy of Jean and Fred Hort, Flickr

Volunteers in Parks

VIPs provide invaluable assistance to Missouri State Parks on a wide variety of tasks and projects around the state. Volunteers assist people in visitor centers and contact stations. They help catalog historic items and documents, and they serve as natural history interpreters and tour guides. Some VIPs perform maintenance or light construction tasks, or help with building or renovating trails. There is almost no limit to the types of work that volunteers can perform. The main requirement is a willingness to serve.

Contact the park for more information at
636-324-7064.

Or sign up at the following:
mostateparks.com/page/57872/volunteer-parks-program





Explorer Corner

American robins are common sights on lawns across North America, where you often see them tugging earthworms out of the ground. Robins are popular birds for their warm orange breast, cheery song and early appearance at the end of winter. Color the American robins in their nest.



Did you know?

An American Robin can produce three successful broods in one year. On average, though, only 40 percent of nests successfully produce young. Only 25 percent of those fledged young survive to November.

Did you know?

Robins eat different types of food depending on the time of day: more earthworms in the morning and more fruit later in the day.

Did you know?

Robins eat a lot of fruit in fall and winter. When they eat honeysuckle berries exclusively, they sometimes become intoxicated.

Did you know?

The oldest recorded American Robin was 13 years and 11 months old.

The Naturalist's Journal

NESTWATCH

NestWatch is a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Participating in NestWatch is easy and just about anyone can do it, although children should always be accompanied by an adult when observing bird nests.

Simply follow the directions on our website to become a certified NestWatcher, find a bird nest using our helpful tips, visit the nest every 3-4 days and record what you see, and then report this information on our website. You can also download the NestWatch Mobile App for iOS and Android and record what you see at the nest in real time.

To learn more about NestWatch use the link provided.

nestwatch.org/





Cold-Blooded Lovers

BY DUSTIN HILLIS

Spring is a busy and loud time of year for amphibians. Breeding season has kicked off and the amphibians are crawling, hopping or jumping to water sources for the chance to mate and lay their eggs. Babler is a major hot spot for these twitter-pated critters, from wood frogs (a species of conservation concern) to spring peepers to spotted salamanders.

Male toads and frogs will find a spot in a body of water and protect it from other males while singing their loudest songs. Females unfortunately do not have the ability to call to the males, so it's their job to listen and pick the loudest and hardiest male. By doing so, she is making sure that her offspring have the best genetics to survive. One of the loudest frog species that we have at Babler is the American toad. The call is high pitched and trilled like a whistle. The sound can be deafening if right up beside a male toad in full song.

Another type of amphibian that breeds in the spring is the salamander. Salamanders break into two groups: spring breeders and fall breeders. Two spring salamanders found at Babler are the eastern tiger salamander and the spotted salamander. Both of which emit no sounds, but instead swim around until a mate is found. Salamanders tend to use vernal pools (fishless ponds that are seasonally filled with water). They lay thousands of eggs that will hatch into larvae and stay in the ponds until early fall, however, some may overwinter in the ponds until spring. Salamanders are habitual breeders, meaning they will come back to the same place year after year to start the cycle all over again.



Northern Cricket Frog



Eastern Tiger Salamander



American Toad



Spring Peeper



Spotted Salamander



Wood Frog

Scout Projects

Park staff have compiled a list of potential scout projects for the park. These projects include a variety of skills and time requirements, from a few hours to full-day, ongoing, group and individual projects. Scout projects are available now.

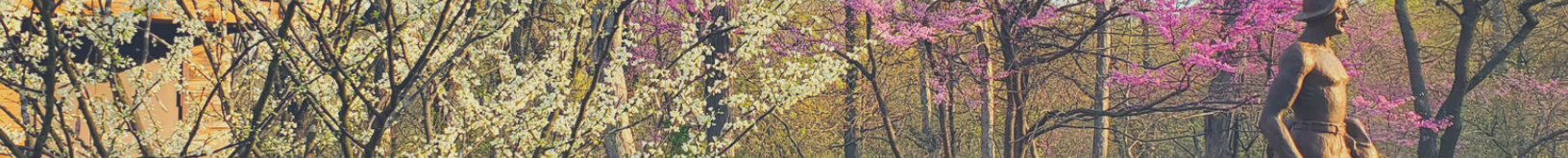
Contact the Visitor Center for more information!

636-458-3813



2023 Managed Hunt Results

The November 2023 deer hunt allowed the park to remove 32 deer. Of the 32 deer harvested, 17 samples were collected for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. All samples came back negative for CWD. This means that the park's deer herd is healthy.



Manager's Notes

BY CHRIS FERREE

Our “on-season” is upon us once again. Though April 1 is really the date of true on-season with water being turned on across the park, it feels like we are there already with the above normal weather we have been having at the tail end of winter.

This on-season will look a little different in the park, especially in the campground. I seem to talk a lot about our large construction projects occurring with each update, but we are truly excited about them as they have a real impact on the park and moving things forward. Here are some updates on these projects:

-Campground Construction: We will see the upgrade of 38 campsites to 50 amp, sewer and water scheduled to start March 4, 2024, with a tentative completion date toward the end of July 2024. Half of the campground will be closed/not rentable through this time. We know it’s an inconvenience, but it will be a great addition to the park when completed. Looking forward to welcoming our first guests onto the new sites late this summer.

-Babler Lodge: We are still in the design phase for that building remodel, but plans are still to have overnight guests use that structure with reservations. Being a building dating from the late 1930s, a lot of thought has to go into preserving the structure but bringing it up to code to accommodate guests, which will include fire suppression, ADA accessibility, and heating and cooling overhaul. Rest assured this project is moving along, and we will keep you updated on its progress.

-Paved Trail: Though the end pieces of that trail are completed, we are looking to secure funding to complete the center section, which remains gravel. Because of that, the trail is still closed to bicycle use. The lower part of the trail will be open from the old equestrian lot to the Guy Park Trailhead area. The upper portion, though paved, will be closed as it terminates into the middle of the campground construction project. Please be mindful of trail closure signage.

-Park Drinking Water System: If you were unaware, the park is currently served by well water, which we maintain and make sure is safe for consumption. Original to the park, this infrastructure is showing its age. We are currently designing a plan to come off the well and hook into Missouri American Water lines. This will allow us to decommission the old water tower and have a more reliable source of water and remove a fair share of maintenance and water quality testing that our park staff has been doing. It will also be much easier on all our water infrastructure as the well water has quite a bit of hardness and minerals in it.

All of these plus normal “off-season” work is wrapping up. The crew has been busy really cutting back vegetation across the roadsides. Our interpreters have been busy visiting groups outside the park and planning for spring and summer programming. The River Hills Visitor Center reopens for weekends starting March 2 with Wednesday through Sunday operation starting in April.

We hope to see you all in the park, the dogwoods and redbuds will be blooming soon enough!

River Hills Gift Shop

Start your spring adventures inside our store. We have beverages, collapsible dog bowls, snacks, hiking sticks, apparel, plush toys, Frisbees, kids wristbands, souvenirs, insect spray and so much more!

