

# Robertsville State Park

March 2, 2026

What? No Species List? Nope. We usually don't make species lists for our winter hikes because most plants are dormant. Trying to determine the species of a dormant plant from its dried-up remains is not always reliable. It serves little purpose to create unreliable species lists. So, we'll just give an overview of things that happened on our walk today.

## NOTES

INSTANT SUCCESS: We met at the very end of State Park Drive in a parking lot next to the Meramec River. As soon as we got out of our cars we found the object of our desires: *Erigenia bulbosa*, the Harbinger of Spring. Finding this plant is always on our end-of-winter to-do list. At this point we could have all gone home happy and satisfied. Fortunately, we continued.

SPICEBUSH TRAIL: After exploring the wooded area near the parking lot, we got back into our cars and drove back along State Park Drive a half mile or so to the Spicebush Trail. We walked the entire 1-mile loop. Here are a few of the topics that popped up or new things we learned:

- Wood Ear Fungus: we found quite a bit of this rubbery ear-shaped fungus growing on decaying branches. It's genus name is (quite appropriately) "*Auricularia*" and its family name is (quite conveniently) "Auriculariaceae". Jelly Ear is edible, rich in nutrients, and has a mild, earthy flavor that is popular in Asian cuisine.
- Trumpet Creeper: we are usually able to identify this vine any time of the year. In winter we look for its light colored bark and its aerial roots at opposite nodes. However this time we observed that the vine loses its roundedness with age – that its upper sections seem to somewhat flatten. This is a feature that was not on our radar – that we were never even looking for. Our thanks to John for making this curious observation.
- Ash Borer Damage: this trail has plenty of dead ash trees. As the bark peeled off the fallen trunks, we could see the canals created by the Emerald Ash Borer larvae and its (somewhat) D-shaped exit holes.
- Maple Buds: although they're not yet very noticeable high up in the trees, we found a fallen maple twig with beautiful red buds that were fully open. In this situation we always have to decide whether it is a "red" maple or a "silver" maple. Kathy Thiele reasoned that it is a Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*) because it is found on bottomland. John agreed, but for a different reason. He pointed out that the flowers we found only contained the reproductive parts – there were no actual petals. The flower of a "Red Maple" would have petals.

It was a rather cold, overcast morning. But everybody was in high spirits. Plus, we found our Harbinger of Spring. Coming here was a good choice indeed!

## PARTICIPANTS:

There were 11 of us botanists today, who are (in alphabetical order):

Kathy Bildner, Steve Bizub, Tina Cheung & Keith Woodyard, Wayne Clark, Michael Laschober, John Oliver, David Steinmeyer, Kathy Thiele, George Van Brunt, and Laura Yates.