

Summer 2012



ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK

# Nature Notes

## From the Naturalist



After one of the busiest (and strangest) spring seasons I can remember, I am happy to be publishing the Summer edition of the Nature Notes newsletter. I apologize to anyone who missed out on the spring edition this year. However, this summer promises to be one of our best years yet!

For visitors who have made St. Francois State Park a yearly tradition, you probably noticed a couple of years ago that we scaled back the number of interpretive programs and special events here at the park. That was a very difficult decision to make, but staff reductions meant that we just weren't able to do as much. This year, however, I am excited to announce that the interpretive staff at St. Francois is back

up to full strength. This means we will be offering programs on Friday nights and Sunday mornings once again. We have three special events in the works, and new programs to unveil.



**Park staff will teach participants of the Learn to Camp event all the basics-from pitching a tent to cooking over a fire.**

One event to be on the lookout for will be a Learn to Camp event on Sept. 8-10. This event will be aimed at helping families who have never been

camping to gain the skills and confidence to take their family on trips to Missouri state parks and beyond. If you or someone you know would like to apply, keep an eye out on the park's website for details coming very soon.

Mark your calendar for the annual St. Francois Family Play Day on Sept. 22. We are also working on holding a Fen Festival in October to celebrate our unique wetland and its unique life found here in the park.

More information about programs and events can be found on the website [www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm) or on the park's Facebook page. Hope to see you in the park very soon!

## Perseid Meteor Shower Puts on a Show

Every year around Aug. 12, the night sky comes alive with streaks of lights. Created when the Earth moves across the remnants of the comet Swift-Tuttle's tail, the Perseid meteor shower is widely regarded as one of the best and most reliable meteor showers of the

year.

The park will hold the annual Meteor Shower Party on Saturday, Aug. 11 at 9 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to bring a blanket to Shelter 2 and lay under the stars to view the show. The park naturalist will tell



tales of the constellations, sky lore and more while you wait for the meteors. The moon won't rise until midnight, so viewing this year should be perfect. Don't miss it!

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### Missouri State Park Mission

- To preserve and interpret the finest examples of Missouri's natural landscapes
- To preserve and interpret the finest examples of Missouri's cultural landmarks.
- To provide healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences to Missourians and visitors to the state.

# July Interpretive Program Schedule

Date	Programs
Friday, July 6	8 p.m. Fabulous Frogs
Saturday, July 7	2 p.m. Turtle Hurdles 8 p.m. Trials of a Snake's Life
Sunday, July 8	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour
Friday, July 13	8 p.m. Awesome Amphibians
Saturday, July 14	10 a.m. Explorer Hour -Mooner's Hollow Trail 8 p.m.. Water We Doing?
Sunday, July 15	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Incredible Journey
Friday, July 20	8 p.m. Owl Prowl
Saturday, July 21	2 p.m. Nocturnal Creatures 8 p.m. Bats in Peril
Sunday, July 22	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour
Friday, July 27	8 p.m. Spider Sniff
Saturday, July 28	10 a.m. Insect Safari 8 p.m. Inspector Insector
Sunday, July 29	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour

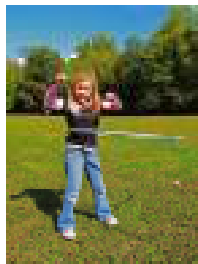
## Get Out and Play This Summer

By Amanda Christian

Once school lets out, our kids start thinking about being able to sleep in every morning, catching up on their favorite TV series, beating the latest computer or video game, or visiting with others on Internet social sites. Studies have shown that this lack of being outdoors is playing a part in reduced cognitive development, childhood obesity, and reduced muscle development and balance as well as other physical ailments. We need to encourage our kids to get outside and play. The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognizes play as a right of all children, and the American Academy of Pediatrics states "Play is essential to development because it contributes to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth."

Some kids simply do not want to go outside alone. Try to encourage them to go outside with friends, or simply go outside with them. You could go outdoors as a

family. Take the lead and plan an activity to do together. Plan a scavenger hunt or a hike. You could do this in a park or even in the backyard. Eat lunch outdoors, have a picnic. Play a game outside. Popular outdoor games are croquet, Frisbee, badminton, and ladderball. Play



catch or shoot some hoops. If your child is not inclined to play sports, that is okay. Perhaps he or she is a reader. You can let him or her take a book outside and read on a blanket. Perhaps you have a GPS. You could try geocaching as a family, and go treasure hunting.

Some things you can do to encourage your child to get outdoors is to begin by creating a back yard that is child safe/friendly. You can give your child a place

on the porch or in the house to display the treasures he or she finds in nature. Provide them with tools to help with explorations such as a bug box, small shovel or trowel, pail, etc. You can place bird feeders in front of windows and keep a bird identifying book near for your child to use. Collect leaves from trees in the yard and let your child match leaf to tree and identify them in a plant reference book. If possible, let older children build a camp fire in the back yard or even camp out overnight in a tent. Set ground rules for safety and let discuss popular topics while you monitor from windows or by checking periodically on snack and beverage supplies.

Encourage your "wild child" to get out and play, and maybe in the process find your own inner "wild child."

(Source: Leave No Child Inside Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, 14 Ways to Encourage Kids to Play Outdoors)

# August Interpretive Program Schedule

Date	Programs
Friday, Aug. 3	8 p.m. Mammal Mania
Saturday, Aug. 4	2 p.m. Oh, Deer! 8 p.m. Return of the Mountain Lion
Sunday, Aug. 5	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour
Friday, Aug. 10	8:30 p.m. Cosmic Vacation
Saturday, Aug. 11	2 p.m. Star Chart Craft 9 p.m.. Meteor Shower Party-Perseid Shower (At Shelter 2)
Sunday, Aug. 12	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour
Friday, Aug. 17	8 p.m. Owl Prowl
Saturday, Aug. 18	2 p.m. Animal Camouflage 8:30 p.m. Nature at Night: Night Hike
Sunday, Aug. 19	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour
Friday, Aug. 24	8 p.m. All NEW Nature Jeopardy
Saturday, Aug. 25	2 p.m. Creek Walk 8 p.m. Wheel of Fortune
Sunday, Aug. 26	9:30 a.m. Growing up Wild (Preschool age) 10 a.m. Explorer Hour

## Learn To Camp Event Encourages Families To Learn New Skills Together

One of the best ways to bond as a family and rejuvenate the soul is to go on a camping trip. The lessons learned, the time spent outdoors and quality time spent with each other are priceless. (Not to mention a great respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life).

Throughout the year, we take surveys from visitors after interpretive programs. A few years ago, I created a survey just for kids. When asked what their one favorite thing about coming to the park was (options were camping, hiking, fishing, nature programs, etc), their answer was overwhelmingly "spending time with my family" (over 70 percent chose that answer). This tells us that our kids want to get away and spend quality time together, something that can be hard to come by sometimes in our over-scheduled lives.

Sadly, not as many people are spending

time outdoors like they used to. Skills like pitching a tent, building a campfire and cooking outdoors are slowly being lost. Many families out there would love to go on a camping trip, but are not confident in their skills or abilities.

On the weekend of Sept. 8-10, St. Francois State Park will host a "Learn to Camp" event. Camping gear will be provided for participating families, and park staff will be there the whole weekend teaching skills like pitching a tent, building a fire and more. In addition, programs to help families become more familiar with their new nature environment will be available.

If you or a family you know have never been camping and would like to learn, stay tuned to the park webpage for details on how to apply.



## Growing up Wild-Preschool Hour new at St. Francois on Sundays

St. Francois State Park will be hosting a Sunday morning preschool hour at 9 a.m. each week starting in July. All ages are welcome but our target audience will be ages three-seven years and we will be using nature related books, crafts, songs and lessons to instill and promote a strong value of nature and the environment in children. Explorer hour for those earning their badges will follow at 10 a.m. Those earning badges who wish to attend the Growing Up Wild preschool hour may do so and will receive credit for attending a park program. It is strongly recommended that all children attending programs are accompanied by an adult. This is a new weekly program at the park, and we look forward to seeing you there!





## ST. FRANCOIS STATE PARK

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[www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/stfrancois.htm)



Find us on Facebook!

Search "St. Francois State Park" and watch for program updates and park news.

## Camping Rates for the 2012

### Camping Season (On Season Rates)

Basic Campsite- \$13.00

Electric Campsite- \$21.00

Electric/Water- \$23.00

Sewer/Electric/Water- \$26.00



\$2 discount for seniors and persons with disabilities.

\*Note that at St. Francois State Park, we only have BASIC and ELECTRIC campsites. To make a reservation, call 1-877-422-6766.

## Annual St. Francois Family Play Day

On Saturday, Sept. 22, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the park will hold its annual St. Francois Family Play Day event. This event is designed to give families ideas of ways they can play outdoors together. Over 20 play stations will be set up for you to play for as long (or as little) as you'd like.

Activities like geocaching, kite flying, fishing, build a fort, kickball, creek exploration and more will be featured during the event.



Build a Fort was the most popular station at Family Play Day.

## Creature Feature

### Timber Rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*)



One of Missouri's five venomous snakes, they live in rocky woods and are active April-October, but often become nocturnal during the summer.

#### Did you know...

- Timber rattlesnakes are shy. If encountered, they lay motionless to avoid detection, relying on their color to camouflage them.
- They developed the rattle to warn grazing animals like bison and elk to not step on them. They don't rattle before striking their prey, rodents, moles, small rabbits and other snakes.
- Due to their shy nature, timber rattlesnakes rarely bite people. Due to habitat loss and persecution, timber rattlesnakes are declining or have been eliminated from some Missouri counties.