

IKC UPDATE

The background of the cover is a photograph of a cave interior. A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a blue helmet stands on a rocky ledge on the right side, looking out over a calm body of water. The water reflects the numerous stalactites hanging from the cave ceiling and the surrounding rock formations. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the cave walls and the water's surface.

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INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY, INC

PO Box 2401, Indianapolis, IN 46206-2401

ikc.caves.org

Affiliated with the National Speleological Society



The Indiana Karst Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of caves and karst features in Indiana and other areas of the world. The Conservancy encourages research and promotes education related to karst and its proper, environmentally compatible use.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

President

Matt Selig (2024)
317-258-9983
MSelig@hotmail.com

Secretary

Laura Demarest (2024)
812-320-5973
LadyLauraDemarest@gmail.com

Treasurer

Keith Dunlap (2024)
317-882-5420
Keith.Dunlap@juno.com

Directors

Bruce Bowman (2026)
765-720-1483
Bowman46118@gmail.com

Jeff Cody (2025)
317-888-9898
CodyJpme@att.net

Scott Frosch (2026)
317-250-9535
Frosch.Apple@gmail.com

Danyeale Green (2025)
317-370-7891
mudandogs@gmail.com

Dave Haun (2024)
317-517-0795
DaveHaun@ExploringEarth.com

Rand Heazlitt (2024)
502-445-9532
Pyrometric@aol.com

Goni Iskali (2025)
BattyCaver85@gmail.com

Joe Kinder (2024)
812-322-3328
KinderJoe@yahoo.com

Tom Sollman (2026)
812-753-4953
TPSollman@gmail.com

Carla Striegel-Winner (2025)
812-639-9628
CarlaStriegel@gmail.com

Paul Uglum (2024)
317-417-5596
Paul.A.Uglum@gmail.com

Richard Vernier (2026)
812-385-5058
rsavcaver2@gmail.com

COMMITTEES / CHAIRPERSON

Education/Outreach
Carla Striegel-Winner
(see E-board list)

Web Technologies
Bruce Bowman
(see E-board list)

IKC Update Editor/Publisher
Keith Dunlap
(see E-Board list)

Buddha Karst Property Manager
Keith Dunlap
(see E-board list)

Lowry Karst Property Manager
Jasper Beavers
812-343-7490
jay3130@yahoo.com

Orangeville Rise Property Manager
Carla Striegel-Winner
(see E-board list)

Robinson Ladder Property Manager
John Benton
830-305-1026
JMBenton1952@gmail.com

Shawnee Karst Property Manager
Keith Dunlap
(see E-board list)

Sullivan Cave Property Manager
Joe Kinder
(see E-Board list)

Wayne Cave Property Manager
Danyeale Green
(see E-Board list)

Indian Creek CE Monitor
Rand Heazlitt
(see E-Board list)

GROTTOES & LIAISONS

Bloomington Indiana Grotto*
Dave Everton
812-272-2300

Central Indiana Grotto*
Keith Dunlap
317-882-5420

Dayton Underground Grotto
Mike Hood
937-252-2978

Eastern Indiana Grotto
Jonathan Annonson
317-395-4325

Evansville Metro Grotto*
Steve Weinzapfel
812-630-7995

Louisville Grotto*
Susan Wilkinson
317-910-8023

Near Normal Grotto*
Ralph Sawyer
309-822-0109

Northern Indiana Grotto*
Cheryl Doan
260-385-0631

St Joseph Valley Grotto*
Joy Baiz
574-286-9404

Sub-Urban Chicago Grotto
Gary Gibula
GaryGibula@aol.com

Windy City Grotto
Susan Clark
708-415-1635

*grottos with liaison agreements

MANAGED CAVES / PATRONS

Buddha Cave
Jeff Cody
317-888-9898
CodyJpme@att.net

Lowry Cave
Jasper Beavers
812-343-7490
jay3130@yahoo.com

Robinson Ladder Cave
John Benton
830-305-1026
JMBenton1952@gmail.com

Shiloh Cave
James Adams
317-499-5451
JKAdams@aol.com

Suicide Cave
Kevin Smith
317-412-3667
FreeWheeler2Go@yahoo.com

Sullivan Cave
Paul Uglum
317-417-5596
Paul.A.Uglum@gmail.com

Upper Twin Cave
Dave Everton
812-272-2300
DEverton@indiana.edu

Wayne Cave
Dave Everton
812-272-2300
DEverton@indiana.edu

IKC ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING REMINDER

Sunday, March 17th, 12:15 PM Social, 1 PM Meeting (EDT)

Monroe County Library - Ellettsville Branch (Room A)

600 W Temperance St, Ellettsville, IN

The Annual Business Meeting is for the purpose of the Executive Board elections. Annual reports from the IKC Cave Patrons and Property Managers will also be presented. And as always, the meeting is for members and other interested persons to have an open forum to talk about caves and karst conservation and related topics. Past, present, and future IKC projects are discussed to solicit comments and input from our members and the caving community as a whole. The meetings are informal, and everyone is encouraged to attend and participate. The IKC Board wants your input.

Preliminary Agenda Items: Election Results; Financial reports; Cave Patron and Property Manager 2023 annual reports; Recap of recent (2024) preserve work projects; Promotion of upcoming preserve projects; Education/Outreach/Field Days status; Electronic scheduling and waiver system; Cave/land acquisition activities; and more...

Meeting Details: The Ellettsville Branch is located at the intersection of Highway 46 (Temperance Street) and Sale Street. Free parking in front of the library. Enter the front doors and proceed straight thru the main library and past the service desk, continuing to Meeting Room A towards the back.

Pre-meeting Social "Hour": Come early for refreshments and some social time. See page 6 for more details.

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

March 17 – IKC Pre-Meeting Social Hour (see page 6)

March 17 – IKC Annual Business Meeting (see above)

April 5-8 – Eclipse weekend (see page 5)

April 20 – Pre-Symposium Tour, Paoli, Indiana (see page 7, 10)

April 20 – Indiana Cave Symposium, Paoli, Indiana (see page 7)

April 25 – Invasive Management at Orangeville Rise (see page 5)

May 4 – Discovery Day at Henderson Park (see page 10)

May 18-19 – Orientation to Cave Rescue Training (see page 8)

June ?? – IKC Quarterly Board Meeting (date and location TBD)

For more information on the Indiana Karst Conservancy, visit our website at ikc.caves.org, our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/IndianaKarstConservancy, or write to our PO box. Membership to the IKC is open to anyone or any organization interested in supporting cave and karst conservation. Annual dues are \$15. Please see inside the back cover for a membership application form or to make a much-appreciated donation. Memberships and donations may also be made electronically by credit card or PayPal using our on-line services on our website (see the Join Us! tab in the menu) or ikc.caves.org/join-the-ikc.

The *IKC Update*, distributed for free, is published quarterly for members and other interested parties. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep the membership and caving community informed of IKC activities and other news related to cave/karst conservation. Submission of original or reprinted articles for publication is encouraged. Back issues can be found at ikc.caves.org/ikc-updates.

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RAMBLINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT...

I am grateful for the volunteers that work on behalf of the IKC. We are, after all, a 100% volunteer organization. Nobody gets involved with karst conservation if merely getting rich is on their agenda.

At the IKC, whether we succeed or fail is in the hands of cavers and supporters who care enough about caves that they are willing to lend a hand for nothing more than the satisfaction of a job well done.

In the companies I've worked for, this would never fly. I've never met an employee who said, "I believe so much in what this company does I will work for free." I don't blame them. As an employee I am in their position as well, and although I enjoy my corporate job and have a passion for it, I would never do it without compensation.

But I have been glad to lend a hand at the IKC for decades now. Mud-painting graffiti, picking up trash, treating invasive species, helping to negotiate the purchase of properties, serving on Board of Directors' committees, writing Facebook posts, preparing and giving presentations on the IKC's behalf, meeting with politicians to tell our story, copy editing the *IKC Update*, reviewing tax returns and investments, tearing down rogue deer stands, carrying rotting tires out of the forest, answering emails and phone calls from citizens with questions about our organization and caves.

Why do I bring all this up? It isn't because I believe my contribution is especially or uniquely worthy of recognition.

In the IKC I am privileged to work with people who know better than me the difference between garlic mustard and a Tree of Heaven. I get to work with geologists who are at the cutting edge of karst research, biologists who are experts in their fields, people with in-depth knowledge of regulatory and environmental management issues, donors who support us with their generous donations, people with decades of not-for-profit work experience and those who advocate on the behalf of Indiana's land conservation trusts.



The IKC's volunteer Property Managers move (metaphorical) mountains to take care of the surface of our seven beautiful IKC preserves. They organize workdays and put on events like bird and geology hikes. They clean up fallen down trees, paint kiosks, mow trails, make sure the port-a-potties are serviced, communicate with neighboring landowners, and deal with the occasional vagabond and scofflaw that seek refuge on our properties from time to time.

Our volunteer Cave Patrons deal with a constant stream of persons seeking information about the IKC's caves. When can they visit? How can they get and sign their waivers? What's the gate code and where should they park? Is camping allowed on the IKC's properties? They investigate and recommend further in-cave conservation activities. They lend their expertise to research permit requests. They are planning for 2024's eclipse and patiently field calls from the occasional person who wants to know the hours of our gift shop at Sullivan Cave (answer: none).

I can't neglect to mention the IKC's small army of volunteers that aren't Board Members, Property Managers, or Cave Patrons and who actually do the majority of the IKC's hard work. Without their commitment and rolled-up sleeves, the IKC would only be a pleasant talking society. They show up on sunny days, on rainy days, in the spring and winter to do work ranging from fun and enjoyable to tiresome and sweaty.

There are also many others we depend on to get the job done, and probably hundreds of other projects done on behalf of the IKC that have slipped my mind as I write. I've forgotten to mention our 2024 Orientation to Cave Rescue training this May, the April Indiana Cave Symposium our volunteers are organizing in cooperation with the Indiana Cave Survey, and the first Wilderness First Aid training we sponsored last year. I've only hit the high points as best I remember them.

The IKC is a complex and growing, service-oriented conservation organization. As mentioned, we're all volunteer and whether we succeed or fail is in the hands of our members and volunteers who carry this load on our behalf.

This dependence in turn places an important responsibility on the IKC's leadership. I believe you are a leader in the IKC when you show up at our events ready to make a positive contribution to help accomplish our purpose.

Our mission in all this work is officially stated in the IKC's Exempt Purpose (see top of page 2). As President, I've quoted it many times. I believe it is more than just a statement we make to the IRS on our tax returns. I encourage everyone to review our Exempt Purpose when they think about why the IKC exists and what principles should guide our efforts. It is the measuring stick to judge whether we as leaders of the IKC are doing our jobs.

As the IKC's leaders, we are accountable to those who support us with their money and hard work, and to focus our effort on concrete goals that respect the passion and love of caves that unifies our effort. We should, to the best of our ability, make our decisions based on

principles that further the accomplishment of our Exempt Purpose.

Why is all this philosophy on my mind as I write? Perhaps because I just filled out and emailed my election ballot for Officers and Directors of the IKC (thank you to the volunteers of the Election Committee and our volunteer Election Tellers!). I hope you've voted, as well.

As I reviewed the candidates' statements of why they want to hold an elected position in the IKC, I was impressed by our very experienced and passionate slate of candidates who seek to serve. I've been privileged to do the IKC's volunteer work alongside many of them. I have seen their commitment to the IKC's Exempt Purpose with my own eyes.

I look forward to how we will weave together our passions and purpose to continue to build and grow the Indiana Karst Conservancy in 2024. I promise it will be fun, and I encourage all those who read this issue to join us in our work. I look forward to seeing all of you above and below ground in 2024!

Matt Selig

NEWS BRIEFS...

- ❑ ***We did it!*** In the December *IKC Update*, we indicated we were quickly approaching our fund-raising goal of \$225,000 to acquire the 20 acre-tract connecting the IKC's Wayne Cave Preserve to the National Speleological Society's Richard Blenz Preserve in Monroe County (see ikc.caves.org/wayne-cave-preserve-expansion for more details). This acquisition also makes our Wayne Cave Preserve our largest of our seven preserves at 77.46 acres. The final funds raised were \$234,753 (104.3% of our goal) with the excess retained in the IKC's restricted Land Acquisition Fund to be used for a future acquisition project. To see all the wonderful supporters (big and small) who made this all possible, go to ikc.caves.org/wayne-cave-preserve-expansion-donors. And while this project is technically wrapped up, if you missed out on supporting this project and would like to see your name added to the donation list (both on the IKC website and eventually on the on-property kiosk display), you can still make a donation by designating it for the Wayne Cave Preserve expansion acquisition.
- ❑ On Saturday, March 16, Board members Goni Iskali and Keith Dunlap are leading a hike for local land-owners titled "***Sinkholes, Caves, and Karst Topography***" at our Buddha Karst Preserve focusing on karst and the creatures that depend on it. The tour is organized by several Lawrence County agencies. It is open to anyone, but you must RSVP. For more info and to register, call 812-279-8117 Ext 3.
- ❑ On Thursday, April 25 from 5 to 7 PM EDT, Property Manager Carla Striegel-Winner is hosting a garlic mustard pull and invasives ID field session at the Orangeville Rise. This "weed wrangle" may be in partnership with Orange County Invasives Partnership (OCIP). For more info, contact Carla (Indiana-KarstConservancy.info@gmail.com).
- ❑ The Eclipse is coming! If you are thinking about visiting one of the IKC preserves from April 5-8 to cave, camp, hike, or view the eclipse, you ***must*** contact/email the respective Property Manager ***and*** Cave Patron (see page 2 for their contact information) so both are aware of your request to be on-site. Also

Continued on page 6...

JOIN US FOR AN IKC PRE-MEETING SOCIAL HOUR

SUNDAY, MARCH 17 – 12:15 to 1 PM EDT

Monroe County Public Library (Ellettsville Branch)

600 W Temperance St, Ellettsville, IN 47429

Come for refreshments and give a pre-meeting hello to the IKC Board and fellow members and supporters, and find out what the IKC is all about. We will have info available on our upcoming activities – including the field events and the Indiana Cave Symposium. Feel free to stay for the meeting – for a few minutes, or if you are brave and caffeinated, for the whole meeting! They are famously long so we understand completely if you choose to sneak out and celebrate St. Paddy's Day a wee-bit early.

Questions? Contact Carla Striegel-Winner (IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com).

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understand that traveling to and from our preserves on April 8 may be very problematic so plan ahead. For the full details on visiting one of our preserves during that weekend, find and download our full resource sheet on our home page (ikc.caves.org).

- ❑ Not to outdo the interesting recent observation in Endless Cave (how is that for a teaser... see page 12 for that story), on a January trip to Shiloh Cave in Lawrence County, Charlie Lewis, Jordan Lacy, Warren Biggs and others were greeted with this owl taking it easy in the entrance room of the Rector Mill entrance. “Who” would have guessed!
- ❑ The IKC gives a huge ‘thank you’ to Vibe Yoga (www.vibeyogastudio.com) in Bloomington for raising \$292 in donations during the month of January! Special thanks also to IKC Board member Goni Iskali for facilitating this partnership. Yoga and caving make a great match!
- ❑ The IKC also did a mini fund-raiser in December. Cindy Rothrock, an IKC member (and sister to Keith Dunlap), once again offered to donate processed persimmon pulp for the IKC to re-sell. She also offered to wholesale raw honey from some of her hives for the IKC to retail. Because the items could not be easily shipped, the offers were sent out to a limited list of IKC members and supporters in the Indianapolis and Bloomington areas so the goods could be hand-delivered. In total the IKC netted \$416 for the effort.
- ❑ ***We really appreciate your additional donations!*** As has been noted in the past, the IKC annual dues revenue does not cover all of the IKC's operating expenses and obligations. These baseline expenses include printing and mailing our quarterly newsletter, our general liability and business insurance premiums, our property taxes, routine stewardship activities, and other miscellaneous/necessary business expenses. Thus, we greatly appreciate the additional donations many of our members make each year beyond their standard dues to supplement and support the IKC (side-note, the \$15/year IKC dues have never increased in the past 37 years and are actually cheaper now than when they were initially set at \$25/year in 1986). During 2023, fifty-eight individuals/couples and seven organizations made general donations beyond their dues, totaling \$7,973. Donors include John Ahlberg, William Ahrbecker, Jasper Beavers, John Benton, Ted Bice, Don Bohling, Larry Bundy, Danielle Burden, Paul Cannaley, Jeff Cody, Laura Demarest, Mike Drake, Jim Duncker, Michael Everidge, Dave Everton, Jeff Farr, Timothy Flint, Chris Gibson, Rick Gikas, Danielle Hafele, Barbara Hanka, Dave Haun, Tem Hornaday, Goni Iskali, Glenn Kotnik, Marcella Larch, George Mattson, Val and Greg McNamara, Jane and Lynn Miller, Jon Miller, Steven Morris, Bill Morrow, Ralph



2024 INDIANA CAVE SYMPOSIUM PREVIEW – APRIL 20

by Keith Dunlap

The 30th Indiana Cave Symposium, co-sponsored by the Indiana Karst Conservancy and Indiana Cave Survey, will be held on Saturday, April 20, at the Orange County Community Center (1075 N Sandy Hook Road adjacent to the 4-H fairgrounds) in Paoli, Indiana. This is the same venue as last year.

As in the past, the symposium will offer a free cookout (burgers, brats, and other assorted meats and non-meat offerings) and we encourage attendees to share pitch-in side dishes (a covered dish, salad, or dessert). The meal will start at 5 PM EDT with presentations beginning at 6:15. A *partial list* of presentation titles and presenters include:

- The Discovery and Exploration of Buck Creek Lodge Cave, Harrison County, Indiana – Chris Bell
- Wayne Studebaker Dye Tracing to Blair Hollow, Monroe County, Indiana – Mike Drake and Kevin Romanak
- Henderson Park Caves at Twin Creek Valley: A TNC/IKC Partnership – Scott Frosch
- ICS: What's in it for you? – Carla Striegel-Winner
- The Connection and Future Management – Danyeale Green



photo courtesy Keith Dunlap (2023)

For questions about the Symposium, contact Dave Everton (DEverton@indiana.edu). Also, in order that we may plan for the event, please RSVP using the following link: form.jotform.com/240527741452151

Also note we will again be doing a pre-Symposium karst surface tour. IKC President Matt Selig will be the guide and the tour will take a detailed look at the hydrological dynamics of Indiana's Lost River drainage basin. We will exam surface features with a special emphasis placed on the karst processes evidenced by these surface features. We will also discuss karst resource protection topics in the Lost River drainage basin. Because the number of participants will be limited, pre-registration for the tour is required. Registration for the tour opens on March 1, but you may go to [IKCFieldTourApril2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/IKCFieldTourApril2024) at any time for more information and to have a reminder sent to you. Participants will depart from and be back to the Orange County Community Center (site of the Symposium) with plenty of time to be ready for the 5 PM dinner. Hiking on and off trail may be required. All registered participants will receive detailed information after signing up.

Moshage, Ashley Motia, Carl Nelson, Stanley Nieder, Curtis Owens, Chris Parks, Nathan Pate, Ernie and Jacqueline Payne, Russel Pusilo, Kevin Rasmus, Kelle Reynolds, Sam Richey, Carroll Ritter, Ralph Sawyer, Matt Selig, Carla Striegel-Winner and Jamie Winner, Larry Teeter, Bruce Trotter, Aaron Valandra, Mark Van Bushkirk, Dick and Sue Vernier, Paul Webb, Stan Weinzapfel, Norbert Welch, Scott Worpell, Robert Zatarski, Central Indiana Grotto, Cleveland Grotto, Northern Indiana Grotto, Windy City Grotto, Bluespring Caverns, BRS III LLC, Indiana Native Plant Society, and Vibe Yoga.

- ❑ The IKC also maintains a Cave/Land Acquisition restricted fund which is used exclusively to accumulate resources for our acquisition activities. In 2023 the IKC fund-raised for the Wayne Cave Preserve expansion and had ninety-nine individuals/couples and fourteen organizations contribute \$182,035. Donors include Josh Abdulla, Ron Adams, Jonathan Annonson, Miriam Ash, Joy Baiz, Bill Baus, Bruce Bowman, Patrick Burns, Linda Byer, Keith Calkins, Paul Cannaley, Dan Chase, Brandon Chasteen, Thomas Chenier, Harry Church, Martin Church, Joya Clark, Jeff Cody, Barbara Coons, Stephaine Paine Crossin, Laura Demarest, Steve Dodds, Mike Drake, Keith Dunlap, Dave Everton, Nickolas Farid, Tim Flint, Peggy Florestano, Sam Frushour, David Garrette, Rick Gikas, Al Goodcase, Jeffery Gosnell, Daniel Gray, Danyeale Green,

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ORIENTATION TO CAVE RESCUE TRAINING – MAY 18-19

by Danyele Green and Laura Demarest

The Indiana Karst Conservancy is hosting a two-day Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) seminar to be held on May 18-19, 2024 at the Lawrence County Independent School in Fayetteville. This is introductory training geared towards anyone who may find themselves involved in or responding to a cave rescue, as well as those who are interested in learning more about how to prevent and assess in-cave incidents, and what to expect if/when a rescue call-out is initiated. There are no prerequisites for this class though both cavers and emergency response personnel will benefit from the wide range of topics to be covered.

The training includes classroom time as well as participatory learning. Day one will consist of classroom lessons and hands-on exercises involving patient packaging and litter movement. Topics covered will include: Incident Command System and how it applies to cave rescue management, medical assessments and patient care, hypothermia prevention and treatment, patient packaging for evacuation, considerations for extreme situations, how the cave environment influences rescue proceedings, in-cave communications, media interaction, cave search tactics, and more. On day two, a full-scale mock rescue will be conducted in-cave, giving students the opportunity to work through simulated challenges based on actual cave rescue scenarios.

As an organization managing cave and karst properties, the IKC has a keen interest in supporting safe and conscientious caving activities. This OCR class is provided by an all-volunteer cadre of instructors and specialists trained by the National Cave Rescue Commission. The NCRC is not a cave-rescue team, but rather an organization under the National Speleological Society that facilitates training for interested groups and individuals. Training such as OCR allow for cavers of all experience levels to



photo courtesy Laura Demarest

develop an understanding of how a rescue incident is conducted, including methods for increasing success and minimizing complications – both above and below ground. First-responders who work in areas where there is a potential for cave incidents will benefit from this training, especially when it comes to cave search methods, communication challenges, and in-cave evacuation considerations. OCR training also provides a unique opportunity for cavers and rescue personnel to work together to share knowledge, build trust, and understand the types of local resources available in the event of a rescue.

Thanks to the IKC and several generous donors, there are discounts available to IKC members and licensed First Responders. The cost structure is as follows:

- \$65 - Full fee (no discounts)
- \$40 - NSS member (\$25 discount)
- \$40 - IKC member (\$25 discount)
- \$15 - NSS *and* IKC member (\$50 discount)
- \$ 0 - First Responder (\$65 discount)

Depending upon demand, discounts may be limited to the first registrants. More info and the registration link are available at ikc.caves.org.

**REGISTRATION WILL OPEN ON
APRIL 1 AT NOON EDT**



WHAT IS THE INDIANA LAND PROTECTION ALLIANCE AND HOW DOES IT BENEFIT THE IKC?

by Carla Striegel-Winner

January marked the beginning of my second year of a two-year term on the board of Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA). The board is made up of representatives of its 21 member land trusts, of which the IKC is one. As a member of that board, I attend bimonthly Zoom meetings, sit on the marketing and communications board committee, and act as a liaison between the IKC and ILPA. I feel obligated to not only represent the IKC, but also other small land trusts who depend primarily on volunteers. I consider it an honor to be a part of ILPA and the tremendous things that the organization is doing with Executive Director Andrea Huntington at the helm.

In 2023 Indiana Karst Conservancy benefited greatly by being a member of ILPA:

- We have been able to attend several professional development opportunities which have been completely free to us as a member trust.
- We applied for and received a grant for our vascular plant bioinventory project at our Wayne Cave Preserve, which is a new co-created grant program with ILPA and the Indiana Academy of Science.
- ILPA advocates to our lawmakers about the good work that land trusts do and has helped us understand how to advocate as well.
- ILPA helped lead a statewide effort to increase funding for land conservation and the State made a historic \$10 million investment in the President Benjamin Harrison Conservation Trust this year, which is used to purchase lands for conservation.
- Our IKC board members and volunteers were regularly invited to attend free live webinars and in-person gatherings and trainings.

Most recently IKC Board members Keith Dunlap, Danyele Green, and I attended the full-day Annual Winter Conference in downtown India-

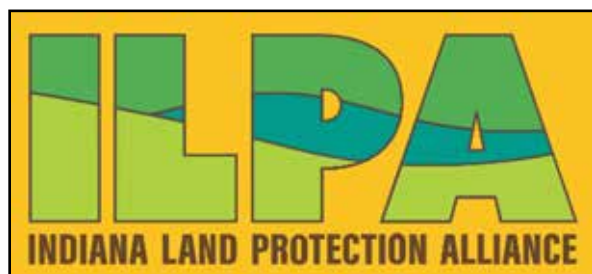


photo courtesy Wyatt Williams

IKC Board members at the reception following the ILPA Winter Conference in January.

napolis and were able to stay for an evening reception co-hosted by ILPA and the IDNR celebrating land protection in the past, present, and future. All of these benefits were received with our membership, at no additional cost.

ILPA provides even more for member trusts in 2024. They have embarked on redoing their five year strategic plan, and I will be attending the two-day planning retreat in May. Another exciting project for 2024 is that the IKC will be benefiting from a grant ILPA received to have professional photographers visit member land trust preserves and events to get photos for ILPA (and for us) to use for promotion and outreach. There are upcoming webinars and more grant opportunities as well. ILPA is working on adding a one-day conference for outreach staff and volunteers. The three-day stewardship gathering is planned as well. And of course through all of this we get to know and understand the other land trusts and Indiana agencies as we all work to preserve and protect the lands that mean the most to us. I look forward to continuing on this journey that the IKC has embarked upon with ILPA. To find out more about ILPA go to protectindianaland.org



IKC 2024 FIELD EVENTS – FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIPS

by Carla Striegel-Winner

In 2024, we are once again planning four field events for members and supporters. This year we are highlighting/focusing our events on our work with our various conservation partners.

Indiana Cave Pre-Symposium Tour

Paoli, Orange County

Saturday, April 20, 1 PM to 4:30 PM EDT

The IKC and the Indiana Cave Survey will again be offering a karst surface tour prior to the Indiana Cave Symposium. Because the number of participants is limited, pre-registration is required. Registration opens on March 1, but you may go to [IKCFieldTourApril2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ikc-field-tour-april-2024-tickets-704444444444) at any time and have a reminder sent to you. IKC President Matt Selig will be the tour guide and will take a detailed look at the hydrological dynamics



photo courtesy Danielle Hafele

of Indiana's Lost River drainage basin. We will be examining surface features with a special emphasis placed on the karst processes evidenced by these surface features. We will also discuss karst resource protection topics in the Lost River drainage basin. Participants will depart from and be back at the Orange County Community Center (site of the Symposium) with plenty of time to be ready for the 5 PM meal. Hiking on and off trail may be required. All registered participants will receive detailed information about the tour. For more about the Symposium, see page 7.

Discovery Day at Henderson Park

Near Salem, Washington County

Saturday, May 4, 10 AM EDT to 1 PM EDT

Join The Nature Conservancy and the Indiana Karst Conservancy for a free and family-friendly discovery day focused on celebrating Henderson Park's incredibly unique glade and karst ecology! We'll kick off the partnership between TNC and



photo courtesy Scott Frosch

IKC to manage the property, have guided nature hikes with TNC Director of Stewardship Tom Swinford, Land Steward Mike Everidge, and IKC Board member and Cave Access Coordinator Scott Frosch will assist as well. We will showcase the natural and human history present on the site. Snacks and water provided, as is information about TNC and IKC. The trail is crushed stone, 2.6 miles and is rated as moderate with rolling hills. Come hang out and see what Henderson Park is all about! **Reservations required due to limited parking.** Please reserve with TNC at bit.ly/HendersonParkDiscoveryDay.

Wyandotte Cave Tour

Near Leavenworth, Crawford County

Sunday, June 30, 9 AM EDT to noon (tour)

12:30-1:30 (optional stewardship activity)

Join us for a special IKC tour of Wyandotte Cave! We will be hosted by O'Bannon Woods Property Manager Stanley Baelz and accompanied by IKC



photo courtesy Carla Striegel-Winner

Board members Tom Sollman and Keith Dunlap. Plan for three hours in cave, and although we will stay on the main tour route, keep in mind this is a strenuous trip. We will have an optional stewardship opportunity at the cave if you are able to stick around after the tour. A light lunch will also be provided for anyone who stays. This trip is by pre-registration only and limited to 20 participants. Participants will pay the group tour rate for this special tour. Registration opens on May 31, but you may go to [IKCFieldTourJune2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) at any time and have a reminder sent to you.

Winter Tree ID Hike at Shawnee Karst Preserve
Near Mitchell, Lawrence County
Saturday, November 9
10 AM EST to noon (hike),
12:30-1:30 (optional stewardship activity)

Join DNR District Forester Janet Eger for a hike and learn how to ID trees in the winter! We will also focus on our surface management of this preserve and how we utilize the assistance of resource people like our District Forester to make sure we are managing the preserve properly. We



photo courtesy www.wbiw.com

will have an optional stewardship opportunity if you are able to stick around after the hike. A light lunch will be provided for anyone who stays. Registration opens October 4, but you may go to [IKCFieldTourNovember2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) at any time and have a reminder sent to you.

For questions on any of these events, contact Outreach/Education coordinator Carla Striegel-Winner at IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com or 812-639-9628. Also follow the IKC on Facebook [@IndianaKarstConservancy](https://www.facebook.com/IndianaKarstConservancy) or see our webpage (ikc.caves.org)

PLANT INVENTORY HELPS WITH PRESERVE MANAGEMENT

by Carla Striegel-Winner

In February of 2023 the IKC applied for and then received a \$1200 grant to hire a botanist to conduct a vascular plant survey at our Wayne Cave Preserve in Monroe County. We were one of the first land trusts to benefit from this grant program, which was co-created by Indiana Academy of Science and Indiana Land Protection Alliance. Our project is now complete as of December 2023.

Wayne Cave has some unique features and Property Manager Danyeale Green wanted some guidance on how to manage certain areas. In addition to having a rare sinkhole pond and an open area that we might want to keep open, we have a giant forested sinkhole that we hypothesized some rarer (or at least regionally different) plants might live near the bottom or along some of the rocky areas. This grant is not just to assist land trusts (especially those of us who do not typically have the funds to hire a taxonomist), but it is to help foster taxonomists too.

Botanist Nic Martinez was recommended to us, and he previously identified an extremely rare Indiana plant on the Wayne Preserve in 2021 that has



photo courtesy Nic Martinez

brought significant interest to the property and even helped us fund raise for the new expansion tract. For this grant project, Nic completed floristic inventories of specific areas of Wayne Cave Preserve. He did these in four seasons... April 25, June 17, August 27, and November 12, 2023. This ensured that all plant species were recorded. Additionally Nic used vegetative plot assessments (see above) during the June 17 site visit. We plan to publish the report in a future *IKC Update* and on our web site, and have him do a public walking tour of our preserve. We wanted to

Continued on page 13...

INTERESTING FIND DURING ENDLESS CAVE BAT CENSUS

by Brad Westrich; State Mammalogist; Indiana DNR

On Sunday January 21st, a group of ten individuals arrived at Cave River Valley to conduct a hibernaculum survey in Endless cave. It was a sunny 20° F, and the survey participants were circled up, staying warm, and otherwise catching up with friends that we email more frequently than we see in-person.

The large group discussed their roles in the survey to come; some were assigned cameras to photograph bat clusters, others were given clipboards and datasheets, some were temperature recorders, and the rest were spotters. Once everyone was ready, we entered Endless and the only sounds were the shutters of the cameras, whispered notes, and the sloshing of boots in water.

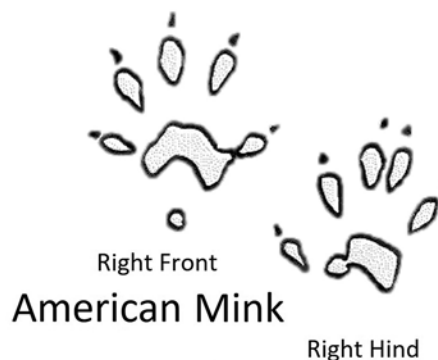
With an efficiency that would scare most government agencies, we quickly worked through the cave and minimized our disturbance to the hibernating bats. Upon reaching the main passage split about 1200 feet from the entrance, one group went left, one went right, and the rest exited the cave. Tom Sollman and I were the ones that went right to census some warmer passages. The cramped spaces quickly limited how far we could explore. But we still found a few tricolored bats to add to the survey totals.

After our survey work was done, I began processing an observation I made a hundred feet back in this passage. It turns out I am incapable of switching off the mammalogist part of my brain. In that right passageway, back near the split, I pulled Tom aside and pointed at the ground. There in the mud was mammal sign that

indicated this passageway was used like a highway by some mammals.

As many readers are likely to guess, there were plenty of raccoon tracks to be seen (and scat earlier in the cave too), showing that they move up and down this cave frequently. Raccoon tracks are 1½ to 2 inches long; have 5 toes on front and hind feet; with the long, thin toes appearing to connect to the larger palm pad; the hind feet are larger than the front; and despite how common they are, the tracks raccoons leave behind can be confusing to interpret at times. However, on this day, the raccoon tracks were easy to identify.

It was the second set of tracks that I was keen to document because a different mammal species made them – an American mink (*Neogale vison*). Their 1-1½ inch tracks show 5 toes on front and

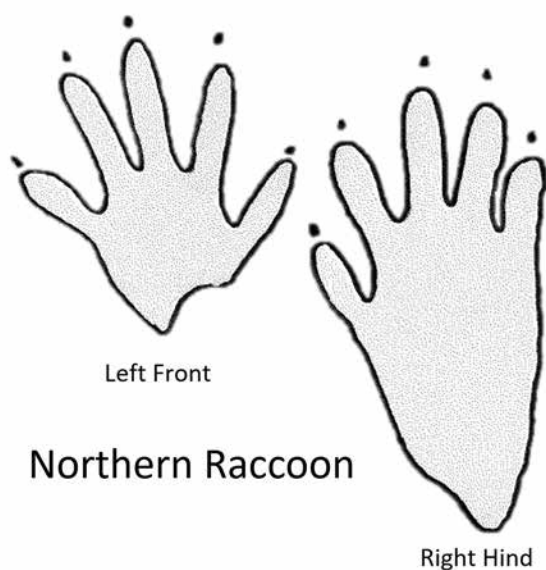


hind feet; the front feet are larger than the hind feet; there is negative space separating the toes and the palm pad; the toe pads are often tear-drop shaped; and the palm pads are fused and lobed.

American mink is a relatively common semi-aquatic species in Indiana. I've documented mink in Indiana near rivers, streams, and lakes, but never in a cave. Let alone 1200 feet from the entrance of the cave! So, this observation seemed a bit odd to me, though I couldn't refute what I was observing.

After documenting the tracks, I verified that a mink had made them by checking Mark Elbroch's *Mammal Tracks & Sign: A Guide to North American Species*. I then sent the photos to track and sign experts in our region. Sure enough I had validation from all sources.

But why was a mink in a cave that far from an entrance? A quick internet search revealed what I've relayed so far – mink can be found near water bodies and maybe those habitats are near karst features. Finally, I encountered a note from the Journal



of Mammalogy (Issue 31#4, page 457) published in November 1950 that provided a suitable answer:

BATS AS PREY FOR MINK IN KENTUCKY CAVE

*Bats are nearly free of predators, for few mammals or birds seemingly have the opportunity or desire to feed on them. However, we have discovered that mink frequenting one bat-inhabited cave feed heavily, if not exclusively, upon the bats therein. Such is the case at Carter Caves, Carter County, Kentucky. The two mink taken in the cave had remains of bats in their stomachs and one taken about one hundred yards outside the cave opening had remains of several bats in the stomach. The bats eaten probably were either *Myotis lucifugus* or *Myotis sodalis*, or both; not the larger *Eptesicus fuscus* or smaller *Pipistrellus subflavus*, both of which are less abundant. This predation must be a seasonal one, for the four species are present, in numbers, only during winter months. We surmise that the mink catch a few bats as they accidentally fall from their ceiling clusters to the floor or stream below. Shifting of bats within a cluster apparently takes place, but must be infrequent. The large number of bats in the cave, perhaps a hundred thousand, makes possible the likelihood of some bats being dislodged at frequent intervals. Some clusters of bats are close enough to the floor of the cave to allow a mink to jump up and grab one or more. This provides a ready, although perhaps not palatable, source of food for this predator. Woodrow Goodpaster and Donald F. Hoffmeister, 6014 Kellogg Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Museum of Natural History, University of Illinois, Urbana. Received February 6, 1950.*

There you have it, an answer to the question.

...continued from page 11

give a few excerpts from his report here:

The Upland site inventory contains 113 species and... Species indicating both sandstone and limestone-derived soils occurred in the sampling area. There were very few stems of invasive species present...

*The Big Sinkhole site was divided into three sections based on elevation.... The bottom-most section had 26 species ... a significantly wetter habitat than the slope and rim.... The author observed a concentration of glade fern (*Homalosorus pycnocarpus*) and silvery spleenwort (*Deparia acrostichoides*) in the bottom of the sinkhole and small populations of smooth hydrangea (*Hydrangea arbores-**

Why did the mink enter the cave during winter? Possibly to forage on low-hanging "fruit" like hibernating bats.

This observation, the context surrounding it, and the note from 1950 make for a very cool story. But I could have just as easily missed those tracks if there had been more bats in that section of cave. So, I wonder: what else am I missing while staring up at the ceiling looking for bats? Tough to say definitively. I'll be practicing better awareness in the next caves I survey though.

Overall, it was a successful hibernaculum survey with documentation of Indiana bats, gray bats, little brown bats, tricolored bats, raccoon sign, American mink sign, pickerel frogs, cave salamanders... Outside the cave I observed tracks made by deer, red foxes, coyotes, bobcats, opossums, squirrels (likely gray), and a small bird that I'll never identify.

Editor's note – Cavers can help: *When I first heard of Brad's find, my immediate thought was so cool! and my next thought was perhaps occurrences of mink or other mammals are not commonly reported in caves simply because cavers didn't know the tracks were something to take note of. And that was followed by the thought of what a nice addition this would be to have Brad write something for the IKC Update. Perhaps, as he mentions, this is more common, and we just aren't noticing it. If you find tracks other than raccoon way back in a cave, try taking a photo and identifying it later using a field guide or an app like iTrack. If you still think you have found something that is atypical... report it to Brad.*

*cens) and early meadow rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*) growing on rocks exposed by the sinkhole formation...*

The Sinkhole Pond contains 36 species ... An extremely conservative grouping of plant species is present... This area is of very high quality and should be trafficked as little as possible.

We are so appreciative of Indiana Academy of Science and Indiana Land Protection Alliance for making these grants available, as they help us better understand the resources we are managing! Also a huge thanks to Nic who went above and beyond expectations. If you are interested in learning more about the grants or would like to peruse the extensive list of Hoosier taxonomists, go to protectindianaland.org/ias-partnership

A LOOK BACK AT INDIANA KARST

by John M. Benton

THE DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF BINKLEY FOR A DAY CAVE

It was a warm June day in 1972. New road construction on Highway 135 was continuing from Corydon (Indiana) south to Mauckport to connect to the Matthew Welsh Bridge that would cross the Ohio River into Kentucky at Brandenburg. The entire 14 mile highway route is karst terrain, underlain by cavernous limestone rock, containing numerous sinkholes, underground drainage, and **caves**. The Binkley Cave system is situated just south of Corydon and in 1972, about 12 miles of this system had been surveyed. Today, at over 46 miles long with an active survey still going, Binkley is the longest known cave in Indiana.

Larry Ashabranner was a young construction worker for G.H. Allen Construction out of Vincennes, who worked on the bridge crew building the new bridge over Indian Creek just southwest of Corydon. One of Larry's co-workers was young Butch Kintner. The two both grew up in Corydon, attended schools together, and hunted, fished, and checked out a few local caves over the years. Allen Construction was the bridge contractor and Rieth-Riley Construction was the general contractor for the roadbed along the Highway 135 route. About 2:30 PM that warm June 1972 day, the bridge crew heard a strange noise to the south of the bridge that they were building. The noise was kind of a vibrating **thud** and looking to the end of the bridge, the workers noticed a large white cloud of dust, perhaps a couple hundred yards south of the bridge along the roadbed. The road construction crew had not been recently working in that area, so several members of the bridge crew went to investigate. There was an irregular 8 to 10 foot circle in the road bed that just dropped out of sight! And cold air was gushing out of the new cave entrance that warm June day! The bridge crew stopped working at 3:30 PM which was coming soon. And conveniently on the bridge site, the crew had a 60-foot extension

ladder! Taking the extension ladder apart, Larry, Butch, and an unidentified bridge worker took the 30-foot ladder section over to the new cave and lowered it into the opening. In their haste, all the trio could come up with for lighting was one two-cell flashlight. The cave exploration was on!

Larry recounted in a 2024 interview that the drop was about 20-25 feet down to the top of the breakdown rock pile. There was an estimated 4-5 feet of solid rock at the top of the cave, but the rock was shattered in some places after the collapse. When the time came to climb down the ladder, only Larry descended into the cave with his single two-cell flashlight; the other two decided to stay on top by the ladder and observe. It would be a solo trip.

This is what Larry recalls of that trip, 52 years ago: Larry got off of the bottom of the ladder and carefully stepped on and around the breakdown rock chunks the ladder was resting on, climbing down to what appeared to be the bottom of the cave room he was in. He estimated he was 40-45 feet below the road bed at the bottom of the ladder and was 80 feet below the road bed once he was on the cave floor. He later estimated he was 15 to 20 feet above the level of Indian Creek, when he



Larry Ashabranner and Gary Roberson discussing the Binkley Cave map

was at the bottom of the cave. Leaving the large room, he estimated he was headed to the east, the floor was fairly smooth, no stream, but the clay floor was damp. The passage was an arched tunnel, he estimated the ceiling height at 40 feet and approximately 40 feet wide – **borehole!** Aware of the fact that Larry only had a single flashlight as his light source, he continued. The passage continued to the east, maybe southeast, but it had narrowed to perhaps 30 feet by 30 feet, still large for Indiana cave passage. After going an estimated 200 feet in the passageway and with only a single light and by himself, Larry turned around and headed back to the room where his exploration began, leaving the 30 by 30 foot virgin passage heading into darkness. Larry does not recall any

side passages and saw few formations, though at the time, he was more thrilled with the discovery than looking for formations, he admits.

Returning to the base of the ladder, Larry was still unable to coax the other two workers to come down into the cave. He decided to take a look at the western side of the large room, and after following a walking size passage for 20 feet or so, it appeared that passage was becoming smaller, so he turned around and exited the cave. Larry speculated that this second passage trended to the southwest, paralleling the bluff of Indian Creek. So there appeared to be two passages leading off from the “Ladder Room,” one to the east and one to the southwest. To this day, no one has been back.

Gary Roberson, Terry “Dog” Crayden, and Ken “Bear” Hoover were working on developing Squire Boone Caverns during the summer of 1972. They are founding Indiana Speleological Survey (ISS) members and headed up the ISS survey of Binkley Cave. They were headed back home from Squire Boone that same June day, having been blasting on the entrance tunnel at Squire Boone. In a piece of the puzzle that is missing, Corydon’s “Grand Ole Man of Caving”, Lewie Lamon, had learned of the new cave opening (perhaps someone on the bridge crew had stopped at Lewie’s hardware store in downtown Corydon that day after work?) and the Squire Boone crew happened to stop in the store near closing time. In conversation, Lamon told the trio about the roadbed collapse/cave just south of Indian Creek. All four of the cavers were well aware of Binkley Cave, and the sinkhole plain area the cave was under south of Corydon. So Roberson, Crayden, and Hoover left the hardware store and made the ten minute drive to the newly opened cave. By now, it was around supper time and no one was around. Larry Ashabranner and his gang had left the cave and had already pulled up the ladder from the hole. Roberson, Crayden and Hoover stared down into the impressive hole with awe. This was west of any Binkley passage known at the time, but certainly was in the same drainage and could potentially connect! Blowing

Hole Cave was further west, but would not be connected to Binkley for close to 40 years. The three ISS members could only dream and imagine what an entrance here might mean. Having no ropes or vertical gear with them (they were unaware of the 60 foot extension ladder stored under the nearby bridge), they left the area, and hoped the opening would remain for a while.

The next day, crews from the Rieth-Riley spent a very long day back-filling the hole. It was not directly under where the drive lanes would be, but rather on the eastern shoulder, near where the current guardrail ends south of the bridge. An estimated forty or more large dump truck-loads of different size rip-rap went into the hole to fill it. Roberson, Crayden, and Hoover returned the next evening, after their Squire Boone work shift, and were very disappointed to find the hole was no more.

A “connection” of sorts, among those involved presented itself many years later. Larry Ashabranner’s wife, Jan, became the office manager of Indiana Caverns, developed primarily by Gary Roberson. She only recently retired from Indiana Caverns at the end of 2023. Larry and Gary had conversations and learned about each others fascination with the “Binkley For A Day” Cave, as it had become known. And Larry’s buddy on the bridge crew, Butch Kintner, who now owns land south of Corydon, graciously gave



Approximate location of the former entrance to Binkley For A Day Cave on SR 135 south of Corydon

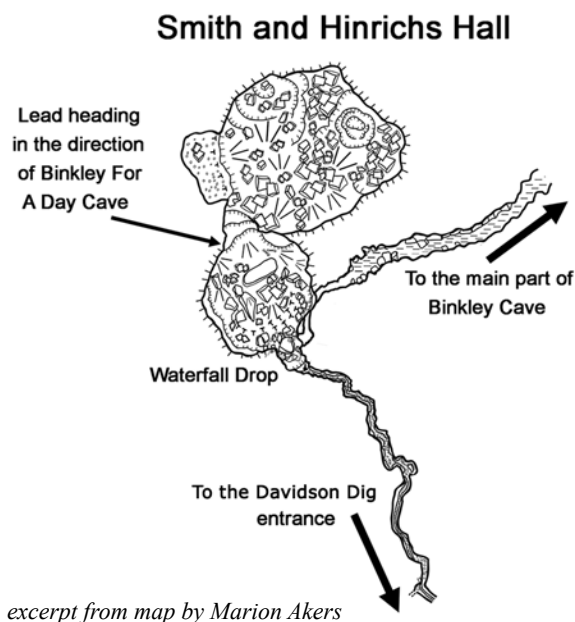
permission a few years ago for cavers to do a dig project into a large karst head on his property near Stoner Spring, where several of the Binkley dye traces reappeared. This excavation resulted in the cave known as Butch’s Dig. And to show this is a small world, the main operator of the large track-hoe rented for that dig was Larry Ashabranner (who has won numerous awards over the years for his skill and preciseness as an equipment operator).

In retrospect, there is a western-heading side passage leading off of Smith and Hinrichs Hall in the Davidson Dig section of the Binkley system, perhaps 1500 feet from Binkley For A Day Cave. Rand Heazlitt briefly investigated this lead, but most of the effort in Smith and Hinrichs Hall was to the east when the connection was made into the

Geedings Dome area of Binkley Cave. It may be possible to get to Binkley For A Day Cave from inside Smith and Hinrichs Hall. Only time will tell. It would sure be nice to re-discover that 40 by 40 foot borehole that Larry Ashabranner found in 1972! And there *should* be lots of cave missing in that area that has never been found.

Sources:

- Interview: January 18, 2024. Larry Ashabranner, Gary Roberson, John Benton, Richard Newton, Corydon, Indiana.
- *A God Project*, Gary Roberson, 2023, published by Indiana Caverns.
- *50 Years Under the Sinkhole Plain*, Gary Roberson, 2009, printed by 360 Digital Books.
- Personal Communications: Gary Roberson, 2023-2024.



THE DECEMBER COVER PHOTO – HOW WAS IT DONE?

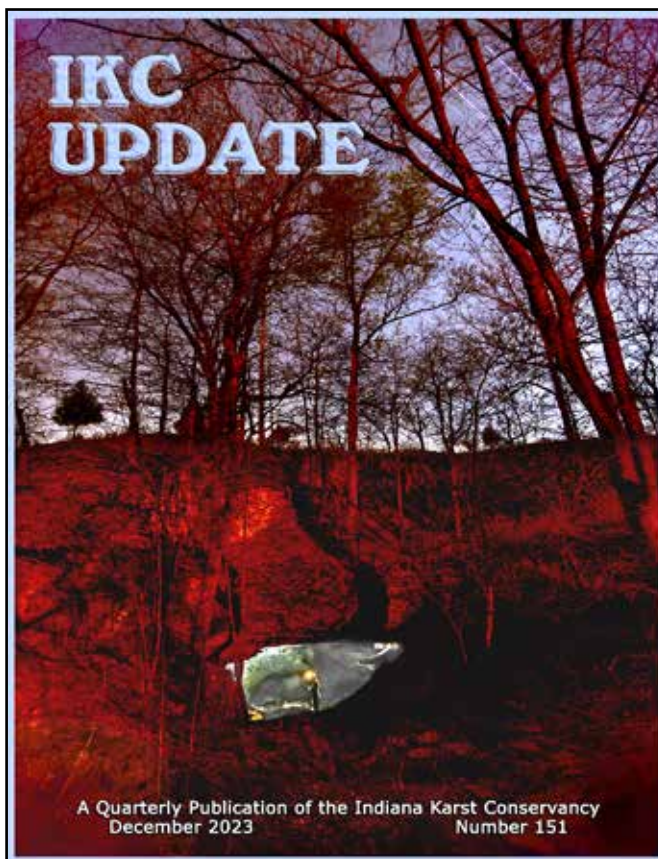
by Richard Vernier

Several people asked about how my “Buddha and Stars” photo was done, taken in 2007 and featured on the cover of the December 2023 *IKC Update*... Was it done in Photoshop somehow?

Basically it was taken with a Nikon D200 digital SLR camera (high tech at the time) with a wide-angle lens and was set up on a tripod facing the cave entrance. My wife Sue went to the entrance with two photography strobes (one was “slaved” to the other) and set one on a ledge facing into the cave and hid the other behind her body. On my command she fired the strobes, switched off her headlamp and waited in the dark. The camera lens was wide open and I set the shutter to stay open for thirty, cold, minutes. We were doing this in April so the trees were bare and you could see the stars. A sodium vapor lamp in the area produced the reddish illumination. Not planned, but I think it added something.

At the time I was familiar with using a film camera and I didn’t really know that the best way to do star trails with a digital camera was to take a sequence of much shorter images and “stack” them using Photoshop or a specialty application such as Starstax. This would have avoided the “thermal” noise that I had to work to remove with Nikon’s editing software.

Please note that visitation to the Buddha Karst Nature Preserve is typically only available during daylight hours and requires advance permission from the Property Manager for nighttime visits.



INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY TREASURY REPORT

Income/Expense Statement From October 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023

INCOME:

Dues Apportionment and Residuals	1,102.50	
Donations - General	2,612.46	
Donations - Land Acquisition Fund	114,910.00	
EQIP grants	3,578.52	
General Investment Earnings	2,146.18	
		\$124,349.66

EXPENSES:

IKC Update (printing, production, mailing)	943.77	
Education / Outreach	114.99	
Stewardship / Conservation	502.55	
Bio-Inventory Grant	600.00	
Wayne Cave Preserve acquisition	205,584.04	
Liability Insurance	1,799.00	
Business (PayPal fees, PO Box, etc)	255.35	
Transfers to/from restricted funds/other adjustments	-70,774.04	
		(\$139,025.66)

NET OPERATING EXCESS (DEFICIT) THIS PERIOD: (\$14,676.00)

Balance Sheet December 31, 2023

ASSETS:

Cash in Checking/CD/Brokerage accounts	665,614.89	
Wayne Cave Preserve ¹ (77.46 acres)	393,000.00	
Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve (73.48 acres)	162,000.00	
Shawnee Karst Preserve (67.78 acres)	175,000.00	
Buddha Karst Nature Preserve (36.84 acres)	29,000.00	
Sullivan Cave Preserve (30.00 acres)	88,000.00	
Lowry Karst Preserve (6.66 acres)	33,000.00	
Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve (3.01 acres)	7,000.00	
Indian Creek Conservation Easement (valued at \$1/acre)	13.16	
		<u><u>\$1,552,628.05</u></u>

FUNDS & OPERATING EXCESS:

Land Acquisition Restricted Fund	55,101.38	
Deferred Dues Restricted Fund (303 members)	6,446.25	
Stewardship Endowment Fund ² (8.92%)	118,736.01	
Gale & Ray Beach Endowment Fund (10.88%)	403,331.41	
Previous General Fund (total)	96,689.00	
Net Excess (Deficit) This Period	<u>(14,676.00)</u>	
Current General Fund (unrestricted)	82,013.00	
Current General Fund (committed)	4,490.92	
Real Estate Basis (excluding value of CE)	<u>887,000.00</u>	
Total Liabilities & Operating Excess		<u><u>\$1,552,628.05</u></u>

NOTES:

- 1) Includes the 19.87 acre preserve expansion valued at \$205,000
- 2) \$20,500 transferred from the General Fund for the Wayne Cave Preserve expansion

IKC EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Sunday, December 10th, 2023 – 1:00 PM EDT

IU Geology Building, 1001 E 10th Street, Bloomington, IN

Board Members Present:

Matt Selig*, President
 Laura Demarest, Secretary
 Keith Dunlap, Treasurer
 Bruce Bowman
 Jeff Cody
 Scott Frosch
 Danyeale Green
 Dave Haun
 Goniela Iskali
 Rand Heazlitt*
 Joe Kinder
 Tom Sollman
 Carla Striegel-Winner
 Paul Uglum
 Richard Vernier

* represented by proxy (see below)

Board Members Absent:

None

Others Present: Bill Baus, Warren Briggs, Patti Cummings, Sam Frushour, Tony Moore, Wes Roeder, Nathan Schonegg and daughter Iris, Cris Seuell, Joanna Shaver, and Sue Vernier.

Call to Order – IKC Exempt Purpose & Introductions

Meeting was called to order by Laura Demarest at 1:00 PM EDT.

Acceptance of Proxies

Sue Vernier for Matt Selig and Cris Seuell for Rand Heazlitt.

Approval of Previous Minutes

No edits were proposed to the last meeting minutes as published in the December *IKC Update*. *Paul Uglum made a motion to approve the minutes. Danyeale Green seconded. Unanimously approved.*

E-mail Motions Since Last Meeting

None.

Treasurer Report

Dunlap outlined the current financial status of the organization:

Assets:

Cash assets totaling	\$637,546.98
Land assets totaling	\$887,000.00
Total Assets	\$1,524,546.98

Dedicated Funds:

Land Acquisition Fund	\$51,854.17
Stewardship Endowment	\$94,646.20
Gale & Ray Beach Endowment	\$389,715.46

Deferred Dues	\$7,222.50
General (unrestricted) Fund	\$94,108.65
Total Dedicated Funds	\$637,546.98

Additional information on the Stewardship Fund and Beach Endowment investments was provided with the financial report.

Current membership: 298

Election Nomination Committee Appointment

Officers Matt Selig, Laura Demarest, and Keith Dunlap will be up for re-election (1-year term). Directors Dave Haun, Paul Uglum, Rand Heazlitt and Joe Kinder are also up for re-election (3-year term). The election committee will determine if each person up for re-election is willing to rerun. Danyeale and Paul have created materials to describe the positions. Danyeale, Jeff, and Bruce volunteered to be on the election committee. Next steps are to have the proposed slate approved by the Board, create the election ballot with the candidates, and mail it out in February.

Wayne Property “Connection” Update

Fund-raising Status: Keith updated that the IKC closed on the expansion property on November 15 and the total cost (including closing costs) was \$206,331. Our fundraising goal was \$225,000 because the goal included the contribution to Stewardship Endowment Fund. We have reached our goal of fundraising and are currently about \$5,000 over, but we will continue to accept donations until the end of the year and the excess money will remain in the Land Acquisition Fund for the next project. The contributions from the various land trusts/foundations and generous donations from members helped us reach our goal expeditiously. We did not pursue the dedication of the property as a Nature Preserve so there are currently no easement restrictions on the property, but the IKC can determine at a later date if we want to pursue dedication or other easement opportunities.

Classified Forest Enrollment: Keith reported that the DNR District Forester visited the property on December 1 and the application has been completed to enroll the new 20-acre expansion into our existing Classified Forest designation. This will reduce our property assessments next year and resulting property taxes (starting in 2025).

Property Maintenance: Danyeale added that we will not apply for an EQIP grant for the “connection” property because the District Forester concluded we did not have enough invasives to warrant it, but we will apply for a Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) grant



and place all 77-acres in this program. An Eagle Scout troop is slated to come out soon for a workday. More workdays will be planned for the spring. Currently no crossover hiking is allowed from the IKC to Buckner property because of hunting activity on the Buckner property until access is resolved. Sam Frushour noted that the hunter using the property is using it very sporadically, so we can discuss how to allow access.

The IKC has traditionally made a contribution to our Stewardship Endowment Fund equal to 10% of the capital cost of the acquisitions. *Keith made a motion for the Board to transfer \$20,500 from the General Fund to the Stewardship Endowment Fund. Sue Vernier seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.*

Education/Outreach Committee

Review Annual Outreach: Carla thanked the Learning Lab at the Indiana Geology and Water Survey for allowing us to use the space for this meeting. Carla then reviewed some of the outreach done in 2023. The IKC completed four field days in 2023 at our various properties. The IKC co-sponsored the Indiana Cave Symposium in Paoli and Matt led a tour before this event. Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA) members and possible donor groups toured the Wayne property. Matt also attended and tabled an IKC booth at the National Cave & Karst Management Symposium in Chattanooga. Facebook continues to do well and add new members.

2024 Plans: Continue to complete four field days, details yet to be determined. Scott Frosch has agreed to do a spring hike at Henderson Park, since the IKC now manages the cave access there. The date for this trip is yet to be determined, and Laura added that she has a friend who is familiar with the history of the area and can ask if they can help.

Preparation for the 2024 Eclipse

Keith, Danyeale, and Carla participated in a meeting hosted by ILPA on how to prepare for this event. The webinar was recorded and can be shared with whoever is interested (Carla can email). Scott Frosch was unable to attend the webinar, but has been researching how the IKC can prepare. Danyeale noted that no Emergency Medical Services (EMS) can be expected in the eclipse path because the hospitals and EMS units are anticipating being overrun. The promotion and hype for the eclipse has increased since the last national one in 2017 and reservations are indicating that all areas of Indiana in the totality zone should anticipate a lot more visitors on April 8, 2024.

Directors discussed again if a members-only event should be planned, but it was determined that this is not appropriate given that the IKC properties don't provide great viewing areas and the aforementioned safety concerns. Danyeale asked that Board members to review the draft pamphlet distributed during

the meeting before it is used to convey messaging to members. Danyeale will also email it with more details (e.g., when suggested edits are due).

ILPA Update

ILPA will be conducting the annual business meeting via Zoom on December 13, 2023 and any Board members are welcome (Carla will forward the invite). The Winter Gathering (meeting and reception) at the Indiana Historical Society has been pushed until January 17, 2024, and the event is free because we are members (Carla distributed the agenda for the event during the meeting). ILPA dues are due in January, so Carla made a request to approve the \$500 dues. *Bruce made the motion to pay the \$500 dues and Paul seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.*

2024 OCR Training w/ NCRC

Laura mentioned that the IKC is aiming to host a safety training event each year. This year, Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) training was proposed on May 18 and 19th. These dates were approved by the Lawrence County Independent Schools and the National NCRC. However, reservation won't be open until March and Jess Deli (the regional coordinator) will send out the final event and reservation details. The participation fee is generally \$50-60 per participant and the IKC has previously offered a \$25 discount for members and no charge for first responders. Laura asked if the IKC is interested in continuing to make this offer and the general consensus was yes. Keith noted that donations from a couple of members for this event in the past have covered the registration dues so that the IKC has not used additional funds. *Carla made a motion to offer IKC members a \$25 discount for the first 25 and free entry registration to up to five first responders. Cris seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.*

Paul made a motion to make the Sullivan property available for the training. Sue seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

SCCi Online Waiver Update

Paul noted that the online waiver system is ready for testing. Bruce, Keith, and Joe will test it and Paul will give them access. Gate key management and distribution will continue to be a challenge and people will need to plan ahead on when they are caving if they are to use this system. Assuming after testing that the IKC wants to use the system, Paul will let the SCCi know and the IKC will contribute funds to SCCi for the maintenance of this service.

Cave/Land Acquisition Activities

Lamplighter Cave west entrances: Scott hasn't followed up with this landowner recently, but the property does not look well maintained lately. The owner is emotionally attached to the farm because he wants to keep it in the family. There was discussion about orga-



nizing a Board members' trip in the spring to evaluate its value as a potential IKC acquisition.

Lowry Expansion: Matt spoke with the owner adjacent to the Lowry Preserve and he currently is not interested in subdividing and selling the 3-acre property, but Matt will continue to stay in touch because the interaction was positive. The neighbor also visits our property and grew up in the area, so he is familiar with the cave and can possibly be another "set of eyes" in case any issues come up.

Weaver Cave: The property owner reached out to Matt. Weaver cave is located on a 12-acre lot that is part of a previous subdivision. The other lots sold for a high price (\$14-20K per acre). The cave entrance is also very near the property line and the cave runs under an adjacent property so access may be limited even if IKC owns the entrance. A price was not discussed, but Matt will stay in touch.

Recap of Preserves Work Projects & Upcoming Preserves Projects

Buddha Karst Nature Preserve: Keith had nothing new to report.

Lowry Karst Preserve: No report from Jasper Beavers.

Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve: The dilapidated neighboring store property has been purchased and Carla met the new owner, who discussed several use options and then asked if the IKC might be interested in purchasing. Carla indicated some concern with the septic system if the building were to be inhabited or utilized again.

Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve: No report from John Benton. The emergency information sign was replaced by John because it had fallen down.

Shawnee Karst Preserve: Keith and Carla did some cedar and pine removal. Carla noted that some of the cedar trees may be available as Christmas trees (contact Keith if interested). The Shallow Grotto had an event there in November, and they cut up a large tree that had fallen down on one of the campsites. In March, Keith will mow the larger prairie to help with the establishment of native grasses. Keith and Jamie Winner also rewired the shed to be able to plug in a generator to get lights on in the back room.

Sullivan Cave Preserve: Joe, Jeff Cody, Joe's friend (Jay) and Joe's son (Jaimeson) painted the majority of the wood shed. Carla donated some roof sealer to finish painting the roof. Volunteers from the field day helped clean up the parking area, cut and transport wood, etc. The old driveway has been decommissioned and the new address sign post has been installed by the new property entrance. Jamie Winner cut down the large decaying tulip poplar by the lane gate. Joe will grease the cave gate and replace the locks. Joe also noted invasives and will work on eradication efforts for next year.

Paul noted that the gate key will change between December 24th and January 3rd because no trips are currently planned for that time. Laura noted that the key in the emergency box will also need to be replaced. Google info notes that the cave is "permanently closed" and other misinformation like wrong address; it was noted to notify visitors to not use Google maps for navigation. The plastic wrapping around the bolt cutters needs to be replaced (and possibly the laminated map) and Joe will check it out.

Wayne Cave Preserve: Danyele updated that she went out with a biologist for four-toed salamander to determine if there is good habitat for this species, but none was found. Danyele will walk the connection property to plan future trails. Future workdays will include trash removal, especially in the connection property near the previous house location where the demo occurred.

Indian Creek Conservation Easement: Matt sent out letters to the landowners as part of the property easement inspection. Carla and Keith will visit on December 19th. The Board may need to determine who will be the next monitor (to get back to June inspections).

Henderson Park Caves: Five grotto and non-grotto trips were completed. There is no specific limit to the number of trips per year, but parking is limited, so from a practical standpoint, 15 cavers per trip is allowed in cave. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) seems to continue to be happy with the IKC. Tom Swinford from TNC will provide the language to planned sign (similar to Cave River Valley sign).

Items from the Floor

- There was a lot of interest over the last *IKC Update* cover photo taken by Dick Vernier and it was requested that he write a quick technical explanation for the next issue or Facebook.
- Danyele noted that the Land of Indiana company purchased the Freeman property and logged a large portion of it, and she was wondering if any of the logging activities impacted the cave (i.e. was cave used as a disposal site). It appears that the property will change ownership again soon. Danyele is working with the realtor regarding purchase or donation for tax purposes who will share this information with the new owners when the sale closes in February 2024. We anticipate hearing back on the status of Freeman Pit and Freeman Cave before the next Board meeting.
- Laura stated that the NSS approved the national convention in Corydon in 2026. Laura will co-chair the organization of this event with Dean Wiseman. Other positions and volunteer opportunities are currently being solicited. A volunteer form can be submitted to express interest and sort people into roles. The exact dates are yet TBD because the Corydon



Fair Grounds has not confirmed them. The IKC will likely eventually play a role (e.g., cave access), but not certain how yet.

- Kevin Strunk wanted to relay via Keith updates about the upcoming apartment development in Bloomington. Kevin was able to get a copy of the Environmental Constraint Analysis and noted that the karst assessment was completed by a consultant in Indianapolis and the information in this section was sparse. The current plan contemplates roads and structures over the karst areas. Some public meetings have been completed and more are coming up. The project appears to have a lot of local opposition. Kevin volunteered at the previous board meet-

ing to draft a position letter, and Danyeale or Matt can review and relay.

Next Meeting Date and Place Selection

The annual IKC Business meeting was tentatively scheduled for Sunday, March 17 at 1:00 PM – meeting at the Ellettsville Library (Danyeale will make reservations). Social time before the meeting may be planned again (TBD).

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm EDT.

Respectfully compiled and submitted by Goni Iskali, acting Secretary

...continued from page 7

Timothy Harris, Dave Haun, Hank Huffman, David Hughes, Goni Iskali, Kevin Johnson, John Kirby, Marcella Larch, Ed LaRock, Tymme Laun, Marvin Leinback, Jerry and Salisa Lewis, Mark Longacre, Danny McDowell, Val and Greg McNamara, Erik Meitner, Kim and Thomas Metzgar, Jon Miller, Robert Miller, Steven Morris, Bill Morrow, Ashley Motia, Stanley Nieder, Kenneth Nisley-Nagele, Mark O'Daniel, Curtis Owens, Sherrill Owens, Chris Parks, Nathan Pate, Ernie and Jacqueline Payne, Matt Pelsor, Chuck Perkins, Joe Powers, Everett Pulliam, Kelle Reynolds, James Reyome, Carroll Ritter, Gary Roberson, Wes Roeder, William Roth, Ralph Sawyer, Julie Schenck-Brown, Matt Selig, Mark Sheeham, Robert Sollman, Tom Sollman, Jeffrey Stocker, Amanda Stofan, Carla Striegel-Winner and Jamie Winner, Kevin Strunk, Wesley Terrell, Bruce Trotter, Richard VanRheenen, Dick and Sue Vernier, Paul Webb, Nelson Weeks, Steve Weinzapfel, Norbert Welch, Brad Westrich, Rich Whisler, Rich and Joyce Whisler, Wyatt Williams, Jack Wood, Robert Zatarski, Bluesprings Caverns, Central Indiana Grotto, Evansville Metro Grotto, St Joseph Grotto, Central Indiana Land Trust, Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy, National Speleological Society, National Speleological Foundation, Sam Shine Foundation, Anne S. Frantz Charitable Fund, Design and Build Corporation, BRS III LLC, SerVaas Labs (Bar Keepers Friend), and SerVaas Charitable Fund.

- ❑ The IKC has gained *thirteen* new members in the last quarter. Welcome Anna Blanton, Seth Brown, Megan Fletcher, Kaleb Glassburn, Jason Griggs, Steve Hambling, Phillip Heavrin, Marie Henson, Chase Hildebrand, Jesse Johnson, Sean Milligan, Tony Moore, and Jeff Riser. The IKC membership currently stands at 309.

INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY, PO BOX 2401, INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206-2401

I would like to help the IKC protect Indiana's unique caves and other karst features. Enclosed is:

\$ _____ for IKC membership dues at \$15 per year (dues expire March 31st of each year, please pro-rate @ \$1.25/month).

\$ _____ donation to the general IKC fund.

\$ _____ donation restricted to a specific IKC project. Please specify: _____

_____ I know of an area worthy of protection. Please contact me.

_____ I would like to volunteer to help. Please contact me.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE # _____

Make checks payable to the Indiana Karst Conservancy, Inc. and mail to the IKC Treasurer, c/o Indiana Karst Conservancy, PO Box 2401, Indianapolis, IN 46206-2401. The IKC is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with membership dues and donations fully tax deductible.

