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The Babler Babble

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WINTER 2022/2023

The Itsy, Bitsy, Chilly Spider

Wildlife can be less active during the winter months in Missouri. After a long summer filled with insects crawling and flying all over the land some welcome this cold shift. Some of the more feared insects such as wasps and spiders sharply reduce their activity, but they bounce back in full force in the warmer months. So, what happens to spiders during the off-season? Where do they go? It is easy to imagine that they all die off in winter, but they actually find ways to stick around.

As you walk through the leaves of the forest the spiders are still around you. They just move more slowly or stay stationary to weather the cold. Some can enter a dormancy-like state but become more active on



Wolf spiders can be found in a variety of habitats, even in winter. The one above was seen in some grass a warm winter's day.

The black widow and the brown recluse are the only two native Missouri spiders that are harmful to people. The brown recluse, pictured right, can sometimes be found in homes seeking warmth from the winter cold.

warmer days and hunt for other insects. Big leaf piles and structures like wood piles are great locations for them to hold out in. You might find them if you search, but it is better to leave our eight-legged friends sheltered from the cold this time of year. Although some species stay in the forest where the temperature fluctuates, others prefer a consistently warmer climate.

Unlike out in the elements, the homes of humans tend to stay warmer and drier, with more consistent temperatures. This is more of an ideal habitat for some species looking to escape the cold. Therefore, as the average daily temperature drops you may notice an increase in spider activity in your home. Basements and garages become a common



Spider-web covered in frozen dew.

location to find spiders. as these areas typically offer a way into the home and provide dark passages for spiders to travel through and hide in. Be careful while rummaging through any boxes in the garage, as they might contain a variety of species waiting out the outside conditions. While they are not always welcome by the homeowners, spiders help keep the halls and rooms a little cleaner, as they hunt down pests running loose in your home during the winter months. Remember: When you see spiders inside during the winter, most are just looking for a better place to be when it's bitter -cold outside.

-Cody Grainger,

Seasonal
Naturalist



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.



Above are some examples of items to use when creating your DIY bird feeders. When you are finished creating your feeders share them on Facebook and tag the park by using #Babler4Birds.

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



123rd 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
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 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
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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 2022

Nature's Décor

Saturday, December 10th

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 2023

First Day Hike

Sunday, January 1st

10 a.m.– Noon

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. Meet at the Alta shelter parking lot.

February 2023

Tweets for Sweets

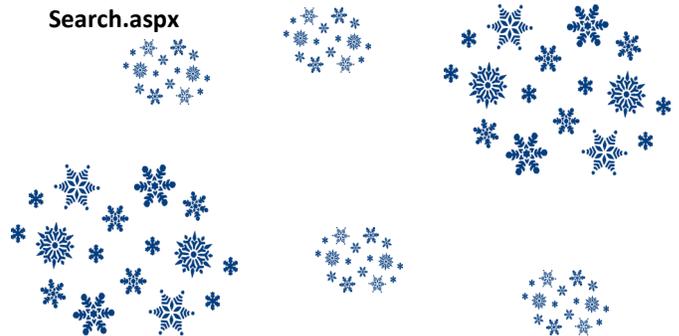
Saturday, February 4th

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.

To register for this program please visit:

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



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 636-324-7064 or 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: December 3-4

Babler State Park will be totally closed to the general public for our annual managed deer hunt on Dec. 3-4. 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.

Babler's Year in Review for 2022

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.



Temporary Hours for the Visitor Center

New hours are temporarily being implemented at the Visitor Center due to shortage in staff this fiscal year. The visitor center is normally open on weekends during November and March and closed completely from December through February. In 2022, it was decided that the visitor center would be closed from November through March 16, 2023. Starting on March 17, 2023, it will be open on the following days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This will be through April 30, after which it will reopen to normal business hours of Wednesday through Sunday. We hope that we can maintain normal business hours in the next fiscal year. We will keep you updated.

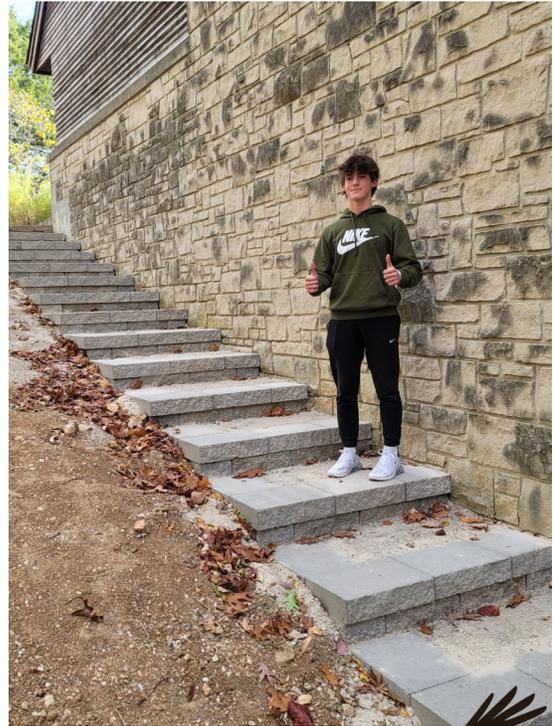
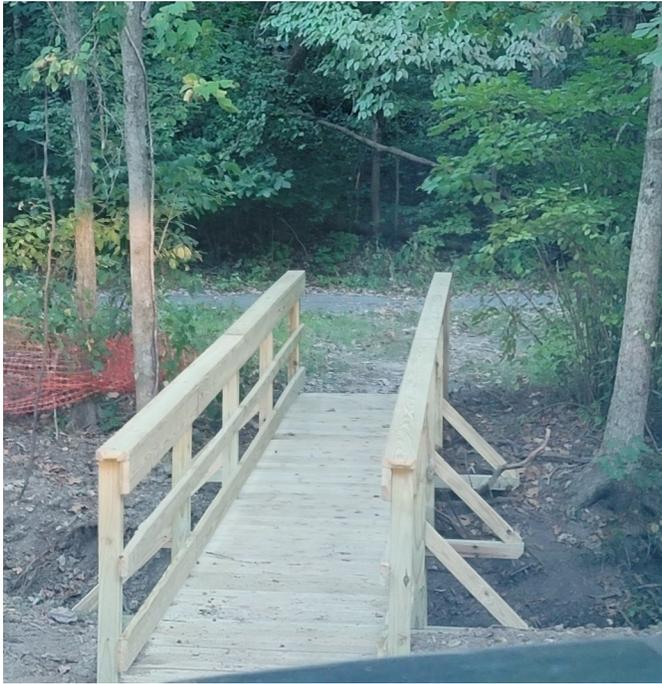
To check current park hours, go to mostateparks.com/park-hours/dr-edmund-babler-memorial-state-park.

Replacement of Failing Structures

The park is always looking for areas to spruce up or fixing structures that can become problems in the future. One example of a structure replacement from 2022 is the trail bridge near the Crystal Spring Trailhead off of Guy Park Drive in the valley section of the park. The bridge was losing ground due to continuous erosion from the creek bed that it crosses. The Eastern Construction Crew came out and assessed the damage for the park and then got right to work on building the new bridge (pictured on Page 7).

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The park also loves helping Scouts fulfill their project needs. Eagle Scout Chase Burgard of Troop 456 in Wildwood helped the park by replacing a failing wooden stairway leading to the eastside of the visitor center near the gardens (pictured on Page 7). His group of Scouts replaced the rotting wood stairs with solid concrete blocks. Their hard work has resulted in compliments about the new stairs, and the knowledge that our guests will have a stable foundation when traversing the visitor center grounds.



The Eagle's Nest: Manager's Comments



Yet another year is coming to an end. 2022 has had its share of events, challenges and accomplishments.

As of November, we are back in our off-season, with reduced park operating hours and water turned off throughout most of the park. It's amazing how October is so busy for all of us and then the park becomes almost empty by the end of the year. This does leave us time to concentrate on other things, such as painting, smaller cleanup projects and general straightening out of our areas.

This winter will also be busy in planning for some bigger projects. The Babler Lodge project is moving forward with planning, and our paved bicycle trail is past design phase and will be bid out to contractors in late winter, with construction to hopefully begin in spring of 2023. Planning has also begun on the feasibility of connecting the park to municipal water (American Rescue Plan project). Other items include- planning for campground infrastructure upgrades and amending our conceptual development plan to move the equestrian parking lot. All of these large projects take time to execute, and they are all moving through the process. It will continue to be a busy few years for all of these to get to completion.

We also look back this past year on a return to pre-pandemic usage of the park and the Outdoor Education Center, run by our partners Parkway/Rockwood Community Ed. Our visitation numbers continue to be strong as we hope people who came back to the park or discovered it for the first time during the height of the pandemic continue to do so.

All of this is possible because of the park's amazing staff and volunteers. Everything from repairing a campground electrical pedestal or maintaining native pollinator gardens to interpreting Babler's natural and cultural uniqueness—answering questions; and solving issues would not happen without such dedicated people who the park is lucky to have.

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season, and I look forward to sharing some new park updates in 2023!

Chris Ferree

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:

May-October: 9AM- 4:30PM—Wednesday-Sunday

April: 9AM– 4PM—Saturday & Sunday

November-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 –October: 7AM-9PM

November -March: 7AM-6PM

We're on the web!

www.mostateparks.com/babler

www.facebook.com/



First Day Hike: Hawthorn Trail

January 1st 10 AM-Noon

