

The Babler Babble

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2018/19

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Hiking in a Winter Wonderland

The air is crisp and the sun has not yet risen. You grab your coffee, hat and gloves, then strap on your boots. "Don't forget a snack," your brain says. Today's adventure: a winter hike on the trails of Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park. The trees have finished with their magnificent autumn colors, leaving only a few procrastinating leaves hanging on otherwise barren branches. The park's forest floor and understory, once thick with green foliage, is now a carpet of dead, dry leaves.

The woods seem bare as you take in the scenery. It is difficult to imagine how much life inhabited these woods just months ago. The monarch butterflies that fluttered about during the summer have moved south, along with many bird species. Bracket fungi and moss on rotten logs provide the only

color on the ground. Little animal life is visible, but you can hear squirrels chattering and goldfinches singing. Cedar waxwings flock to berry bushes. Tracks crossing your path tell you that a deer walked here not long ago.



Freshly fallen snow on one of the trails at Babler State Park.

Where have all the animals gone? They are still around, although many of them are now hibernating. Food is scarce during the winter months. Snakes will use abandoned burrows for the next few months, bees stay in

their hives, and ants have moved further underground. Mammals of various sizes are fast asleep in burrows or dens. Some mammals like skunks may wake up occasionally during the winter; however, others such as little brown bats, are true hibernators and will not be seen until spring.

Your path is nearing an end. As you walk back to the parking lot, you are grateful for the moment of peace and the fresh, crisp winter air. You look up at the gray sky and realize snowflakes are beginning to fall—the first snow of the season! Getting into your car, you think about how lovely the woods will look with a fresh, sparkling blanket of snow over everything... and drive away, already planning to come back the next day to see it.

Robin Walker
Seasonal Interpreter



Freshly fallen snow captures the tracks from resident deer (left) and the hopping tracks of various bird species (above).



Winter is for the Birds

Winter is coming...and the birds of Babler have various ways of dealing with the changes winter will bring.



Barn Swallow flying through the air.

Temperature! Many birds migrate to warmer areas, usually south of their summer habitats. Some birds leave Missouri to fly farther south for the winter. You will not see ruby-throated hummingbirds, barn swallows or many of our warblers at this time of year. Others fly in from further north and spend the winter here in Missouri. Cedar waxwings and dark-eyed juncos (also known as snowbirds) are common sights.

Food! Birds that eat insects cannot find them in winter, so they will turn to berries and other fruits. Robins, bluebirds and other birds will gather in wooded areas that have fruit available. Birds will gather anywhere that has flowing water that does not freeze. They will also gather anywhere humans are providing food and/or open water. You can see plenty of activity at the feeders outside our visitor center.



Cedar waxwing eating berries.



American goldfinch in winter colors.

Colors! Many birds lose a bit of color over the winter, but the most dramatic is the goldfinch. Male goldfinches molt before winter going from bright yellow to gray with only a hint of yellow. This may help them to avoid being seen by predators. In summer, the male's need to show off and attract a mate outweighs the risk. The females, which are less colorful even in summer, will also molt to become even more camouflaged. The sight of those bright yellow feathers will be a sign of spring to look forward to.

Brenda Appleby
Seasonal Interpreter



Recycling for Birds

If you love to watch birds in your backyard but cannot afford fancy bird feeders, try these simple ideas that recycle everyday objects.

1. Try reusing old baking dishes or other types of pans. You can get creative by adding on chains or rope to hang it in your yard. This dish could also be placed on the ground and filled with water creating a unique bird bath.
2. Try reusing empty plastic bottles, such as this washed out bleach bottle. Just cut three square holes out of the middle to allow the birds access to the bird seed in the new hanging platform.



Ask the Interpreter!

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

Q: Why does the park have a managed deer hunt?

A: The park has a rising deer population due to the encroachment of urban development. When you have large numbers of deer in a small amount of acreage you will start to see negative effects to the native flora (plants). The browsing rate skyrockets and we have a thinning of forbs, shrubs and lower branches of trees due to deer eating them. This dampens the biodiversity of the park by eliminating food sources for other wildlife.

We also implemented the managed deer hunt to combat the deer from dying of either hunger or disease due to the higher concentration of deer within the park. Muzzleloaders (known as black powder rifles) are the chosen firearm due to the distance their projectiles travel. Also, the park gets a more precise harvest rate. By using the method of muzzleloader, we have a safer hunt for both the hunters and the surrounding landowners.



Explorer Corner

Did You Know?

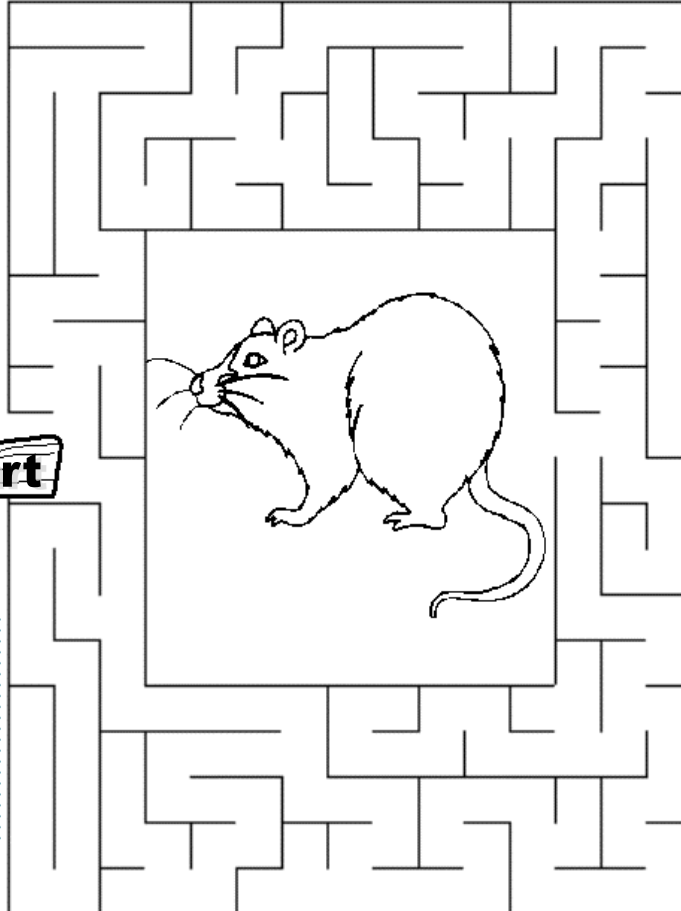
Great horned owls may potentially live for nearly 30 years! However, 13 is a ripe old age for most wild specimens.



Did You Know?

Great horned owls are found in many types of habitats. They can be found in deep forests and even in your own backyard!

Can you help the Great Horned Owl find his supper?



We do school programs!

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

Great Horned Owl

(Bubo virginianus)

The Great horned owl is the largest owl in Missouri, with wide ear tufts. They can be reddish, brown or gray in the face, and have a white throat. The iris of their eye is yellow. The upper parts of their feathers are mottled brown; the underparts are light with brown barring. After dark, you can identify the owl by its three to eight deep hoots grouped in a pattern such as "hoo h'HOO, HOO, HOO."



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!

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.

January 2019

New Year's Hike

**Tuesday, Jan. 1
10 to 11 a.m.**

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.

Park Happenings

Babler State Park is on Facebook!

Facebook is a great way to stay up-to-date on current program offerings, stay in contact with park staff, and post pictures and comments about the park. Please check us out on Facebook 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: Dec. 15 and 16

Babler State Park will be completely closed to the general public for our annual managed deer hunt Dec. 15 and 16. This deer hunt allows the park to control our increasing deer herd numbers 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 Department 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)

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. The Centers for Disease Control does not recommend consuming meat from positive CWD tested deer.



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.

Babler's Year in Review for 2018

We have a NEW Interpreter!

In mid-July of 2018, we hired a new Interpreter for Dr. Edmund A. Babler State Park, Dustin Hillis. Dustin comes to us from the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center where he worked as an hourly naturalist for the Missouri Dept. of Conservation. Previously, he has worked for Missouri State Parks in various seasonal temporary positions since 2010. He loves to work outdoors and visit with guests who frequent Missouri state parks. Please join us in congratulating him in his new role.



80 Years & NEW Statue!

This fall, we celebrated the park's 80th birthday and rededicated the statue of the Civilian Conservation Corps Worker. This statue was first dedicated at Jefferson Barracks. When Jefferson Barracks's CCC Museum closed, interested parties worked to transfer the statue to Missouri State Park's care. It was decided Dr. Edmund A. Babler State Park was the best place suited to house the statue commemorating the CCC. The park dedicated the statue and publicly thanked Naomi Shaw, the CCC Legacy group and Henry Sulima for their dedication and donations to make this statue possible.



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.



A Renewed Hope

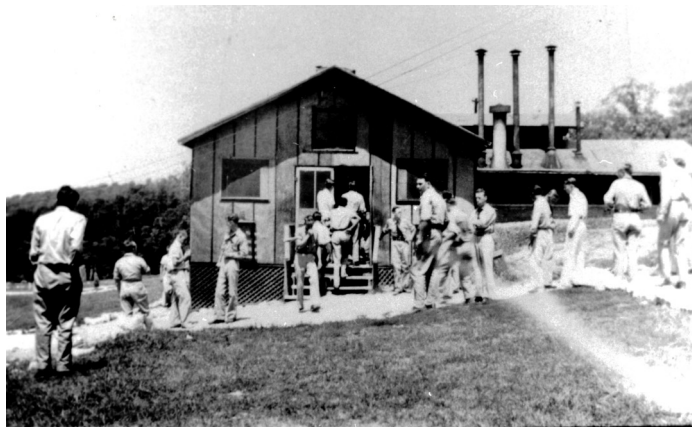
No money...no food...and a family to support. With no hope of it getting any better anytime soon. This was the



Young CCC man in his uniform at Babler State Park.

situation facing many families in the mid-west during the Great Depression. During the 1930s, unemployment in the U.S. was at an all time high. To help eliminate this problem President Franklin D.

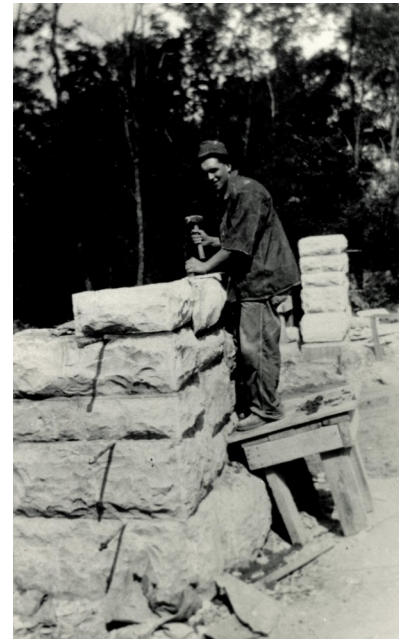
Roosevelt introduced the New Deal in 1933.



Young men entering and leaving the mess hall at Babler State Park. The building is no longer standing.

The New Deal included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and other back-to-work programs. The CCC assisted young men between the ages of 18 to 25 and employed them to improve our state and national parks. They employed thousands of young men during its existence. The men of the CCC helped build restrooms, building facilities, overlooks and roads, and helped plant millions of trees.

The CCC program was a program modeled after the military. The men would be housed in military-type barracks, issued uniforms, given three square meals a day, healthcare, and an education, and received a decent wage. The men were paid thirty dollars a week, however, twenty-five dollars was sent back home



Young CCC man practicing masonry work on a structure at Babler State Park.

to their families, allowing the men to keep five dollars for themselves.

For many men this was a great improvement in their quality of life. All men were required to attend education classes if they had not completed high school. Men were even given the option to attend trades classes, such as welding, electrical, masonry, plumbing, and engineering. The CCC enrolled over 300,000 men and taught many of them how to read and write. Not only did the CCC provide education, job experience and money to these young men, but it also gave the men and their families hope.

A Renewed Hope (continued)

The CCC helped improve many state and national parks in the nation. In Babler State Park you can still see the excellent work left by the CCC. In the park, there are twenty-two CCC structures that are still standing today. These include: three shelters (Henry Babler Enclosed, Alta and Cochran), stables, the Ranger's office, equestrian tunnels, etc. Come experience living history of the past, today at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park.



Young men working on the road crew at Babler State Park.

Shelly Payne
Seasonal Interpreter

The Eagle's Nest: Managers Comments



As I look out the window from my office at the visitor center, I see the forest floor already blanketed with snow. How quickly we went from enjoying the fall leaf colors straight into winter. It is at this time of year I receive comments or questions on “what we do now that the season has ended” or “must be nice to be able to relax during the off season.” Actually, the care and management of the park does not end or change with the seasons; it is an ongoing process. The slowdown in use and the closing of facilities for the winter, however, does allow us to concentrate on projects and improvements before the start of a new season next spring.

Planned improvements include: building new uni-strut metal racks for campground electric panels, replacing deteriorating wood structures, installing four new roofs, replacing grills in the campground, installing a replacement hot water heater in the campground shower house, and a complete HVAC replacement system installation at the Administration Building at the Outdoor Education Center. We also continue to work aggressively on exotic plant control and other resource management initiatives that will help preserve this park into the future but for now, it is time to fire up the snow plow and clear some roads. Have a great winter and hope to see you in the park.

Jeff Robinson
Park Superintendent



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

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Wildwood, MO 63005
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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**

