

Park Staff

- Richard Love
Acting Park
Superintendent
- *Vacant
Asst. Park
Superintendent
- Andrea Grant
Asst. Park
Superintendent
- Dustin Hillis
Interpretive Resource
Specialist
- *Vacant
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Tom Parsons
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Erik Veenstra
Park Maintenance
Worker
- Angela Carson
Park Ranger

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The Babler Babble

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 4

WINTER 2019/20

A Burning Ring of Fire

Humans have been using fire for thousands of years for hunting, farming, and land management. Fire was used by Native Americans to maintain different ecosystems. A prescribed fire is a planned fire; it is also sometimes called a "controlled burn" or "prescribed burn," and is used to manage the landscape to create healthy ecosystems. Prescription fires follow a set of strict conditions to ensure the safety of the public, land managers, and for the preservation of the natural resources.

Prescribed fire is one of the most important tools used to manage fire today. A properly planned prescription fire describes its objectives, fuels, size, the desired environmental response, and the conditions under which the burn will occur. The plans will also cover how the fire will be suppressed. The fire may be designed to create and/or

preserve diverse habitats for plants and animals. These fires can also help in the reproduction of endangered species by creating the habitat needed for their life cycles. Fires help to reduce fuels such as downed timber and leaf litter. This type of fire is used to aide in the prevention of future wildfires.

Missouri's prairies, glades, and other unique habitats were historically created/managed by naturally occurring wildfires. These wildfires were started without human intervention, typically in Missouri by a random lightning strike. Many of our native vegetation rely on fires in order to reproduce and spread across the landscape. Prescribed burns are intended to mimic the



Park staff plan out the day for burning the Hawthorn Unit.

wildfires that our native vegetation have adapted to. Missouri State Parks have used fire since the 1970s to reduce hazardous fuel loading near developed areas of parks, manage large intact landscapes, restore natural woodlands and glades, and for research purposes to determine fires' impact on the landscape. Before any fires are permitted, the park must complete a fire management plan and prescribed

Story continued on Page 6.



One of Babler's maintenance workers serving as a crew boss igniting his crew's line of the fire (left) and a crew member using a rake to collet leaves to continue the steady line of fire on the line (above).

The Shell-tered Life

The oak-hickory forest communities found within Babler State Park provide ideal habitats for one of Missouri's best-known reptiles, the Three-toed Box Turtle. These turtles are easily recognizable by the lower half of their shells, the plastrons, which are yellowish in color and single-hinged, a unique adaptation allowing complete withdrawal into shells for ultimate protection. The upper half, the carapace, is usually olive green, brown, or yellow in color. A vital function of the carapace is to



One of our resident box turtles named Tiny. Despite Tiny's malformations, she is a ray of sunshine at the Visitor Center.

allow for penetration of sunlight and UVB rays, which are critical for the absorption of calcium and other vitamins.

What happens when these UVB rays are blocked? Tiny, our twenty-six year old Three-toed Box Turtle who resides in Babler's Visitor Center, is smaller than average and has several deformities. Her carapace is not an evenly shaped dome, her feet have some malformations, and her face shows asymmetry. She was likely kept in a basement with no exposure to sunlight and may have also had a poor diet.

The functionality of the carapace is also compromised when humans paint turtle shells, a historical practice often used to track individual turtles. The chemicals in the paint introduce toxins into the bloodstream, elevate the risk of respiratory infections, and can cause shell and other anatomical anomalies by blocking UVB rays and preventing calcium absorption. Blue, our forty-five year old Three-toed Box Turtle, was brought to the Visitor Center after being discovered covered in blue paint. Although there has been success in removing some of the paint, a portion remains on her carapace.



One of our resident box turtles named Blue. She is very shy and likes to bury herself in her bedding.

Many factors contribute to the health and longevity of Three-toed Box Turtles. These processes help the turtles to prepare for their long hibernation period during the winter here at Babler. By recognizing the importance of interactions between diet, health, sun exposure, and shell health, we can help sustain populations of this reptile for generations to come.

-Kathy McCoy,
Seasonal Interpreter



New Arrivals!

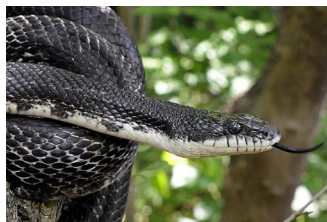


We have some new arrivals coming to the Visitor Center this winter. We will have three new snakes. However, we recently acquired some new animals in the fall of 2019: a tarantula named Nebula, a striped scorpion named Antares, and a marbled salamander named Sally.

We look forward to welcoming our new arrivals. Check our Facebook page to see when they arrive!



Speckled Kingsnake
Name: Pascal



Texas Black Rat Snake
Name: Apollo



Western Hognose Snake
Name: Wilbur

Ask the Interpreter!

Questions for "Ask the Interpreter" can be submitted via e-mail to dustin.hillis@dnr.mo.gov or on Facebook!

Q: What types of birds should I be on the look-out for in winter?

A: This time of year we receive a variety of wintering birds that travel through Missouri. A couple of these species are the Dark-eyed Junco and the Cedar Waxwing.

The Dark-eyed Junco, also known as "Snowbirds," are little dark gray and



Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*)

white birds that form small flocks that flit to and fro. The birds can be seen hiding in the bushes or covering the ground below bird feeders while gathering seeds. Cedar Waxwings are medium sized songbirds that are gray with red and yellow markings with a small crest on their head. These birds can form small to medium sized flocks that can be heard before they are actually seen. They tend to be in the tops of trees that have berries during winter, such as Eastern Red Cedars.

Conservationists have found that when waxwings eat the berries from Bush Honeysuckle, a highly invasive shrub in Missouri, they do not produce their mating plumage in the spring. This makes the females think the males are actually females and will not mate with them, causing a plummet in their localized populations.



Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)

Did You Know?

Groundhogs go by many different names, some of which may surprise you. They go by names such as woodchuck, marmot, grass rat, earth pig, and whistle pig.

Did You Know?

The woodchuck is important for providing homes for other animals: skunks, foxes, weasels, opossums, and rabbits all use woodchuck burrows for their dens.



Explorer Corner

Help Mr. & Mrs. Groundhog by finding all the hidden words.

L K Y E N W A T U S X N U P W E V E
P J P N F O Y R A U R B E F T Q I L
G X F L W D K W Y D U O L C S T W A
H R O C I A Y O B M U M W P A T J M
P Z O M R H D I O L P M W E C B P M
G L U U P S U G S P R I N G E W V A
D O E J N U Q T R E S G L Y R K L M
A W D U N D E R G R O U N D O S S S
Y A D I L O H E M E R G E E F T B S
S Y A D Q L L O P R E D I C T I O N
I S S F V Y K H G K C V W O R R U B
X B E A W I Z M R O D E N T X D N P
T E T A N R E B I H A R E T N I W L
E E P W E E U E I F W E A T H E R I
J S P E N N S Y L V A N I A M J V H
S E H L G O E Y E O Y Z F R T S Y P
X K B I T J R Y V X H J P X C Y G U
L K S I H K O P O B Q E X Z Z O H C

We do school programs!

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

Did You Know?

Historically, Groundhog Day is celebrated on February 2nd. This is when the superstition of the winter/spring prediction happens by the groundhog. If the groundhog sees its shadow, then there will be 6 more weeks of winter and if not then we will have an early spring.

However, in Missouri, the original date was believed to be Feb. 14th by many that lived in the Ozarks. This created conflicts between the Ozarkers and the outside world, due to the Ozarkers feeling the outside world was wanting to rush the seasons.

Word Bank

Burrow hibernate shadow cloudy hole sign cold holiday
Six weeks day mammal spring emerge Pennsylvania underground
February prediction weather forecast Punxsutawney Phil winter
Groundhog rodent



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!

December 2019

Nature's Decor

Saturday, December 7th

10 am - Noon

Deck the halls with boughs of holly...the holidays are just around the corner and we're in the mood to decorate! We'll use nature's resources to create wonderful winter wreaths. You provide the grapevine wreath (you choose the size and shape you want) and pliers, and we'll provide everything else for decorating. Meet at the Visitor Center in the basement.

You must be registered to attend this class. Contact the park for more information at: 636-458-3813 ext. 223.

A Merry Babler Christmas

Saturday, December 7th

10 am - Noon

Join Babler in welcoming Santa to the Park for the day! From 10am to Noon at the Visitor Center, children can visit with Santa. There will be refreshments available. Don't forget to check out our gift shop for unique last minute gifts!

January 2020

New Year's Hike

Wednesday, January 1st

10 am - 11 am

Join us for Babler's first hike of the year! We will be hiking the Hawthorn Trail across from the Alta Shelter. The Hawthorn Trail is approximately 1 ¼ miles long. The shortest trail at the park, it shows a diversity of geology not found elsewhere at Babler. A short distance from the trailhead before the loop begins, the trail crosses the Equestrian Trail. Continuing straight past the intersection, the trail goes along the northeast side of a narrow ridge and returns on the southwestern side. We will have refreshments on hand at the Alta Shelter for our guests.

February 2020

Tweets for Sweets

Saturday, February 8th

10 am - Noon

Join Babler in celebrating National Bird Feeding Month by creating treats for our migratory winter bird friends. We will be making different types of feeders, from pine cone suet feeders to recycled bird feeders. Meet at the Visitor Center in the basement.

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.

Babler's Year in Review for 2019

Too much water!

This year Babler has seen more than its fair share of water. However, in June, we had a rain event where we had over 3 inches of rainfall within an hour. This proved too much for our Equestrian Trail to handle and washed out many sections of trail. Currently, we have the trail reopened, but a section of the trail is still closed and is in the process of being repaired. There is a marked detour around this section of the trail, just follow the yellow signs.



The Loss of Our Manager

In October, we unexpectedly lost our beloved Park Superintendent, Jeff Robinson. Jeff served as manager for Babler for 20 years. Prior to being at Babler he also worked for MO State Parks at the following parks: Wakonda, Cuivre River, Lake of the Ozarks, and he was a roving manager between St. Joe and Washington State Parks. However, Jeff also worked for the National Park Service in the western United States, such as Rocky Mountain National Park. He will forever be in our hearts and always a part of Babler State Park.

Babler's 1st Halloween event!

Babler held its first Babler's Howl-oween event on Halloween evening. The event had over 70 people throughout the night! Due to this amazing turnout, this event will return next year on Halloween night 2020. Prepare yourselves for next year, because it lands on a Saturday.



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.

The Magical World of Water

Water is one of the most interesting and unique components of life in Missouri. As we enter the winter months, we will start to see the changes that water will experience. Through snow, ice, and rain, we will see one of the most interesting chemical structures in the world. Sitting in the Missouri Watershed is Babler State Park, with a variety of streams, wetlands, and natural springs. Each one of these plays a vital part in water quality, not just for Babler itself but for



Babler spring after a heavy rainfall event. This spring can release an average of 200 gallons per minute.

the watershed as a whole. As snow falls and melts, that water has to go somewhere. For much of the park, that water filters and is purified through the available spaces in the soil and eventually

reaches the groundwater. This water will eventually travel back into the local streams, springs, or through the park's water supply system to provide drinking water for the rest of the park.

As the temperature begins to fluctuate into the winter months, you start to notice frost and ice form over grasses, trees, and bodies of water. This is one of the most unique properties of water at work! In lakes, as the water loses its stratification from the summer months, the water recirculates between different water columns creating a stable temperature between. Water is in its most dense form between 3-4 degrees Celsius (37.4-39.2 degrees Fahrenheit), and as the outside temperature continues to drop, it cools the water and the molecules begin to condense. As it condenses and reaches that 3-4 degree Celsius threshold, the heavier molecules sink to the bottom of the pond. Any colder and the ice begins to expand and crystalize floating to the top to form the icy layers we see when walking through the park.

While water flows and freezes, it also floats. A key component to the water cycle is evaporation.



Iceicles hang from the cave entrance of Babler Spring. Constant melt of snow and the refreezing of the water, creates spectacular ice formations.

This is where the sun turns water into a vapor and then, through the process of condensation, a cloud starts to form. Acting as thermal blanket, clouds help hold in heat that is radiated from the earth. While a starry night can bring subzero temperatures, a cloudy night can bring snow. Clouds can also help identify weather patterns. Clouds that hold a flat bottom, with a pillow shape often indicate a stable climate with no sudden shifts. Clouds that rise high indicate an unstable climate, making for a higher potential for snow, ice, or winds.

-John Kruger,
Seasonal Interpreter

A Burning Ring of Fire Continued...

burn plan. Each prescribed fire must meet all the conditions identified on a go/no go checklist before ignition can start.

Here at Babler, we currently maintain three burn units. The Hawthorn Unit spans most of the Hawthorn Trail and revitalizes a dolomite glade and an ongoing woodland

restoration zone. This winter, Babler will be burning, weather permitting, two large units on the hillside below the Alta Shelter (Alta-Central & Alta-North). These prescribed burns aid not only in the maintenance of the natural resources but also to mitigate Babler's invasive plant species as well, such as Bush Honeysuckle.

Most people are concerned when they

hear that a fire is intentionally being set in the forest. However, when properly managed by resource stewards, prescribed fires can protect both property and people, and improve the natural resource's health and ecology.

-Sean Flemming,
Seasonal Interpreter

The Call of the Wild

Now that the seasons are changing, we aren't seeing the same wildlife as we often did during the spring and summer. Some of our native animals have migrated south for the winter, others have settled into their dens and members of a final group are relying on their camouflage to hide them. However, that doesn't mean you can't experience the wildlife this time of year! All you have to do is listen. Plenty of Missouri's animals have distinctive songs and calls that can help you identify not only the animal, but also what they are trying to communicate. Many of these calls



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) standing in a clearing.

can be heard in your own backyard!

The red fox has put on its duller, reddish brown coat for the winter, which is contrast to its spring coat. Its normally elusive behavior becomes a little less reclusive as the need to scavenge for food increases. Red foxes have several different calls that can alert you to their presence. The first is the "alarm bark" to warn other foxes of danger,



Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) resting in a tree with a watchful eye on the park naturalist.

which sounds remarkably similar to a dog bark. The neighborhood dog that you hear every night might actually be a red fox. A more terrifying call that the red fox produces is called the "vixen's scream." The vixen scream sounds similar to a young woman screaming, hence the name. It is often used in horror movies to create an unsettled atmosphere, but it is actually used to communicate and find a mate. The vixen scream is usually ignored except by male foxes. Since winter is the breeding season for red foxes, be prepared to hear this eerie call if you live near the edge of a woodland.

Another Missouri native that is very vocal during the winter is the Barred Owl. Barred Owls can be identified by their brown and gray "bars" on their tail feathers, fluffy appearance, and large dark eyes, which gains them the nickname of the teddy bear owl. If you like imitating owl calls, the Barred Owl is the best choice. They have a few vocalizations that are easy to make, and often you can get a response from a curious owl. To simulate

their call, all you have to say is "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" only removing the use of your lips and tongue, which produces the sound from your throat and diaphragm. Barred Owls are talkative and if one is in your area, chances are good you'll hear a response! Due to their territorial nature, the males make another call to warn off other males. This usually results in two males chattering at each other,

which sounds similar to monkeys fighting until the territorial dispute is settled.

I encourage anyone who interested in the calls they are hearing to invest in different resources that help them to identify the source of the calls. This can be a video on YouTube or even by just visiting a Visitor Center at a State Park. The yipping that you are convinced is a pack of wolves might actually be a family of coyotes. The sound of someone screaming in terror might actually be a bobcat staking out his territory. You can get a good survey of the animals in your own backyard, just by listening!

-Rachael Meara,
Seasonal Interpreter

Babler's First Families: Kelp

In the southwest corner of the park lies a 40 acre parcel that Henry Kelp I purchased in the 1850's. Born in 1797 in Hanover, Germany, Henry and his wife Johanna (nee Schroeder) immigrated to the United States in 1851 with their 3 sons. Conrad, the oldest, was a farmhand for the Bacon family in 1860. He would later join the Confederate army and die in Georgia in 1864 at the age of 22.

John Frederick (Fred) Kelp was an infant when the family came to Missouri. He was a blacksmith at age 15 and married Maria (nee Schneider) in 1883. The family, which also included daughters Anna and Johanna, lived in St. Charles county where Fred died in 1888 after surgery.

Daughter Mary was born here in 1855. She married John Wildberger in 1879. They lived off of Manchester Road and had several children, 5 of whom survived until adulthood. Mary and her children ran a grocery



The Kelp family house prior to the park's creation.

store and meat market after her husband's death in 1903.

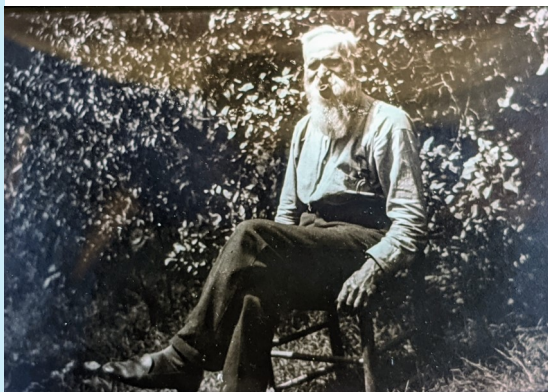
Henry Oscar Kelp II was born in Hanover, Germany in 1844. After his father tired of farming, he and his brothers took up the work at early ages. Upon marrying Caroline Arbegast in 1878, Henry built a home on the family farm. The ruins of the foundation still exist and are near the family

burying grounds. There are no headstones to mark these graves, only a line of cedar trees for the 7 family members interred here.

family continued working the land until it was sold in the 1930's to become part of Babler State Park.

The legacy of the Kelp family lives on through descendants that still live in the Wildwood area and a trail, which is named for the family. It's fascinating to learn who lived on this land and find the all but forgotten remnants of the life that they forged here.

-Carley Wright,
Park Volunteer

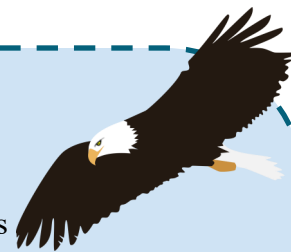


Henry Kelp sitting on a homemade chair on his property (above) and the remnants of the Kelp homestead home (right).

Henry II wasn't just a farmer. He served the community as a blacksmith, and as postmaster of the Kelp Post Office beginning in 1886. He and Caroline had 5 children, and the



The Eagle's Nest: Manager's Comments



Another winter has come and with it the cold and snow. How many times have you heard your neighbor or your friends say that they wish they were on some island beach somewhere in the warmth? In Missouri, we are blessed with the extremes of all 4 seasons, and though the weather seems bleak, it is not time to hide under your blanket and avoid the outdoors. Babler Memorial State Park is open year round, and with the proper preparation it is an excellent time to take a hike through the woods. In fact, because of the lack of all those annoying leaves you can really find and see fascinating geologic features, terrains, wildlife or panoramic views of the valleys that you otherwise would never see. Add some snow, and you can have a real camera worthy day; just make sure and dress appropriately. Layers are always recommended in case it gets warm and you need to adjust. Also, I would always bring snacks and water. We do have an all season restroom that is heated, with modern facilities available for use. It is located in the main picnic area, near the old pool. For those wanting to stay overnight, the campground remains open with limited facilities; the shower house is closed but vault type toilets and potable water are available. Hope to see you out in the park and please enjoy the winter while it lasts.

-Rich Love,

Acting Park Superintendent

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a deadly illness in white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family, called cervids. CWD kills all deer and other cervids it infects. CWD is spread from deer to deer through direct contact and through contact with soil, food, and water that have been contaminated through feces, urine, saliva, or carcasses of infected deer. Potential for transmission increases when deer gather in larger, concentrated numbers. The disease has been found in Missouri and is slowly spreading. The Missouri Department of Conservation is working with conservation partners to find cases and limit its spread. CWD remains relatively rare in the state at this time. Currently the disease has no vaccine or cure.



For more information on CWD, visit:
mdc.mo.gov/

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. We even have Eagle Scout projects available. Contact the visitor center for more information!

Park Closure: December 14-15

Babler State Park will be totally closed to the general public for our annual deer hunt on December 14th & 15th. This deer hunt allows the park to control our rising deer herd and manage for high browsing rates in the park. This year the park will also be monitoring Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) by sampling the harvested deer within the park. This data will allow the Missouri Dept. of Conservation to know how far the disease has spread and will allow the park to monitor the health of our resident deer herd.

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.



**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: 8:30AM- 4PM—Wednesday-Sunday

November & March: 8:30AM- 4PM—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 1st –October 31st: 7AM-9PM

November 1st-March 30th: 7AM-6PM

We're on the web!

www.mostateparks.com/babler

www.facebook.com/



First Day Hike: Hawthorn Trail

**January 1, 2019
10AM-11AM**

