

Friends

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MCCONNELL SPRINGS

McConnell
Springs
LEXINGTON 1775

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Founders' Day Returns to McConnell Springs

by Jon Hagee, Founders' Day Chair

With Spring comes our annual Founders' Day celebration at Lexington's McConnell Springs on Saturday, May 21! It seems like forever since we had the last one!



Two hundred forty-seven years ago Lexington and the surrounding Bluegrass was a woodland paradise for pioneers seeking freedom and land of their own. William McConnell and a group of explorers were camping down by the Springs when word came of the Battle of Lexington and the start of the Revolutionary War. In honor of that event, the explorers decided to name our community Lexington, and did so in 1779 when the town was founded.

This year features a special, McConnell descendant, and we invite any other of our frontier McConnell family to be our special guests!

Experience frontier life of 1775 for yourself! Founders' Day is held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be traditional musical entertainment; guided tours of the park's 27 acres of woodland trails; colonial crafts such as wood-working, quilt making, weaving & gunsmithing. Exhibits

of colonial tools and Indian artifacts. Demonstrations of pioneer cooking and blacksmithing. And a special frontier living history area around our primitive log cabin. Children's activities include bow and arrow, tomahawk throw, pioneer kids toys and games.

This is a FREE family event, come spend the day! Concessions will be sold onsite by The Friends of McConnell Springs as a special fundraiser for park events.

This is a rain or shine event; sunscreen, rain gear and insect repellent may be needed. Visitors taking guided tours are encouraged to wear hiking shoes. McConnell Springs is located on Rebmann Lane off Old Frankfort Pike via McConnell Spring Drive across from the Fire Training Center.

Inside: Dear Friends, What's Buzzing?



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Dear Friends...

Charlie Boland, Chair

As I write this from my home office, looking out the window I see a pair of cardinal mates, robins, grackles, and nuthatches at the feeder, three ducks floating in the pool, a hawk circling in the sky, and a flock of geese just flew over – what a great view! It reminds me that McConnell Springs is a special place for those of you who love to watch birds, and observe any other types of wild life. We also have bee hives, bat poles, deer, turtles, and every other kind of “land rover” you can imagine. Come on out to the park and see for yourself.

We are excited to offer the return of the Founders’ Day celebration on May 21 after missing the past couple of years! Come experience the pioneer life and see many other interesting historical exhibits, skilled craftsmanship, nature and environmental education points, music, and a great time

with family and friends – all on the land where it all started for Lexington 247 years ago. Don’t miss Founders’ Day – see the specifics for this event and others elsewhere in the newsletter.

Thanks for all the support you give to the park through visits, financial contributions, volunteer hours – we couldn’t do it without you. Consider a paver or a memorial tree as a unique tribute for someone you would like to honor. We also have t-shirts, a special book... *The Founding of Lexington* by local author and historian Carolyn Murray Wooley, and bandanas available for you at the park – just ask at the welcome desk inside the Kentucky American Water Education Center. The on-site Parks staff is also happy to answer any questions you have during your visit or after your hike. We’ll see you soon!

What’s All the BUZZ About?

by Jon Hagee, FOMS Board Member and Beekeeper

If you’ve noticed some new additions to the park in the past couple years, here is more on our beehives!

In 2020 and 2021 we added two beehives to the park. Our beekeeper team, Jon Hagee and Don Powell, are both board members of The Friends. They routinely inspect the hives, make seasonal changes, experiment with technique, treat for pests, and feed the bees, when needed.

We’ve built a relationship with the local and state beekeepers, and are working on programs for the park, including an exhibit. Honey bees are important for pollination. We also hope to have some raw honey this year, and working on improving our internal sensors which can be viewed on our web site: <https://mcconnellsprings.org/bee hive/>.

If you have an interest in beekeeping, we would be glad to talk with you about getting experience with our team!





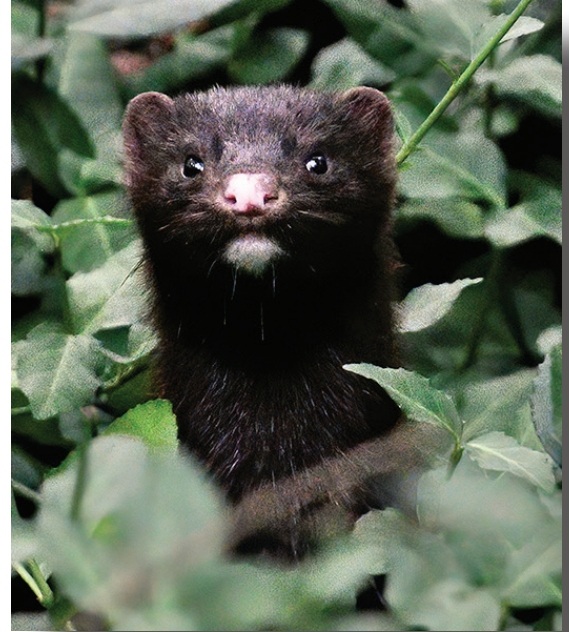
Notes from the Naturalist...

by Steven Rogers

The American Mink, *Neovision vison*, is a species of semiaquatic mammal that is native to much of the United States and can be found living in wooded areas along creeks, rivers, lakes, ponds, or any other reliable source of water.....like springs. Mink have become a recent addition to the habitat at McConnell Springs, having first been spotted in the park in 2019, but they have already left their mark on the park and the other animals that live here.

Since mink have been discovered at the park a change has occurred with a few other animal populations most noticeably with frogs. Mink are predators that are built to swim and chase their prey in the water, they can dive up to 16 feet and have semi-webbed feet that give them speed. Since the introduction of this predator, the frog population in the wetland area has decreased most likely due to being hunted by mink. While it does sound bad that the frog population has gotten smaller, the mink are a native animal that serve an important role in an ecosystem.

Most likely, if food sources for the mink get too low they will move on out of the park which will allow frogs and other animals that they hunt the opportunity to rebound in numbers. For now though, the mink can be spotted around the wetland pond and even around the Blue Hole springs on rare occasion. Keep an eye out for a long slender brown body swimming through the water as they hunt for their next meal. Soon a taxidermy mink will be on display in the Kentucky American Water Education Center and will serve as a valuable education tool for the public. Funding for the mink display was provided by The Friends of McConnell Springs through general donations received from the public.



Courtesy: Karen Higdon,
FOMS Board Member and Treasurer

Barrel Tasting for the Springs

It may have been a chilly day, but the sun came out and so did our supporters. A big thank you to everyone who was able to attend our Wine Barrel Tasting Event and help support McConnell Springs. Another thank you to the wineries who donated their wine and their time to make the event successful. We are already thinking ahead to next year and hope to see all the McConnell Springs fans attend!





The Friends of McConnell Springs
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Website: www.McConnellSprings.org

Friends – Memberships

The Friends of McConnell Springs is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Your tax-deductible donation supports the preservation of McConnell Springs and educational programs at the site. Can we count on your support in being a Friend? If so, please mail this form to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation amount:

\$1000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25

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Check this box to make my donation to The Friends of McConnell Springs Endowed Fund #0527 at the BGCF.

Complete the form above and mail it with your membership donation to:

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No matter what membership level you give, your generosity is greatly appreciated! Thank you for your support!

Our mission

The Friends of McConnell Springs, an independent not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, works in a partnership with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Parks and Recreation, dedicated to the restoration and preservation of McConnell Springs as:



- a national historic site, recognized as the pioneer encampment in the naming of Lexington, Kentucky;
- an environmental and educational resource; and
- a passive recreational park.

FRIENDS is published by the Friends of McConnell Springs

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Contributors: Charlie Boland, Jon Hagee, Karen Higdon, Becci Ray, Steven Rogers, and Laurie Thomas

McConnell Springs is a natural and historic site at 416 Rebmann Lane in Lexington, Ky. The park has two miles of trails that lets you explore the sinking springs, vegetation, stone fences and vestiges of historic buildings. McConnell Springs boasts more than 130 species of plants and numerous species of urban wildlife that reside at or visit the park. The unique geologic, natural and historic features are protected, providing environmental, cultural and historical education opportunities for the residents of Fayette County and elsewhere.

To learn more about McConnell Springs, call 859.225.4073 or visit www.McConnellSprings.org.