

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

River Hills Current

Volume 4, Issue 3

Summer 2011

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2011 Year of the Turtle: "Turtle"ly Cool! *(continued on page 4)*

From the brush along the trail came a rustling of leaves. The group stopped, grew still, and quietly awaited the arrival of whatever animal was heading toward them. *A bird...a squirrel...maybe a deer!* Then, low to the ground, the leaves parted and little head covered in vibrant reddish orange spots emerged, cautiously looked around. Then the domed shell and four small legs lumbered onto the trail...it was a turtle! A three-toed box turtle to be exact!

What Makes a Turtle a Turtle?

Turtles are an often forgotten, yet wonderful group of animals that, unlike many of our other native species, can be seen on a regular basis in yards, waterways and along trails. Missouri is home to 21 species of turtles, one of which is the largest freshwater turtle on Earth! Turtles and tortoises are also the oldest living group of reptiles on Earth. They are ectothermic (cold-blooded), have claws and scales (except soft shell turtles), and lay leathery-shelled or hard-shelled eggs. Turtles do not have teeth, but a beak they use to tear apart plants, worms, fish, and insects to eat. Most turtles' shells are covered in scales, called scutes. Soft shell turtles' shells are covered in rough, leathery skin.

Aquatic vs. Land

Missouri's turtle species can be broken down into three groups: hard-shelled aquatic



Three-toed Box Turtle

turtles, hard-shelled land turtles (box turtles), and soft-shelled aquatic turtles. The majority of our native turtles are aquatic. They can often be seen basking along the banks of rivers and lakes on logs and rocks. Missouri has two species of box turtle, the ornate and three-toed. The term "box turtle" comes from the hingelike division on the plastron, or lower part, of their shell. This hinge allows the turtle to completely close its shell to protect the soft head and legs from predators. Unlike their aquatic cousins, box turtles cannot swim! For this reason it is important to know the difference between the two.

Turtle Trouble

Turtles have a long heritage, but this may lead to their decline. The areas in which turtles live are rapidly being altered by people. These changes include:

filling of marshes and swamps, pollution, channelization of rivers, and removal of basking and nesting areas. Turtles do not have the ability to change as fast as their habitats are changing!

Abuse of our turtle species is another primary reason for their decline. Needless (and unlawful) shooting of non-game species and death caused by vehicles, farm machinery and pets are aiding in their decline. Several of Missouri's turtles are on the state's list of species of conservation concern. Some of these are the most endangered reptiles in the state! For these reasons, turtle conservation groups, in collaboration with PARC (Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation); have designated 2011 as **The Year of The Turtle.**

How to Help

There are many ways people can help turtles. One of the easiest ways is to trash your trash. Recycle items that can pollute waterways, dispose of chemicals and medicines properly, and cut ALL plastic rings before tossing them in the



Alligator Snapping Turtle

trash. People can also give turtles a break by avoiding turtles on roadways (if possible) and moving them off roadways when safe (note: Turtles are determined!

Park Staff

- Jeff Robinson,
Park Superintendent
- Richard Love
Asst. Park Superintendent
- Kendra Swee
Interpretive Resource Specialist
- Angie McClanahan
Sr. Office Support Assistant
- Ron Thurmon
Park Maintenance Worker
- Gary Simon
Park Maintenance Worker
- Joseph Lee
Park Maintenance Worker
- Robert Maynard
Park Ranger

Program and Special Event Schedule

All programs are FREE and open to the public

Explorer Hours

Saturdays: 10 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Sundays: 2 p.m.

River Hills Visitor Center

Earn your explorer patch by participating in these fun activities at the visitor center every weekend Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Topics change weekly, so there is always something fun to do! Bring your scouts, your family and your friends and have a blast while exploring Missouri's natural resources! Please call the visitor center at 636-458-3813 to inquire about weekly topics.

Evening Amphitheater Program

Saturdays 7-8 p.m.

Campground Amphitheater

Join a park interpreter for a fun and engaging evening program at the campground amphitheater. These programs begin in June and will run through Labor Day weekend. Topics will coincide with each weekend's explorer hour theme! Contact the visitor center at 636-458-3813 for program topics.

Bug Day Festival

Saturday Aug. 13

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

River Hills Visitor Center

Investigate the world of insects at Babler State Park's Annual Bug Day Festival. Join the "bugs" of Babler at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. for a fun day. There will be exhibits, games, and crafts for the whole family to enjoy!

Babler State Park's Historic Past

Part One

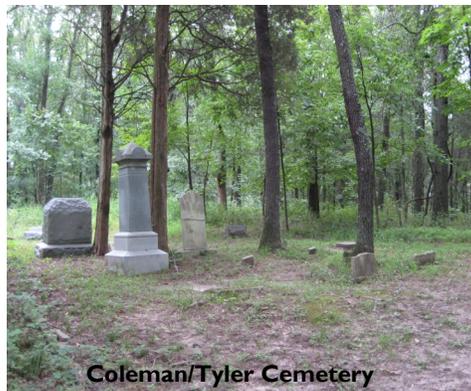
From farming to recreation, the land composing Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park has been witness to an interesting history that is quintessential to Missouri life over the past 200 years. Some of the first recorded histories come from the early settlers of this land.

Pioneers came to this area for its beauty, inexpensive land and proximity to both the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. After the War of 1812, many immigrants came to the United States from Europe. They often started out in states such as Kentucky and Virginia, but soon made the trek westward to Missouri. One such family was the family of Henry Kelpé. They came from Germany in 1852 and his son, also named Henry, bought a homestead and 40 acres for \$200 in 1885. The Kelpés were farmers and grew fruit trees, and made corn whiskey. Henry also served locally as postmaster and blacksmith for Kelpé, Mo., from 1886-1896.

Two other influential families who owned land within the current park boundaries were the Colemans and Tylers. In 1836, the Rev. Robert G. Coleman acquired land and moved here from Virginia. Coleman was a slave owner and brought his slaves to the

area for hemp production on his plantation. He also served as a preacher for the nearby Antioch Baptist Church, where both landowners and their slaves worshipped together. The Coleman/Tyler cemetery is one of two cemeteries open to the public within the park. It can be found on the northern side of the park across from the stables on Cochran Drive. Other family cemeteries within the park include Bothes/Glasers, Bates, Puellmann, Kroenung, and Kelpé.

In the late 1890s, the Centaur Lime Co. acquired a large tract of land, formally the Tyler Plantation, within the park boundaries. This company quarried limestone in the area and built large lime kilns for cement production. The Centaur Lime Co. employed approximately 100 people and was in operation until 1928 when the company went bankrupt during the depression.



Coleman/Tyler Cemetery

The 1930s brought great change to the nation and to the land of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park. The Babler family and the Civilian Conservation Corps shaped these lands into the park we see today.

Look for the continuation of the story of Babler State Park in the Fall 2011 newsletter!

Park Notes

Storm Damage Update

All hiking trails, the equestrian trail and the bike trail are open! The Virginia Day Memorial Trail, which received extensive damage, has one section still closed. This section of trail will require a re-route and the park is currently looking at new route possibilities. With every passing storm since February, we have had more trees come down along the trails. As you enjoy the trails at Babler State Park this summer, please stop by the visitor center to let us know of any new trees down along our trails.



Traveling Sawmill to Visit Park

Many of the large, healthy trees downed during February's tornado were harvested in March. These large

logs can be seen along the roadways of the park and in the campground. These trees were set aside as potential lumber for the restoration of the park's Alta Shelter and a group camp dining hall at Lake of the Ozarks State Park. Both facilities are historic structures and restoration must be in the same fashion as original construction.

This summer, a traveling sawmill will come to the park to mill the lumber. This mill will be located at each of the large piles while the milling process is completed. We are expecting some temporary road closures and noise at each site as the sawmill works. Please

bear with us while we try to turn a negative impact into a positive one.

Wildheart in the Park

On May 28 Babler State Park was host to Wildheart, an environmental music group from Missouri. The park would like to thank Wildheart for making the park one of their tour stops and the Missouri Arts Council and South 94 Bait and Tackle for sponsoring Wildheart's visit. Lastly, the park would like to thank all campers and park visitors who attended!



Volunteer Spotlight: a **BIG** thank you to our storm clean up volunteers!!

The staff of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park would like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered their time in March and April to help our park recover from the tornado damage received on Feb. 27. Scouts, students, equestrians, sawyers, neighbors, and individual park lovers came to-

Over the course of six weeks, 97 people donated 272 hours of their time to help the park!!

gether over a six-week period to help our staff clear debris, limbs, and even trees from the trails, open fields, campground, and roadways. Without the time and care of these dedicated volunteers, the park would not have been available for use for many more weeks. The

staff at Babler State Park was truly impressed and honored that so many private citizens felt a connection to our park and were so willing to help in a time of need. Again, we say **THANK YOU!!!**



Ask the Interpreter!

Q: Why the fuss over cicadas this year? Don't we have cicadas every year?

Wes, age 32

A: It is true that we have cicadas every summer. Missouri has five species of cicada that emerge every year. These include Robinson's, Scissor Grinder, Buzz Saw, Big, and Morning cicadas. These cicadas have a green and black

coloration and dark wings. The large number of cicadas we see this year are periodical cicadas. These cicadas only emerge every 13 and 17 years to change from the nymph stage (the exoskeleton that you find on most trees, shrubs and fences) to the adult stage. These cicadas are much smaller than the annual species and have red eyes and red and yellow



Bee attacking cicada

markings on their bodies. The periodical cicadas emerge in May and are usually gone by early July. Although they are large and loud, they serve an extremely important purpose in nature. The influx of so many cicadas means high quality, high quantity food source for reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals and even other insects!

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



Missouri Department
of Natural Resources

Visitor Center Hours

April - October: 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Wed - Sun.
March & 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

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We're On The Web!

www.mostatateparks.com/babler

Save The Date!

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

Oct. 22 – Creatures of the Night

In The Next Issue:

Babler State Park's Historic Past– Part Two

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

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.

Turtles (continued from page 1)

Please move turtles to the side they are facing...otherwise they will just try to cross again). Lastly, protecting turtle habitat is extremely important to turtle survival!

Turtles Do Not Make Good Pets

Since turtles are a native species seen on a regular basis, many people will take them



Ornate Box Turtle

many special needs and neglect of these needs can lead to serious health problems including shell and bone deformities. Re-



Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle



Map Turtle

search has also shown the release of turtles after more than one season of captivity or release in areas other than the location where they were found is almost always fatal to the turtle. Similarly, non-native turtles should never be released, since they can disrupt the natural balance and will

most likely die as well. Turtles can live upwards of 50 years...meaning your pet turtle will have to be willed to your kids and/or grandkids! If you are still interested in keeping a turtle, it is suggested to only keep them for a few days or a week to observe their habits then release them in the exact location they were caught.

home as pets. Contrary to popular belief, turtles are not as easy to care for as they seem. Native and non-native turtles have