

Park Staff

- **Chris Ferree**
Park Manager
- **Richard Love**
Park Supervisor
- **Andrea Grant**
Park Specialist
- **Dustin Hillis**
Senior Park Specialist
- **Erik Veenstra**
Park Maintenance Worker
- **Jonah Coakley**
Park Maintenance Worker
- **Micah Fansler**
Park Maintenance Worker
- **Angela Carson**
Park Ranger, Sgt.

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

Sweet and Sappy	1
Icy Treasures	2
Naturalist's Journal Explorer Corner	3
Programs & Events	4
Park Happenings	5
Christmas at Camp	6
Colcannon Recipe	7
Year in Review	8
Manager's Notes	9
Park Info & Hours Highlighted Events	10



The Babler Babble

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

WINTER 2021/22

Sweet and Sappy

Missouri might not be the first place you associate with maple syrup, but this sweet treat can be made right here in our own backyard! After all the hullabaloo of Christmas and the new year comes maple tapping season, another great way to spend time with family and get something delicious at the same time! All you need are some supplies and a good attitude... and maybe a nice warm jacket.

The best time to tap your sugar maples trees is when the nights are still very cold, at least



Maple sap is collected in February when the sap is flowing upward into the canopy. A spile is tapped into the tree and allows the sap to drip into the collection bucket. Once enough sap has been collected, you will then proceed with boiling the sap to evaporate the excess water and form the sticky syrup.

below 32 degrees, but the high is around 40 degrees during the day. Usually this ends up with Missouri maple season being around mid-February, but you will have to keep an eye on the weather report to be sure. Before the season starts, you will have to be sure you have some simple tools to help you gather the sap. These include a hammer, an electric drill, and a drill bit that matches your spile size, most commonly that will be either a 5/16" or a 7/16" bit. Then you will need a spile and hook set, as well as a bucket to drain and catch the sap. There are several reasonably priced starter kits sold online, or you can mix and match to your liking.

The sap will take a little while to get flowing as the winter weather starts to recede, usually 3 days to a week, and you will want to make sure the weather will stay above freezing during the day while collecting your sap. Don't get faked out by the freak warm days we have here in Missouri!

Once you have collected your sap, you will need to boil it down to make a syrup. It takes a lot of sap, too. About 40

gallons of sap will yield about one gallon of syrup, or about 1/4 the volume of your sap. When you are ready to boil just follow these simple steps:

1. Set up a turkey fryer or wood fire (with large stock pot) in a safe place.
2. Fill a boiling pot with 5 gallons of sap.
3. Boil the sap for approximately 4 hours.
4. When you have about a half gallon left in the pot, finish boiling on a stove.
5. The syrup is done when it reaches 219°F or 66% sugar content.

After making your maple syrup just sit back with a stack of pancakes, waffles, or even a drink and enjoy nature's bounty!

-Kat Krydyski,
Seasonal Naturalist



For a super sweet treat, you can drizzle the syrup into snow to form maple syrup candies.

Icy Treasures

It's late November, the first sub-freezing temperatures rolled through during the night. It was a cold, crisp early morning hike in the woods. With a shiver, I noticed a glimmer on the woods floor. Upon investigation I discovered this mysterious ribbon of ice coming out from a plant. So delicate and beautiful looking, like an ice flower made from a thin white ribbon. I pondered, what would cause such a beautiful and unique formation of ice? Filled with curiosity, I looked around for more icy formations and noticed that it wasn't on any other species of plant. Why was it only on this plant and not on other species around it? I had to know more about this seemingly mysterious phenomenon.

Frost flowers, also known as "ice flowers, ice ribbons, rabbit ice, or ice castles" are typically found in late autumn when the first sub-freezing

temperatures roll through. The fragile sheets of ice are formed from sap flowing out of a rupture in the plant's stem. The formation that the frozen sap forms depends on the amount of sap flow, temperature, and wind variation. The ice formations can vary from looking like petals, puffs of cotton candy, or snarls of white thread. Here in Missouri this phenomenon only occurs on dittany, stinkweed, and white crownbeard. According to KFVS 12, "while it is still a mystery to scientist why these plants are the only plants to produce "Frost flowers" it is suspected that these plants' root system are active later in the year than other species, or their stems rupture in just the right way to force the ribbons of sap."

-Kayla Heady,
Seasonal Naturalist

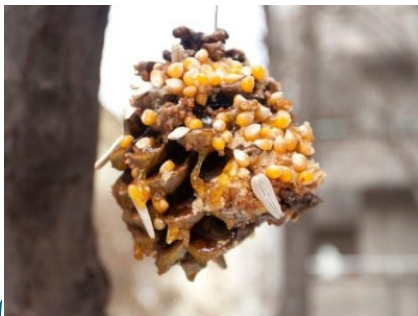


No two frost flowers are the same and will have their own unique designs.



DIY Bird Feeders

Did you know that you can build your own cheap bird feeders? All you need is either some peanut butter or vegetable based lard to use a binder for the seeds. You can use pinecones, toilet paper rolls, orange peels, or anything you want to use. Combine the mixtures to form the base of your bird feed filler. Once combined then add them to your desired feeders.



The Naturalist's Journal: Citizen Science Projects

Winter hiking and exploring can be some of the best activities in state parks if you know what to look for. On your next hike, take a look around to see what things you can see, smell, hear, taste, or touch. Can you see signs of life in the barren snowfall or can you hear any animals calling at night? If you're by a river, look for slide marks in the snow. These are telltale signs of river otters sledding down the slopes. Look for signs of tracks around your bird feeders. Keep a journal of what types of birds you can see or better yet, join a neighborhood Christmas Bird Count project. Just because it is cold and wet outside doesn't mean that the fun has stopped. You just need to know where to look to find your next adventure.

Dustin Hillis,
Senior Park Specialist



122nd Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count is a census of birds in the Western Hemisphere, performed annually in the early Northern-hemisphere winter by volunteer birdwatchers and administered by the National Audubon Society.

The Christmas Bird Count occurs December 14 to January 5 every year. Sign up to receive information and results about all of Audubon's community science programs through American Birds, our newsletter by email.

For more information visit:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>



Explorer Corner

Can you find all the hidden words?

Did You Know?

Many birds migrate through Missouri during the winter, and some from more northerly areas will even stay in Missouri all season long! Be on the lookout for cedar waxwings, dark-eyed juncos, fox sparrows, and many more!

Did You Know?

Did you know you can see bald eagles in Missouri? In the winter months bald eagles like to nest along river ways, including the Missouri, Mississippi, and Meramec!



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

FROST FLOWER
SNOW
SOCK CAP
BIRDS

WINTER
BABLER
EVERGREEN
FIREPLACE

MAPLE SYRUP
CCC
OWL
ICE

EAGLES
SWEATER WEATHER
NEST
FEEDER

We do school programs!

Contact Dustin Hillis, senior park specialist at Babler State Park at 636-324-7064 to schedule your programs.



Did You Know?

You can help out all of our resident and migrating birds here in Missouri by putting out a bird feeder. Woodpeckers love suet, and all kinds of beautiful song birds have quite the liking for black-oiled sunflower seeds!



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!

All programs may be subject to changes/ cancellation due to Covid-19 guidelines. All updates will be made available via the park's Facebook page.

December 2021

Nature's Décor

Saturday, December 4th

10 am– Noon

2 p.m.-4 p.m.

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. Tune in to our Facebook page for the live presentation.

This event is for ages 14 and older. Minors (under 18) must be accompanied by an adult.

Registration for this program starts Nov. 1. To register, click on the link below and select "Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park" as the location.

<https://icampmo1.usdirect.com/MSPWeb/Activities/Search.aspx>

January 2022

First Day Hike

Saturday, January 1st

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 2022

Tweets for Sweets

Saturday, February 6th

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.

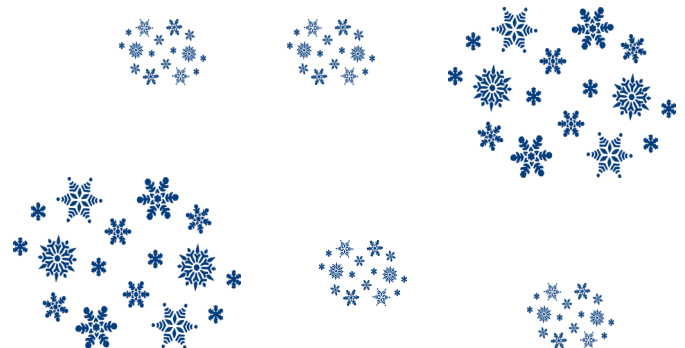
MO State Parks Explorer Program

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.



Park Happenings

NEW! Educational Trunks!

Attention educators! Babler now has a couple of educational trunks that can be checked out at no cost. Trunks can be checked out for two weeks at a time. These trunks are packed full of learning materials that can teach your students about the following topics:

1. Reptiles & Amphibians
2. Arthropods (insects, arachnids, etc.)

To check these trunks out please call the park visitor center and/or naturalist at 636-458-3813.

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. Contact the Visitor Center for more information! 636-458-3813

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.

Park Closure: January 8-9

Babler State Park will be totally closed to the general public for our annual managed deer hunt on January 8-9. This Deer Hunt allows the park to control our rising deer herd and manage for high browsing rates in the park. 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.

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/

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.

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.

Christmas at Camp

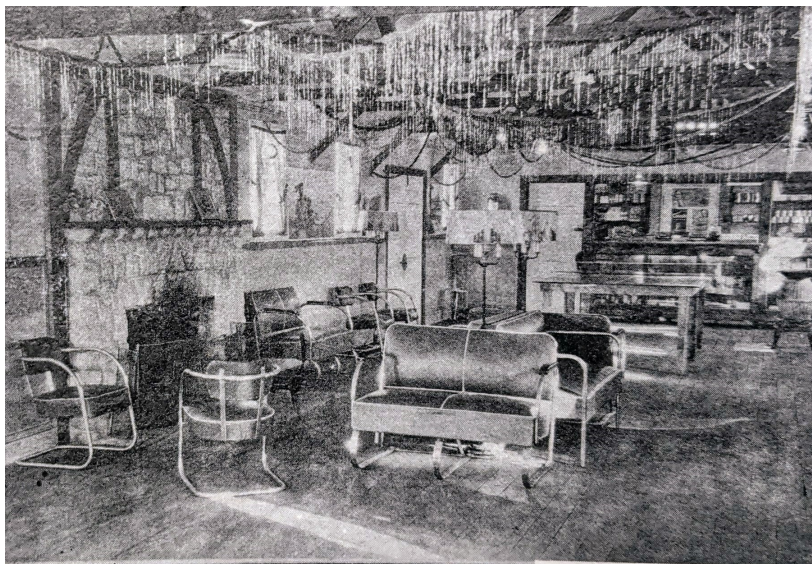
December 1937 started off with a bang - a record 3.5 inches of snow fell on the first of the month. With an average temperature of 31.4 °, it was a chilly month for sure. I wonder how the men of CCC camps 2729 and 3763 felt about winter in Missouri. Many probably saved up time off and were able to go home for the holidays, especially if they lived locally. That was something reported again and again in newspapers all over the country: "James Erwin, who is in CCC Camp, spent part of his Christmas vacation at the home of his parents...". But for those left behind, camps generally became a place of mirth with surprise Christmas parties, visits from Santa, and of course a festive Christmas feast.

We are fortunate that we have an original 1937 Christmas menu from Camp 2729. The meal it describes may be very similar to what your family will enjoy this December.

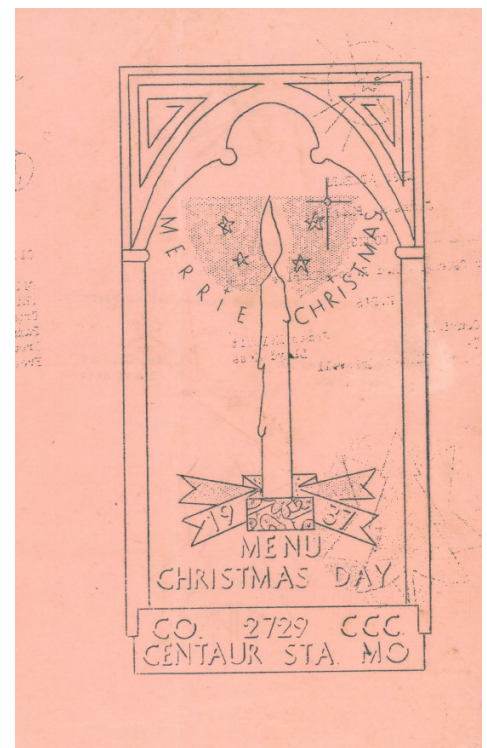
Tomatoe[sic] Juice Cocktail
Olives Sweet Mixed Pickles
Celery
Roast Young Turkey
Giblet Gravy Oyster Dressing
Whipped Irish Potatoes
Cramed Peas
Cramberry Sauce Stuffed
Fresh Tomatoes
Pumpkin pie with whipped Cream
Fruit Cake
Bread Butter Coffee
Fresh Fruits Candy Nuts
Cigarettes Cigars

Where they got fresh tomatoes in December is anyone's guess. Food costs have risen 2,009.80% since 1937, although it varies widely - oysters were then \$0.15/dozen, now they range from \$36-\$54/dozen, while the fruitcake was \$1/lb then, and is around \$30/lb now. I've included a recipe for Irish Whipped Potatoes if you'd like to recreate a portion of the CCC Christmas dinner. Please tag the park in photos with **#BablerCCCdinner** if you do! And whatever you celebrate with the closing of the year, make it merry. Glad tidings to you!

-Carley Wright,
Park Volunteer



This picture is of the Recreation Hall in Camp 3763 decorated for the holidays.



Christmas Day Menu front cover pictured above. Christmas Day Menu inside pictured on next page.

Irish Whipped Potatoes (Colcannon)

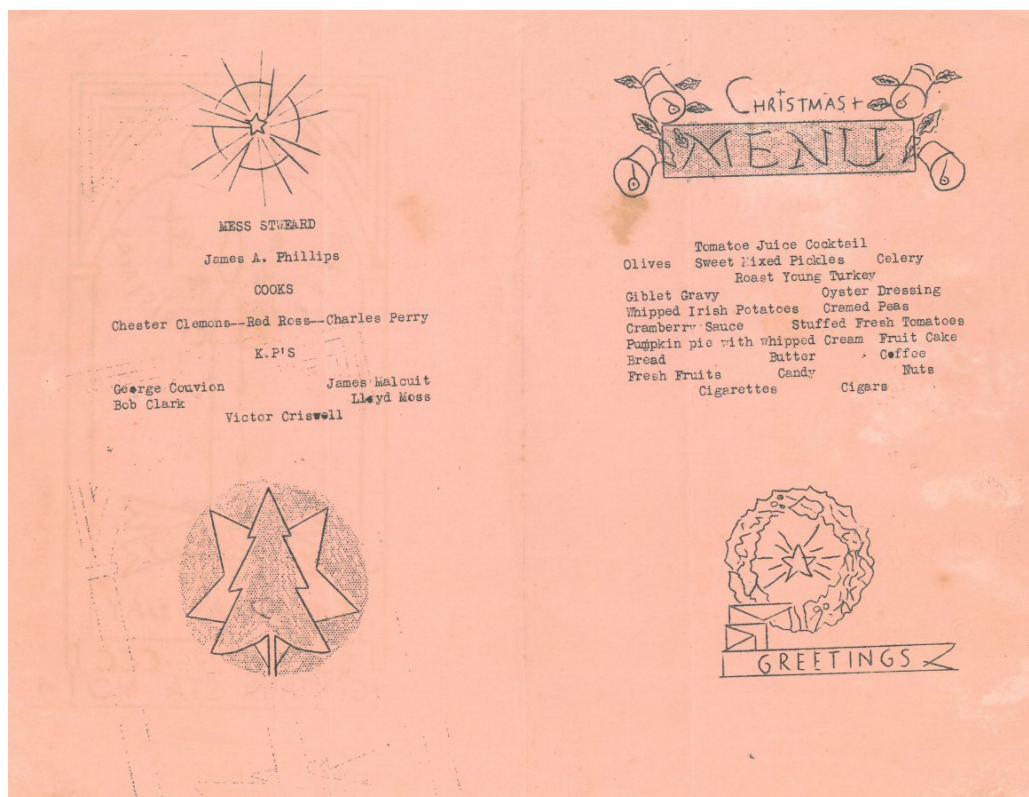
Prep Time: 10 min Cook Time: 25 min. Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 4 russet potatoes (2 to 2 1/2 pounds), peeled and cut into large chunks
- Salt
- 5 to 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for serving
- 3 lightly packed cups chopped kale, cabbage, chard, or other leafy green
- 3 green onions, minced (about 1/2 cup)
- 1 cup milk or cream

Directions:

Boil the potatoes: Put the potatoes in a medium pot and cover with cold water by at least an inch. Add 2 tablespoons of salt, and bring to a boil. Boil until the potatoes are fork tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain in a colander. Cook the greens and the green onions with butter: Return the pot to the stove and set over medium-high heat. Melt the butter in the pot and once it's hot, add the greens. Cook the greens for 3-4 minutes, or until they are wilted and have given off some of their water. Add the green onions and cook 1 minute more. Mash the potatoes with milk or cream and greens: Pour in the milk or cream, mix well, and add the potatoes. Reduce the heat to medium. Use a fork or potato masher and mash the potatoes, mixing them up with the greens. Add salt to taste and serve hot, with a knob of butter in the center.



Babler's Year in Review for 2021

Well We are Still Here

Well it still was not 2020 but 2021 had its own hurdles for Babler. The park noticed an increase in usage, therefore, creating new challenges that the park had to work around. The campground was very rarely empty. The Visitor Center dealt with problems such as a leaking roof, squirrels/raccoons that decided a section of the roof tasted amazing, and continued Covid guideline changes.

New Staff

Jonah Coakley started as one of our Grounds Maintenance Technicians in March. This filled one of our two open positions. Jonah is no stranger to Babler, he had been a seasonal employee at the park since March 2019 and has taken on the challenge to learn all the intricacies (good and bad!) of park maintenance operations. We are excited to have him on board with us!

We also have another full time staff person to welcome to the Babler family. Micah Fansler joined us at the beginning of August as a Maintenance Ground Technician. He brings with him wealth of knowledge working in various roles with the Boy Scouts of America and recently with us a part-time worker with our maintenance staff. We are all very grateful to have him on board. This filled position also means we are fully staffed for the first time in over a year and a half!



Jonah Coakley (left) and Micah Fansler (right).

Visitor Center Updates:

The visitor center has had some updates to our operation in 2021. We have changed our hours stay open later. We now are open 9AM-4:30PM Wednesday-Sunday during the months of April-October and open 9AM-4PM Saturday & Sunday during the months of March and November. The visitor center will remain closed December-February but may open for special events.

We also updated our animal care area. We now have new tanks that give our animals larger habitats to roam. We have decorated them with lots of natural objects to simulate their natural environments.

We have added new exhibits to the building showcasing our pre-park settlers, the Babler Family, and our archaeology dig table. These exhibits wouldn't be possible without our hardworking volunteers and seasonal naturalist staff.

Park Upgrades Coming

Planning continues for our 2 revenue bond projects which include campground improvements (electrical upgrades, expansion of water to individual campsites) and the rehabilitation of the Babler Lodge.

The rehabilitation of the Babler Lodge that we officially got back into our possession in July of 2021. This building is currently off limits to guests due to the locale of the building and security. We have little information about this building unfortunately. The park knows that it was built by the Workman's Progress Administration during the 1930s under the New Deal. It housed the YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) in the mid 1900s. It was also used as housing for one of the park's staff housing, this was due to the fact that they had 7 kids it was the only building large enough to house them. Lastly, in the late 80/90s until 2021 it was used as a Division of Youth Services building housing up to 20 kids. The park and the Missouri State Parks System is excited to have this historic building back in our control and we are excited to one day open it back up for the public to enjoy this building.



The Eagle's Nest: Manager's Comments

I'm not sure where the summer went and fall seems to have abruptly ended with the leaves finally falling off the trees in mid-November, which is about a month later than normal!

The park ended our on season in October with a flurry of activity ranging from our ever increasing popular Halloween events and programing, prepping for our managed deer hunt that occurred first weekend in November, turning off most exterior water sources, winterizing buildings, and giving a good clean to the Babler Lodge (more on that below).

It seems we really do not have downtime in the winter months anymore, we shift from grass mowing to other projects such as restroom rehabbing, trail clearing, prepping for larger projects such as the paved trail resurfacing (which is scheduled to be in full swing this upcoming spring). We shift from naturalist programing to stewardship work in the field and continue improvements to exhibits and outdoor interpretive panel development. Having the Visitor Center open 5 days a week to being closed December through February and spending that time looking for new great products and preparing for next year's shelter rentals and our new reservation system going live early 2022.

Planning continues for our 2 revenue bond projects which include campground improvements (electrical upgrades, expansion of water to individual campsites) and the rehabilitation of the Babler Lodge that we officially got back into our possession in July of 2021. Every time I find myself in that building I'm amazed of how well it was constructed, has so many of its original design elements present, and it just has good bones. We are all very excited about the next chapter of that buildings history to be made.

Before you know it those first few hints of green will be popping across the park and the cycle starts again.

I hope you all have a joyous holiday season and a happy new year!

Chris Ferree

Superintendent Babler State Park





**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: 9AM- 4:30PM—Wednesday-Sunday

November & March: 9AM- 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 1st 10 AM-Noon

