

The Babler Babble

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2021

Park Staff

- Christopher Ferree
Park Superintendent
- Richard Love
Asst. Park
Superintendent
- Andrea Grant
Asst. Park
Superintendent
- Dustin Hillis
Interpretive Resource
Specialist
- Erik Veenstra
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Vacant
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Vacant
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Angela Carson
Park Ranger

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Fungus Among Us 1
- Watercolor World 2
- The Naturalist's Journal
Explorer Corner 3
- Programs & Events 4
- Park Happenings 5
- First Families: Kroenungs 6
- Babler's Hidden Figures
The Eagle's Nest 7
- Park Info & Hours
Highlighted Events 8



There's a Fungus Among Us

Spring is approaching fast, and as we all join in a collective sigh of relief as the cold winter months come to a close, many shift their sights to the astounding wild edibles we have here Missouri. Specifically, the mighty morel mushroom, starts creeping into



These are three of our native morel mushroom species that can be found here at Babler. Yellow morels (top), black morels (middle), half-free morels (bottom) are all delicious fungi that are native heart healthy wild edibles. Photos are courteous of MDC.

the sweet, and savory, dreams of many a mushroom hunter. These fabulous fungi can be found all over Missouri, including here at Babler State Park! The trick, is to know when to find them. Morels usually appear 1-2 days after a rain from March-May and enjoy growing on the forest floor, especially in disturbed or recently burned areas. They also tend to grow under oak, hickory, and ash trees; all of which are found right here at Babler! If you've ever wanted to try out mushroom hunting for yourself, these are a perfect way to introduce yourself. Morels are known as one, if not the, most tasty of our wild edibles, and many Missourians say that just a simple sauté in some butter will make your taste buds sing the praises of this magnificent mushroom. If your mouth is starting to water, gear up with some simple equipment such as a carrier, a grocery store bag will do just fine, and maybe some boots as it will be wet underfoot as you search the forest floor. A mushroom identification book, such as Missouri's Wild Mushrooms, will also be handy as there are 3 species of edible morels, yellow, black, and half-free morels, and one imposter, the false morel which is poisonous. One easy way to distinguish between true and false morels is by checking to see if the mushroom is hollow. A

true morel will have a completely hollow stalk, while the false morel will have a "chambered" stalk if sliced down the middle. Missouri's Wild Mushrooms is available at the Babler State Park Visitor's Center, if open to the public, or you can order it for pick up by emailing Bablerstatepark@dnr.mo.gov or by calling (636) 458-3813. Remember to always make sure that you have permission to collect mushrooms and any other wild edible before harvesting. Here at Babler, mushrooms are the only wild edible allowed to leave the park and has a limit of 2lbs per person, that's about as much as a standard grocery bag can carry. Good Luck and good eating!

-Kathryn Krydynski,
Seasonal Interpreter



False morels, such as the Big Red False Morel shown above, are considered poisonous to people. One of the best ways to tell the difference between false morels and true morels is by the insides. A true morel will be hollow in the stalk while a false morel will have chambers. Photo courteous of MDC..



Babler's Watercolor World

Have you ever visited Babler during the spring or fall? If you have, you know the amount of colors that the park has to offer. If not, let me share with you what you're missing.

During the spring, we have an entire palette of colors ranging from white to red with every color in-between. One of things Babler is most known for is our beautiful arrays of eastern redbuds and flowering dogwood blossoms. All throughout the park you can see these gorgeous views of the dogwoods blooming out in the woods creating a sea of white with little hints of pink/red intermingled from the redbuds. Although these views are welcomed sights at Babler, these arrangements are due to the lack of fire on the landscape. These small trees would not have been as prominent in the park historically. These trees are not fire tolerant like oaks or hickories, and would have died back due to frequent wildfires.

You can also hike the trails here at Babler and find hidden works of art. Along the

Hawthorn Trail you can find pockets of wild hydrangeas, jack-in-the-pulpits, wake robins, spring beauties, and more. This adds to the biodiversity of the woodlands and glades that call the western side of the park home. You can also find carpets of wild bergamot that creates purple/pink pockets. By having these different wildflowers we also help the native pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and ants.

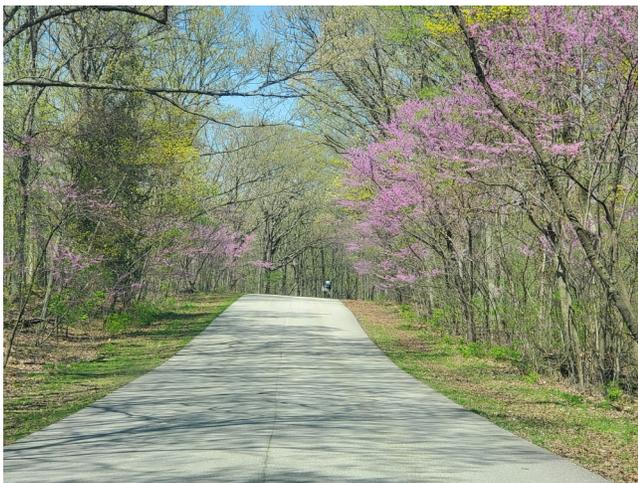
Another trail that you can see different species of wildflowers is the Dogwood Trail. This trail takes you up and down the hillsides on the interior of the park. It provides you with species such as Dutchmen's breeches, white trillium (white wake robins), serviceberries, and a variety of different smaller violets. The dogwood trail is unfortunately encompassed with invasive bush honeysuckle and is not a prescribed fire unit, unlike the Hawthorn Trail. By having these highly competitive invasives, it can dampen

our native wildflowers growth. By actively removing and using herbicide on the individual honeysuckle clumps we can slowly take back what was once pristine spring wildflower habitat.

If you are interested in helping protect Babler's wildflowers, contact our park naturalist to sign up as a invasive species removal volunteer. It is with your help that the park can keep our wonderful palette of watercolor flowers for years to come.

-Dustin Hillis

Senior Parks Specialist



You can find many colorful spring wildflowers such as Dogtooth Violets (top left), Wake Robins (top right), and the unusual green Jack-in-the-Pulpits (bottom).

Redbuds and dogwoods blooming along Guy Park Drive (top). Did you know that you can make jelly from the flowers of redbuds (bottom)?

Flowers cannot be collected in Missouri State Parks. The only wild edibles that can be collected and removed from the park are mushrooms.

The Naturalist's Journal: Citizen Science Projects

Have you ever wondered what was below the water of a stream or have you ever thought about what a macroinvertebrate was? This year I challenge you to volunteer your time through citizen science projects. One type of project that you can directly help Babler with is our Stream Team monitoring. We have seven sites that we will monitor water quality, water chemistry, and our macroinvertebrates throughout the year. This helps biologists and scientists understand the health of our surrounding streams. Stream Team also helps the park by monitoring our waterways and making sure that the park's waters are safe and healthy for everyone. If you are interested in helping the park monitor our sites email dustin.hillis@dnr.mo.gov to sign up as a volunteer. We will have you splashing into science in no time!

Dustin Hillis,
Senior Park Specialist



Missouri has 110,000 miles of streams that provide recreation, drinking water and serenity for ourselves and our children, but they need your help. Stream Teams are made up of people with an interest in, and passion for, Missouri streams. If you are already part of a Stream Team, this website will provide a wealth of information on organizing your Team, participating in a variety of activities, and communicating with other Stream Teams all across the Show-Me state and beyond. If you are thinking about forming a Stream Team, we have information on that, too. Exploring the Stream Team website will show you how citizens have adopted a stream, volunteered their own time and effort to improve it, and have banded together with other Stream Teams to help improve Missouri's streams.

If you are interested in helping with Missouri Stream Team or forming your own team, go to website below:

<http://www.mostreamteam.org/>

We do school programs!

Contact Dustin Hillis, Interpretive Resource Specialist at Babler State Park at 636-458-3813 ext. 223 to schedule your programs.

Explorer Corner

Did You Know?

Precipitation can occur in the form of falling rain, sleet, snow, or hail.

Did You Know?

Water is constantly being recycled, so the water you drink today could be the same water dinosaurs drank millions of years ago.

Did You Know?

About 70% of the Earth's surface is covered with water.

Did You Know?

Only about 3% of the water on Earth is fresh water or water that we can drink.

Follow the Path in the Water Cycle Maze

Start Here

End Here



Can you follow the water cycle?

Did You Know?

The water cycle describes the movement of water throughout Earth's surface, atmosphere, and underground. Water is constantly moving from one place to another through the processes of evaporation, precipitation, transpiration, condensation, and runoff. Water in the water cycle can exist as a solid, liquid, or gas. The water cycle is very important to life on Earth.

Did You Know?

Water is a resource that cannot be created by humans.

All programs may be subject to change following Covid-19 guidelines.

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!

Virtual Feeding Frenzy via the Park's Facebook Page

Saturdays from 10 a.m.-11 a.m.

March 6

March 27

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.



Spring Wildflower Hikes

Saturdays from 10 a.m.—11 a.m.

April 3

April 10

April 17

April 24

May 1

May 8

May 15



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 2021. Meet at the Alta Shelter Parking Lot.

All participants will need to signup via <https://icampmo1.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx>.

World Migratory Bird Day

Sunday, May 9th

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.

All participants will need to signup via <https://icampmo1.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/>

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.

WildHeart Concert

Saturday, May 29th

4 p.m.—5 p.m.



Join us in welcoming the band Wildheart to Babler. Emmy® Award Winning educator and entertainer, Jan Syrigos is Wildheart. Jan captures young audiences with a strong science message exploring wildlife, habitats and natural history. Wildheart energizes her original award winning music with motion, media and the conversation message for a wild and unforgettable journey through our natural world. Meet at the Enclosed Shelter at the Guy Park Trailhead.

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



Park Happenings

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.

2019 Camping Rate Increase

In 2019, the rates for campsites with electricity increased by \$2 during the on-season. The funds generated from this increase will be earmarked to fund various electrification projects. This past season we had several campsites that were not available to our customers due to electrical issues. With these potential improvements and repairs, Missouri State Parks will better meet the needs of its guests.

2020 Deer Hunt Results

The results from the 2020 deer hunt allowed the park to remove 22 deer from the rapidly growing herd. During the hunt, park naturalists sampled 17 yearling and adult harvested deer for Chronic Wasting Disease. The 17 samples came back negative for Chronic Wasting Disease infection, meaning that our deer herd inside the park is healthy.

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.

River Hills Visitor Center Gift Shop

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



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 Kroenungs

Born February 5, 1805 in Hesse, now part of Germany, Caspar Kroenung made his way to America in 1842. Over the years, several of his brothers would also end up in this area, contributing to the significant German population of St. Louis County.

In 1846, Caspar and his wife, Maria Barbara, would have a son named Joseph, and in 1848 Caspar received the deed to land in the area. By 1860, the family had acquired the land that would one day become part of Dr. Edmund A Babler Memorial State Park, a U.S. census

shows them as neighbors to Frederick Gaehle. The land in question resides in the lower southeastern part of the park, along Rieger Rd. Joseph married Mary Amanda Paubel in 1873, and they had 2 sons together before Joseph's untimely death at the age of 28. Albert and Joseph moved with their mother in 1875 to an area off Eatherton Road when she married Andrew Schaeg. Eventually they would have 8 half siblings. Maria Barbara passed away in 1877, with Caspar

following in 1880. They are buried in a small family cemetery along with their son Joseph. Few artifacts of the Kroenung family home exist, save for a small dugout area that could have been a cellar or the foundation of a home or barn.

According to an 1878 fire insurance policy, the property included a one and a half story log and frame house, a log barn shaded on 3 sides, and a log smokehouse.

Ten years after the death of Caspar Kroenung, a lawsuit was filed for the deed to the property by his heirs, grandsons Albert and Joseph. There was a question about undue influence, which allowed the property to go to a Mr. John Goehri. It is assumed that after the lawsuit was seen in the Missouri Supreme Court, the Kroenung heirs were victorious as the property is in their names on the 1893 plat map.

-Carley Wright
Park Volunteer



This is a picture of the Kroenung Cemetery. Due to years of weathering, some of the tombstones have broken off. The park is working to ascertain funding to fix these and other headstones within the park's half dozen cemeteries.

Hidden Figures: Erik Veenstra

Erik Veenstra is the lead maintenance worker at Babler State Park. Erik originally came from Michigan before moving to Missouri. He is a Detroit Red Wings fan but we forgive him (Go Blues!). One thing that he does have is complete dedication for the care and protection of the building and grounds within Babler State Park. Erik is a 2013 graduate of Lafayette High School, attended Truman University but the outdoors is his true calling. Erik worked at the S bar F Scout Ranch in southeastern Missouri starting in 2010 before

joining the park as a seasonal naturalist in 2014. Erik then switched over to seasonal maintenance. The hard work and perseverance he demonstrated led to his elevation to full time status as a park maintenance Worker in 2016 and now to his promotion in 2021 to his current position as lead maintenance worker. Erik has done it all from plowing snow, fixing waterlines, helping with controlled burns, mowing grass, clearing trails to the many building repairs.



The Eagle's Nest: Manager's Comments



I am not sure about all of you but I am very happy (ecstatic, overjoyed) to welcome 2021. Writing this late winter edition I reflect back on my 1st submission back in February 2020. Talking about the Visitor Center opening, getting ready for the camping and on-season. No need to rehash how that all changed in March of that year.

We are still dealing with various things from the pandemic with closures and modifications to our operation. However like spring, which brings change and new life, I am confident that we will continue to move towards more normality in 2021. Though I do not have any concrete timelines as of writing this we are drawing up plans to reopen our Visitor Center (even if in a reduced capacity), the campground should open with same day walk-ins welcome (you can now reserve a campsite 1 year in advance!), bathrooms will open, shelters will become available to reserve, and the birds will be singing throughout our woodlands. I am feeling pretty good about not jinxing things.

We have had a few staff changes since last time. I am pleased to announce the promotion of Erik Veenstra to our lead maintenance worker that occurred at the end of 2020. Erik has been with the park for the past few years and we are so very happy that he is now leading our on the ground team. Tom Parsons-Grounds Technician, transferred to Robertsville State Park late fall of 2020 and is continuing to serve the public and campers there. This did however leave us with 2 vacancies for our Ground Technician spots. We are currently in the process of holding interviews for those and hope to have an update next time.

I can already smell that fresh spring air and see the first small signs of green along our park trails. We all look to moving forward through 2021 and welcoming you here to Babler.

Hope to see you all in the park!

-Chris Ferree,
Park Superintendent



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

800 Guy Park Drive
Wildwood, MO 63005
Phone: 636-458-3813
Fax: 636-458-9105

Email: dustin.hillis@dnr.mo.gov

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

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 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/>



Spring Wildflower Hikes

**Every Saturday:
April 3rd-May 15th
10 a.m.- 11 a.m.**

