

# IKC UPDATE

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# INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY, INC

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[ikc.caves.org](http://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.

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Cover: Valerie Schummer in South Peacher Cave in Orange County, Indiana.  
Learn more about this cave on page 12. Photo by Chris Bell (2024)



# IKC QUARTERLY E-BOARD MEETING REMINDER

Sunday, June 14th, 2 PM EDT

Wyandotte Cave Shelter House

7315 S Wyandotte Cave Rd, Leavenworth IN

The quarterly meetings are for the Executive Board to conduct business, and for our members and other interested persons to have an open forum to talk about cave 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:** Financial reports; Education/Outreach/Field Days updates; 2026 NSS Convention involvement; 2026 Indiana Cave Symposium recap; 40th anniversary planning; Electronic scheduling and waiver system update; Cave/land acquisition activities; Recap of recent and upcoming preserve work projects and related items; and more...

**Meeting Details:** The meeting will be held in the shelter house adjacent to the lower parking lot at Wyandotte Cave, starting promptly at 2 PM EDT.

**Cave Trip:** For those who wish to participate in the special IKC Wyandotte Cave trip, please see page 11 for details. You must pre-register and it is limited to 20 participants. There is a fee.

**Pre-meeting Lunch:** Members and supporters are welcome to join us at 1 PM EDT for a pitch-in lunch at the shelter house at Wyandotte Cave. We will be providing basic fixings for cold cut sandwiches and we encourage anyone coming to please pitch in with a side dish or dessert. The shelter house is adjacent to the lower parking lot. If you have questions, or would like to RSVP for lunch, please email Carla at [IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com](mailto:IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com) or text 812-639-9628.

## ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

**June 14 – IKC Wyandotte Cave Tour – before Board meeting (see page 11)**

**June 14 – IKC Quarterly E-Board Meeting (see above)**

**July 6-10 – NSS National Convention, Corydon (see page 8)**

**August 15 – In Search of Spiders, Buddha Karst Preserve (see page 19)**

**Oct 10 – Big Day Bird Hike (location to be announced)**

**Oct 24 – Wilderness First Aid Scenarios Hike, Wayne Cave Preserve**

**Nov 7 – Cave Data Collection Hike (location to be announced)**

For more information on the Indiana Karst Conservancy, visit our website at [ikc.caves.org](http://ikc.caves.org), our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/IndianaKarstConservancy](http://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 \$20. 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 online services on our website (see the Join Us! tab in the menu) or [ikc.caves.org/join-the-ikc](http://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](http://ikc.caves.org/ikc-updates).

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## RAMBLINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT...

What is a cave? One definition is simple enough: a cave is a void in the rock.

But that definition immediately creates a problem for cavers, because almost everything we love about caves is not the void itself, but what happens at its edges. The walls. The streams. The waterfalls. Formations and fossils that glow in a headlamp beam. The bat clinging overhead. The salamander crawling through the twilight zone.

By our strict definition, these things are not the cave. These edges are the shores of the cave. The cave itself is the dark sea between them.

And cavers are the strangest of visitors, temporary, loud with gear, led by artificial suns through a world that perfected itself in darkness. We did not make the cave. We simply found the entrance and followed our curiosity down.

Cave explorers are odd that way, arriving uninvited into a system that has been quietly refining itself for millennia, then emerging to try to explain it to people who have never been underground. It is not an easy thing to explain. The cave's darkness is not merely the absence of light. Anyone who has sat still long enough in a cave knows it has a weight, a quality, that is difficult to put into words above ground.

So what we bring back from caves matters. Sometimes we bring out trash, because someone before us mistook the underground for a place without memory. Sometimes we bring out survey data, sketches, photographs, the slow work of turning darkness into knowledge that will outlast the people who gathered it.

Sometimes we bring out sore shoulders, bruised knees, torn coveralls, and the quiet satisfaction of a long crawlway shared with good companions.

There is a special kind of friendship that forms underground, where the footing is uncertain and everyone is relying on everyone else to pay attention.

But the most important thing we carry out is harder to name and impossible to leave behind. We bring out the change the cave made in us.

Those of us who have been changed this way

call ourselves cavers. We learn that hidden does not mean unimportant, that water and rock do not respect property lines or political boundaries, that the surface and the underground are locked in an intimacy most people never suspect.

We know that what happens in a field, in a parking lot, in a roadside ditch, does not stay there. It goes down. It goes through. It comes out somewhere, changed or unchanged, contaminated or not. A cave is not separate from the world above it. It is the world above it, viewed from underneath, filtered through stone and time.

This is why it cuts so deep when cavers see damaged caves. Thoughtless vandals scratching their names into formations that took ten thousand years to grow. Sinkholes choked with debris, as if the earth has a basement where you throw what you do not want to think about anymore.

We are not merely offended by these things. We are grieving something we love, something most of the world does not even know exists, something that cannot be replaced on any human timescale.

That grief is information. It tells us what we value, and points us toward a debt of gratitude.

We teach new cavers to take nothing but pictures, and we mean it. There is almost never a good reason for a recreational caver to remove anything natural from a cave. Leave the walls, the formations, the streams, the sediment, the fossils, and the life where they belong.

And yet every caver brings something out, because the cave insists on it. You cannot move through this darkness unchanged.

Every cave gives us something: wonder, perspective, the particular joy of moving through darkness with people who understand the allure. It is with real delight that I head underground. A delight that deepens when I share the adventure with others who have been changed the same way, who know without being told why it matters.

The IKC is how I have chosen to begin repay-



ing what caves have given me. This work has its own rewards, its own community, its own version of the satisfaction you feel emerging from a long trip underground, tired and grateful and already thinking about the next trip.

One of my guiding principles is to find something you love and work hard for it. Cavers already know how to work hard for something underground, how to push through a difficult passage on the strength of curiosity and stubbornness and trust in the people around them.

The IKC asks us to bring that same commit-

ment to the surface, to our advocacy for caves, to land acquisition, to education, and the unglamorous labor of keeping caves accessible for the cavers who have not yet found the cave that will change them.

The caves made us cavers. As IKC members, they ask us to be something more.

As I recently said at this year's Indiana Cave Symposium, marking the IKC's 40th anniversary, we have a lot of work to do this year; please join us.

*Matt Selig*

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## NEWS BRIEFS...

- ❑ One of the main tasks of the IKC's Annual Business meeting in March is the Executive Board elections where the three Officers and four of the twelve Directors are elected. The results were: President: Matt Selig; Secretary: Goni Iskali; Treasurer: Keith Dunlap; Directors (serving 3-year terms): Bruce Bowman, Scott Frosch, Tom Sollman, and Richard Vernier. They join the other eight Directors: Bill Baus, Brandon Chasteen, Jeff Cody, Laura Demarest, Joe Kinder, Cris Seuell, and Carla Striegel-Winner to make up the 2026 Executive Board. Thanks to Owen Freese-Posthuma, Tim Harris, and Kevin Romanak for running for a Director's position this year. Also thanks to Bill Baus, Danyele Green, and Cris Seuell for serving as the Nominating Committee who solicited and vetted the candidates, and to Bill and Danyele for being this year's election Tellers.
- ❑ At the March Annual Business Meeting, the IKC Executive Board appointed Brandon Chasteen as the new Cave Patron for Wayne Cave, replacing long-time volunteer Dave Everton. Dave has served faithfully as the Wayne Cave Patron for over 20 years (see article on page 18) and was willing to continue in that position, but the Board decided there was an opportunity to involve some "new blood" within the organization. Brandon had previously expressed an interest in serving as the Cave Patron for Sullivan, and he lives only minutes away from the Wayne Preserve. So with the transition to the on-line permit system at Wayne Cave, now seemed like an ideal time to make the personnel switch (note, Cris Seuell remains the Property Manager at the Wayne preserve). The Board wishes to express its gratitude to Dave's long-term dedication to the IKC. Dave continues as the Cave Patron for Upper Twin Cave *and* the Cave Access Coordinator for selected caves at Spring Mill State Park/ Cave River Valley. ***Thank you Dave!***
- ❑ As mentioned above, the IKC is continuing its migration to an on-line cave permit/scheduling/liability waiver management system that will simplify and eliminate much of the physical paperwork, as well as provide better liability protection of the IKC from a legal perspective. The Sullivan Cave Preserve switched over last year and now the Wayne Cave Preserve is using the system effective May 1. This system is for requesting cave trips as well as camping on those preserves. Additional properties will be migrated in the future.
- ❑ The month of May signifies a number of Indiana caves re-opening for visitation that were closed so as to not conflict with winter bat use. First on the list is the IKC's Robinson Ladder Cave (see [ikc.caves.org/robinson-ladder-cave-preserve](http://ikc.caves.org/robinson-ladder-cave-preserve)) that is open May 1 to August 31 (IKC permit required). Likewise, Langdon's Cave on the Harrison-Crawford State Forest (DNR cave permit is required) and Endless and River caves in Cave River Valley (see [ikc.caves.org/dnr/spring\\_mill.htm](http://ikc.caves.org/dnr/spring_mill.htm)). The Hoosier National Forest caves such as Fuzzy Hole (see the center spread and back cover) are also now open (May 15 - Aug 15, no permit necessary for small groups). There are also a number of privately-owned bat hibernaculum caves that are available during the summer with the owner's permission.

- ❑ We are excited about the 2026 NSS National Convention coming up in Corydon, July 6-10 (see page 8) and

*Continued on page 17...*

# THE GROUND WE'VE GAINED: IKC LAND ACQUISITION

by Keith Dunlap

*Editor's Note: In this second installment celebrating the IKC's 40th anniversary, I focus on our seven preserves. While we obviously cover our recent preserve activities in every issue, and we publish our annual preserve reports in each June issue (see pages 22-32), this article covers chronologically how we acquired and in some cases expanded our preserves, while also providing other details of these wonderful properties.*

## Sullivan Cave - Our First Nature Preserve

In 1998, the IKC took possession of 28 acres in Lawrence County, including the primary entrance to Sullivan Cave, one of Indiana's longest and most well-known caves. At over 9.6 miles long, containing river passage and some of the largest cave rooms in the state, Sullivan is a significant and sporting horizontal cave. Years of overuse, abuse, and vandalism had taken their toll on the more accessible parts of the cave; but through the dedicated effort of hundreds of volunteers including cavers, scouts, and members of the public who often had no idea what they were getting into, the cave has been restored to most of its former glory, with restoration efforts ongoing.

Surface management activities have included the removal of several abandoned structures on the property, upgrading the access driveway and parking area, reforestation of approximately five acres in two open fields (nearly 3,000 trees planted), and the establishment of a much used camping area. In 2021, an additional two acres were added to the preserve for a current total of thirty acres with multiple adjacent expansion opportunities likely in the future.

## Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve

In 1999, the IKC took ownership of the Orangeville Rise preserve in Orange County. This spring is the second largest in Indiana and provides a major input to the Lost River drainage system. The pre-

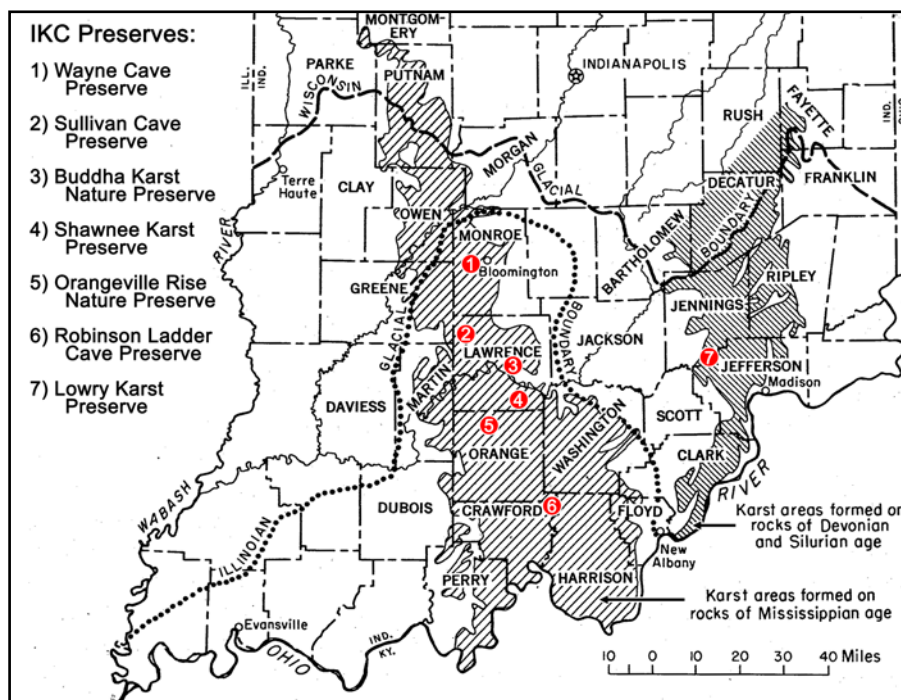
serve is designated as a National Natural Landmark, as well as a State-dedicated Nature Preserve. The property consists of a little over three acres of land on the southern side of the community of Orangeville. The spring is adjacent to a county road, so it has easy public access, making it an excellent educational resource.

The land was transferred from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Indiana to the IKC when they recognized that this property would benefit from the increased focus and active stewardship of the IKC.

## Buddha Karst Nature Preserve

In 2001, the IKC purchased 37 acres in Lawrence County that would become the Buddha Karst Nature Preserve. The property consists of rolling karst topography containing several wet-weather swallets, numerous sinkholes and karst features, two seasonal sinkhole ponds, a perennial spring, and several caves. The primary cavern, Buddha Cave, is over 3,000 feet long and has much to offer: a large entrance room, some crawling passageways, exposed climbs, a 25-foot rope drop, and a nicely-decorated lower stream passage that was featured on the cover of the 1992 NSS Convention guidebook.

The Buddha Karst Nature Preserve was dedicated as a State Nature Preserve in 2002 to provide additional protection to the property and



cave. As such, it is subject to special management requirements, while still being available for responsible recreational caving. Most of the property was pasture when acquired, but between 2002 and 2010 over 12,000 trees were planted and it is now an early successional forest. The IKC maintains a one-mile loop hiking trail on the property allowing for easy viewing of the various karst features.

**Wayne Cave Preserve**

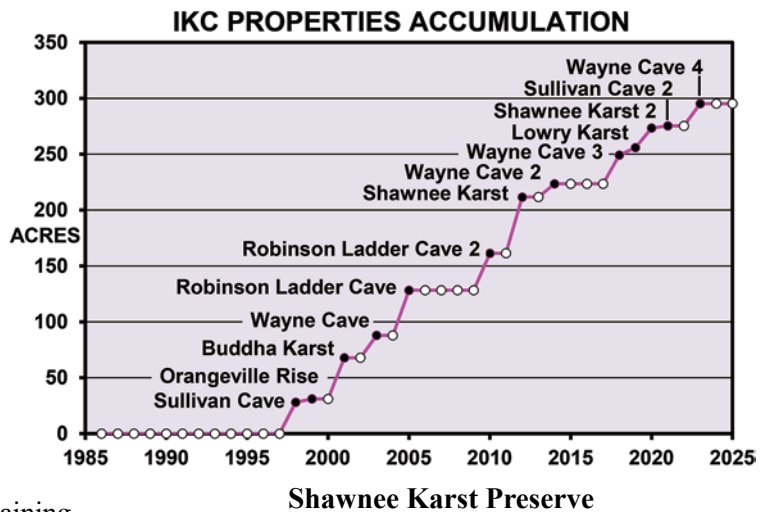
In 2003 the IKC purchased the initial tract of the Wayne Cave Preserve in Monroe County consisting of 20 wooded acres containing the entrance to Wayne Cave and overlaying much of its cave passage. At the time, the cave was 4.25 miles long, putting it in the top ten longest cave systems in Indiana. The cave is considered one of the true classic Indiana caves and access has been managed by the IKC since 1986. Efforts after the acquisition included establishing an off-street parking area, a trail to the entrance, and primitive campsites. Later a large information kiosk was designed and constructed, and a multi-mile loop hiking trail system is being developed.

The Wayne Cave Preserve has been expanded three times (2014, 2018, and 2023), and now totals over 77 acres. The expansions have included several other smaller caves. The property also has several rare plants documented. The last expansion connected the Wayne Cave Preserve to the 43-acre NSS-owned Richard Blenz Nature Preserve, creating over 120 acres of contiguous protected karst land. In 2022, the nearby Studebaker Pit Cave was connected to Wayne Cave, increasing the system length to over five miles, making it the seventh-longest cave in Indiana.

**Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve**

In 2005, a 40-acre tract in Crawford County was acquired by the IKC with financial assistance from TNC. The property contains the entrance and virtually all of the cave passages of Robinson Ladder Cave. At the time of the acquisition, the cave hosted nearly 500 Indiana and little brown bats, now both listed as federally endangered species. While post-White-nose Syndrome populations have dropped to only a few dozen wintering bats, there are some recent signs of recovery.

The preserve was expanded in 2010 with a deed transfer by TNC of 33 adjacent acres, making the preserve now over 73 acres in size.



In 2012, with the financial assistance of TNC, the IKC acquired the initial 50-acre tract establishing the Shawnee Karst Preserve in Lawrence County. This property contains two of the upstream entrances to Upper Twin Cave. The 3.1-mile-long stream cave is the largest site for the State-endangered Hoosier cavefish (*Amblyopsis hoosieri*). The downstream entrance to the cave is in nearby Spring Mill State Park and during the summer, the park staff conduct boat tours in the lower section of the cave. During the off-season months, cavers may get permits to do sporting through-trips from the IKC entrance to the park entrance.

The preserve was expanded in 2020 with the addition of a 17-acre tract, making the preserve nearly 68 acres in size. Several structures had to be demolished, and extensive invasive work is on-going. The preserve has several open areas of native prairie that are being managed for habitat biodiversity.

The preserve has over three miles of maintained hiking trails and several primitive camp sites.

**Lowry Karst Preserve**

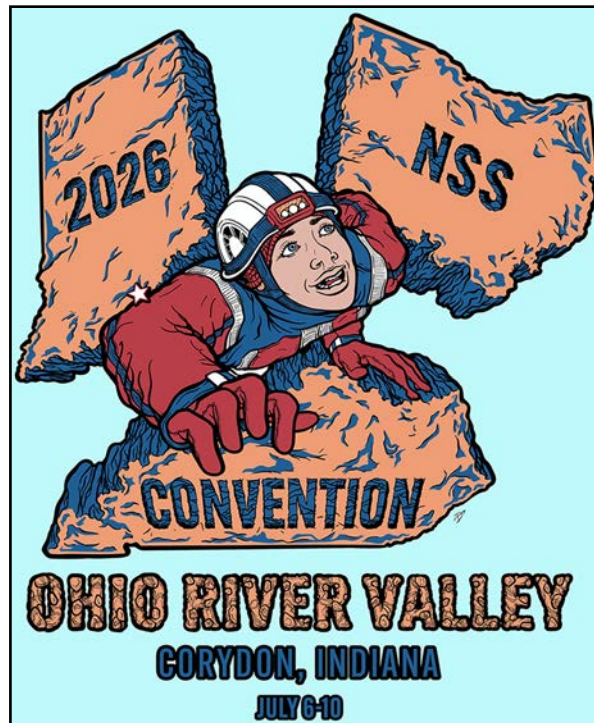
In 2019, the IKC acquired a six-plus acre tract in Jennings County containing the entrance to Lowry Cave. This small property is unique to the IKC in that it is in Indiana’s southeastern karst region with a diversity of fauna not found in the larger south-central karst band. The cave has a very scenic entrance located along Graham Creek. The property runs along a bluff of that creek. Extensive invasive plant control work was required to restore the property to its appropriate biological health. We have established a primitive campsite on the property for our members’ convenience when caving in the area. 🦋

## THE 2026 OHIO RIVER VALLEY NSS CONVENTION – JULY 6-10

by Laura Demarest (2026 Convention Co-chair)

As many are aware, a significant event is coming to Corydon this summer: the National Speleological Society's Annual Convention - July 6-10th! Cavers from all over the US and several other countries will be making their way to the Midwest for what is shaping up to be an unforgettable event in the Ohio River Valley. The last time this region hosted the national convention was in 2007. So if you've never been to an NSS Convention, or not been to one in recent time, don't miss out! It is an incredible opportunity for caving, learning, networking, and having fun! Volunteers from 12 different states have been working together since the summer of 2022 and we are incredibly excited to share this special event with our friends in the caving community! Some highlights of this huge, upcoming event include:

- Hundreds of caving opportunities within a two-hour drive, including privileged access to several very special caves!
- Dozens and dozens of presentations from experts and explorers in the caving community on topics such as regional, national, and international exploration, science, technical innovations, perspectives from some of our community's respected 'Luminaries', and more!
- Three killer music acts – Monday (The Creekers), Wednesday (Muchas Garcias), Friday (The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band).
- Catering by the Schnitzelbank for the Howdy Party (at Indiana Caverns) and Friday banquet.
- Engineering and educational marvel "CaveSim" coming from South Dakota (and sponsored by the IKC and others).
- Vertical caving contests, workshops, and training opportunities.



- Salon displays and contests for cave cartography, photography, art, ballads, and a 60 x 60 foot "walkable" Mammoth Cave map on display!
- Geology Field Trip, Biology Field Trip, Karst Hydrology of the Lost River Field Trip (led by IKC President, Matt Selig), Wyandotte Cave specialty tours (facilitated by IKC members Keith Dunlap and John Benton), Stargazer Float Trip with Cave Country Canoes, and even a Cave Survey contest sponsored by Kentucky Speleological Survey.

- Workshops on cave surveying, speleothem repair, photography, science, and more.
- Junior Speleological Society activities for children all week.
- Seventeen cave vendors on-site and many non-profit exhibits (including the IKC).
- Robust 300+ page full color convention guidebook with features on the major cave systems in the Ohio River Valley region, as well as topics on geology, biology, history, and caver culture!

If you have not yet registered, go to [caves.org/convention/2026-nss-convention/activities](https://caves.org/convention/2026-nss-convention/activities) to learn more about the convention and register. If you're already registered, revisit the website as we have added a *lot* of new items such as field trips, merchandise, updated schedule, and other information. And if you are not sure about attending the entire week, a day pass option for one or two days will be well worth your while! Also check out our Facebook page ([facebook.com/NSSconvention](https://facebook.com/NSSconvention)) as we continue to add new items and timely updates to the schedule.

We hope you can join us for what will surely be an incredible week of caving and camaraderie! Questions? Contact [2026Convention@caves.org](mailto:2026Convention@caves.org). 🐛



Our Members Protect Caves Through Active Conservation

**FIND OUR BOOTH AT CONVENTION!!**

visit one of our caves

hike or camp on a preserve

Join us for a field event

Help us on a stewardship day

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NSS Convention Program ad by Carla Striegel-Winner

## IKC SUPPORTS 'CAVESIM' AT THE 2026 NSS CONVENTION

by Laura Demarest

The Indiana Karst Conservancy is proud to be a lead sponsor bringing CaveSim to the 2026 NSS Convention in Corydon this summer. Support for this world-class, one-of-a-kind educational tool conveys the IKC's commitment to cave conservation and public outreach by providing a unique, high-tech way to teach visitors about fragile underground environments.

CaveSim, the brainchild of South Dakota caver and MIT engineer Dave Jackson, is a highly realistic mobile cave system designed to teach STEM concepts through an immersive experience. It features 60 feet of multi-level passages equipped with interactive electronic formations, such as gypsum flowers, which use sophisticated sensors to track



photo courtesy CaveSim

and score "damage" from any accidental contact. This system allows participants to vie for the title of "Most Careful Caver" while learning the vital importance of protecting real cave resources. Spectators can watch in 'night vision' as others traverse the tricky 'crawlways' and obstacles.

Beyond the simulated crawl, the IKC's sponsorship helps facilitate a suite of high-adventure and educational programs, including a 12-foot vertical caving tower, math-based squeeze box challenges, and biology labs featuring slime molds and extremophiles.

Efforts are currently underway to raise additional funds to support CaveSim's approximate \$10,000 travel/logistics expenses to attend the Convention. If any grottos, conservancies, other cave organizations, or individuals would like to extend their support for CaveSim, please check out [cavesim.com/support](http://cavesim.com/support).

All convention attendees should make sure to visit the display at Corydon High School this July 6-10 to see this amazing exhibit in action! 🦋

## 2026 INDIANA CAVE SYMPOSIUM RECAP

*article and photos by Keith Dunlap*

The 32nd Indiana Cave Symposium, co-sponsored by the Indiana Karst Conservancy (IKC) and Indiana Cave Survey (ICS), was held on Saturday, April 18, at the Orange County Community Center in Paoli.

In addition to the Symposium evening activities, there was a pre-symposium tour in the afternoon (see page 12). And starting at 4 PM, the IKC had our booth set up featuring upcoming events, as well as having hats, stickers, and 40th anniversary buttons and bottle openers for sale. The 2026 NSS Convention staff also set up a booth for information on the convention and volunteer recruitment. Finally, Gary Roberson set up a table to sell and sign his new book *Mud, Water, & Guts: Hoosier Cavers and Their Caves*. It was a very busy pre-symposium this year!

Attendance from my estimation was just over 100 people for the meal, with a few more showing up for the presentations, both records.



As in the past, the symposium offered a free cookout (burgers, brats, and other assorted meats and non-meat offerings) and we encouraged attendees to share pitch-in side dishes and desserts. The meal service started at 5 PM with everyone getting through the food line in fairly quick order, with some making a second pass (or third). People then socialized until the presentation portion of the event started promptly at 6:10. Kevin Strunk was session



facilitator and emcee for the evening and did an excellent job of keeping everyone on schedule.

Prior to the formal presentations, Matt Selig (President of the IKC) and Dave Everton (Chairman of the ICS) made brief introductions and respectively thanked the attendees for coming. Also, Laura Demarest and Dean Wiseman, co-chairs of the 2026 Ohio River Valley NSS Convention, gave a brief preview of the event that will be held in Corydon, Indiana, the week of July 6-10, and then showed a short convention promotional video (also see the article on page 8). They then solicited and encouraged attendees to volunteer for various opportunities to assist with the convention.

Then on to the main presentations:

- **Hamer Cave: 2025 Cavefish Study and the Quarry Life Award** – Carla Striegel-Winner, Keith Dunlap, and Tom Sollman. Carla and Keith tag-teamed the presentation, describing the Quarry Life Award contest, how the IKC got involved, the actual research conducted by Tom Sollman, what extracurricular activities we did on behalf of Heidelberg Materials, and finally the trip to Germany Carla took to accept our award and €10,000 prize (~\$11,200).
- **Bears, Boars, and Bombifrons: What Caves and Karst Tell Us About the History of Life and Climate** – Dr David Polly (Professor and Chair, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, Indiana University and [pollylab.org](http://pollylab.org)). Dave covered a lot of material on large and small fauna fossils/bones found in Indiana caves (some extinct and others still existing). He also weaved in species diversity and extinction as it relates to climate cycles (up to 40) over the past 2 million years.



- **IKC/ICS 40th Anniversary Combined Observations** – Matt Selig and Dave Everton. Matt covered the past 40 years of the IKC: how and why it was formed, major projects and acquisitions along the way, and where the IKC is heading over the next 40 years. Dave covered the pre-ICS history of cave data collected since the 1960s by Powell and others, why the ICS was formed, its various iterations of data organization, and the current web-based database and where it may be going in the future.
- During the break, attendees partook in anniversary cake, and then the four *IKC Update* NSS Cover Art Salon awards were presented.
- **Cave Development in Indiana as a Product of Structural Geology** – Lee Florea (Washington Geological Survey). Lee presented numerous forward thinking concepts of rock strata and water chemistry on how caves are formed in Indiana, and wrapped the presentation up looking at various unknown (until now) fault lines in karst areas.



- **Pless Cave Update** – Dave Everton. Dave gave a brief history of his personal caving career and then transitioned to the history of Pless Cave, first mapped in the 1960s. The cave was little visited for fifty years. Dave first visited the cave on a photo trip in 2009 and soon after started methodically working leads with others in various areas, extending the historic length of 2.7 miles to over 4.1 miles in early 2026. 🦇

## WYANDOTTE CAVE TOUR WITH THE IKC

SUNDAY, June 14th – 9 AM EDT

7315 S Wyandotte Cave Rd, Leavenworth, IN 47137



Join us for a special IKC tour of Wyandotte Cave! We will be guided by O'Bannon Woods staff with added commentary by IKC Board member Keith Dunlap and Wyandotte Cave historian John Benton. The standard tour is typically two hours in duration, but the last time we did this special IKC tour, we were in the cave for almost four hours. Although we will stay on the main tour route, keep in mind this is a strenuous trip of 1.5 miles.

Following the cave tour, feel free to stay for a pitch-in lunch around 1 PM, followed by our IKC quarterly Executive Board meeting starting at 2 PM. Both will be at the shelter house near the cave's lower parking lot.

This tour is by pre-registration only and limited to 20 participants (we will also have several more Board members attending). Participants will pay the discounted \$14 group tour rate directly to the park ticket office on the morning of the tour (regular tour price is \$18). For more information and to register, go to [IKCWyandotteCaveTour2026.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/IKC-Wyandotte-Cave-Tour-2026)



Richard Vernier

Questions? Contact Carla Striegel-Winner ([IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com](mailto:IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com)).

## PRE-SYMPOSIUM TOUR: CAVES, GRAVES, AND QUARRIES

by Carroll Ritter

History and geology were the prime features of this year's tour, co-hosted by the IKC and Indiana Cave Survey. Despite a rather blustery day with some light rain, 25 participants enjoyed many features focusing on the Lost River area and special geological sites. Tour leaders Carla Striegel-Winner, Matt Selig, John Benton, and Carroll Ritter had fascinating stories and information to share in our four hours of adventuring in rural Orange County.

The first stop was along the dry bed of the Lost River with flood debris visible in the trees and shrubs, illuminating the raging power of occasional torrents of swift water. Matt presented in detail the hydrology of normal swallows, sinks, and the underground routes. Of special interest was his explanation that the dry bed route overland is not even directly over the underground passages, but has its own independent meandering system weaving across the landscape, often punctuated with swallows that then connect with a greater network of subterranean mazes. The two major spring outlets of the drainage basin are the Orangeville Rise and the True Rise.

The second stop was at the well-known Peacher caves, graciously shared by owners Ivan and Shannon Knight. Known for over 100 years, these very large and impressive entrances would be hard to miss. Mapping here has produced about 8,800 feet of passages, varying from walking to tight crawling and working one's way up and down out of large muddy pits. John Benton shared historical research on these caves with his audience in the big room in the south cave. Old stone steps, rails, and a gate are still visible from years ago. John spoke about the orchard crops storage here, with thou-



The fruit storage room in South Peacher Cave.

photo courtesy John Benton



Carroll Ritter discussing whetstone grave markers.

photo courtesy Carla Striegel-Winner

sands of bushels of apples evidently keeping over winter. An interesting side story from old newspapers described a 10-ton collapse of rock that fell on and ruined much of one year's crop.

The third stop was Bethel Baptist Church Cemetery north of Orangeville. Here were many very old whetstone grave markers dating back 200 years. Carroll explained the geology and original discovery of this fine-grained siltstone and its many uses from sharpening stones to grinding stones, and at this location, gravestones. The remarkable properties of this locally quarried stone allowed chiseled lettering to survive almost unchanged for this long period of time, despite weathering that dissolves away the clarity of limestone and marble inscriptions. We paid tribute here to one special grave - Private James Shields of the Virginia Infantry in the Revolutionary War. His stone and tribute still stand.

The fourth stop was Dishman Quarry, an internationally recognized significant geological site. Now protected by the Sycamore Land Trust since 2000, the siltstones have recorded history back 300 million years. Especially fascinating are the very fine stratigraphic layers showing daily tidal cycles of sand grain deposition. Sam Frushour and Kevin Strunk were also very engaging with stories and memories working at this site. As the group meandered around the quarry, many oohs and aahs were heard as old lepidodendron casts and fossil traces were found.

As we wrapped up and found our way back to the Orange County Community Center, all seemed to have a great time and had worked up an appetite for that great food being prepared! 🍴

## THIRD ANNUAL DISCOVERY DAY AT HENDERSON PARK

by Danyeale Green

A brief history of Henderson Park: The nearly 400-acre Henderson Park in Washington County is owned by the City of Salem and has seen a past full of unique history. The City of Salem originally had plans for the park's perennial creeks and springs to be the water source for the city through a series of pumps and holding tanks whose remnants still exist today and are visible from the ~ 2.5 mile loop trail. In 1999, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) developed a management plan for the park after securing a conservation easement. Subsequently, TNC has acquired over 1,000 acres adjacent to the park. In the fall of 2023, access to the caves on the property was made possible by an agreement between the Indiana Karst Conservancy, the City of Salem, and The Nature Conservancy. This park is an outstanding remnant of a larger forest that covers most of the area and features caves, springs, limestone glades and barrens. These special areas provide unique habitats for a large variety of native plant communities. Public access to the property is permitted with a gravel parking area outside the locked access gate. There are, however, no restroom facilities, nor is camping allowed. A permit is required to visit the caves (see [ikc.caves.org/henderson-park-cave-access](http://ikc.caves.org/henderson-park-cave-access) for more information).

To increase awareness of this wonderful property, TNC and the IKC partnered to conduct our first quarterly field tour of the season here on April 11. Attendees had a delightful wildflower walk, learned about nature, and met like-minded outdoorsy folk. The third annual Discovery Day had the theme "Wildflowers & Donuts" (yes, we had donuts and coffee to kick off the hike!). IKC Education and Outreach Coordinator Carla Striegel-Winner, along with TNC Conservation Land



photo courtesy Carla Striegel-Winner

Manager Mike Everidge, started the event with welcome introductions and a brief history for the attendees. While several who registered did not make it, the group was still full of excitement with the weather being as perfect as could be for a hike in the woods. One attendee came all the way from Tennessee just for this event!!

IKC Director Danyeale Green had the first stop along the loop hike at Mill Cave. There were photos taken, visits to the stream entrance of Mill Cave, acid tests done to discriminate between limestone and sandstone, and a handy eye loupe used to see the grains of the rocks and fossils up close. Mike and Conservation Land Steward Ryan Goetz led the remaining hike pointing out a multitude of plants along the trail, featuring native species and discussing control methods for invasives, and the use of prescribed burning within the landscape. Photos, smell tests, and all other sensory organs were put to use taking in the gorgeous property.

Thanks to The Nature Conservancy and the Indiana Karst Conservancy for their continued support of this event. Many thanks to the TNC stewards and IKC Directors for sharing their knowledge and love of nature. We took a deep dive into some of the rocks and plants that cavers hold near to their hearts. We explored some unique places in the park. And we made new friends. All in all, it was a great day of discovery. 🦋



photo courtesy Danyeale Green

## ORIENTATION TO CAVE RESCUE TRAINING HOSTED IN HARRISON COUNTY AHEAD OF THE 2026 NSS CONVENTION

by Laura Demarest

On March 28-29, the Indiana Karst Conservancy, in partnership with the Harrison County Emergency Management Agency, hosted a two-day Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) seminar for a full class of 40 students, including many regional cavers and first responders. This class was coordinated by representatives of the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC), an all-volunteer organization under the National Speleological Society, that offers cave rescue training. The OCR class requires no training prerequisites for students, making it an excellent introduction for anyone who is likely to become involved with a “call-out” rescue. The training is particularly valuable to cavers (experienced or novice), emergency first-responders, private and agency property managers, and trip leaders. As an organization managing cave and karst properties, the IKC has an avid interest in promoting safety and accident prevention, as well as emergency preparedness should an incident occur.

The first day of this class took place at the Harrison County Government Center, courtesy of Harrison County EMA, and consisted of a series of quick, intensive classroom lessons on a variety of rescue-related topics, including medical assessments and patient care, Incident Command System and how it applies to cave rescue management, hypothermia prevention and treatment, patient packaging for evacuation, considerations for extreme situations (crack/crevice entrapment, water/flooding issues, etc), pre-planning for an incident, how the cave environment influences rescue considerations, in-cave communications, media interaction, cave search tactics, and more. Following the classroom sessions, the students were invited outside for some demonstrations and hands-on practice involving how to package a patient in rigid and flexible litters, as well as techniques for coordinated patient maneuvering through the “cave” obstacle course that consisted of stairwells and varied terrain around the building grounds. The NCRC offers a variety of more advanced classes that delve deeper into these topics and many more (visit [caves.org/ncrc](https://caves.org/ncrc) for more details). Organizations such as NCRC and the Indiana Cave Rescue Scholarships group ([in-crs.org](https://in-crs.org)) also have funding available to help offset the participants’ training fees.



photo courtesy NCRC Central Region

Instructors for the weekend’s training included NCRC Central Region Coordinator Stephen Bishop, Jessica Deli (former NCRC Central Region Coordinator), Leanne Hughes, Anmar Mirza (former NCRC National Coordinator), Michael Raymond (Minnesota area cave diver), and me (OCR Course Coordinator and Lead Instructor). Each NCRC Instructor must receive formal approval from the NCRC Board of Regional Coordinators after having completed an estimated 400+ hours of intensive week-long training events, including an Instructor Qualification class and exam. Several NCRC ‘specialists’ also assisted with the class including Owen Freese-Posthuma, Yasdani “Yazz” Gamez-Crespo, Jordan Lacy, Tim Miller, Kevin Romanak, Stephanie Stoops, and Nate Vignes. These specialists have completed NCRC Level 1 week-long (or higher) and are working to further develop their skills. All NCRC Instructors and specialists are volunteers, which helps to greatly reduce the costs of these trainings. DNR Conservation Officer Jim Hash also supported the course by assisting with cave access and agency coordination.

Day two of this training was perhaps the most exciting: a full-scale mock rescue scenario in a Harrison-Crawford State Forest cave! Instructors discussed and pre-planned a plausible rescue scenario the night before and arrived early on Sunday to go into the cave and stage themselves in pretend precarious situations. Students and NCRC specialists arrived on-site shortly after, having no clues regarding the mock incident and had to interview a worried friend who reported some caving friends who were overdue. Students and specialists had to determine ways in which to best organize themselves into smaller teams, figure out how to assess the situation underground, manage equipment and

*Continued on page 39...*

## RECENT STEWARDSHIP ON OUR PROPERTIES

*compiled by Keith Dunlap*

Spring has sprung and our stewardship activities are kicking into high gear. Here are some of the projects to report over the past few months:

- ☑ On March 13, Jamie Winner used his tractor and mower to mow the larger prairie remnant at the Shawnee Karst Preserve. This biennial mowing is an alternative to using fire to control woody vegetation. Jamie also mowed a smaller opening near the east end of the preserve. Keith Dunlap also used the IKC's new walk-behind brush mower to clean up the areas around the edges of the fields.



*photo courtesy Keith Dunlap*

- ☑ On the weekend of March 21/22, Nate Vignes organized a restoration effort in Sullivan Cave with the Near Normal Grotto. They worked in the Backbreaker passage between the second dome and Bardangous Hole, focusing mostly on carbide-based graffiti that could be removed with just water and wire brushes. Nate reported things are looking good in the areas they have worked in.
- ☑ On April 11, Sullivan Cave Preserve Property Manager Joe Kinder spent the day sprucing up the camping area. He picked up sticks, blew leaves, and mowed the grass.
- ☑ On April 12, Wayne Cave Preserve Property Manager Cris Seuell organized a workday at the property. The main task was continuing to bench in the new loop trail on the Connection Property, but numerous other smaller tasks were also accomplished like clearing downed trees from the

existing trails and garlic mustard pulling.

- ☑ On April 23, Property Manager Carla Striegel-Winner with assistance from the Orange County Invasive Partnership conducted a Weed Wrangle at the Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve focusing on garlic mustard, poison hemlock, and star of Bethlehem. Approximately 70 pounds of invasive vegetation was removed from the property by seven volunteers.
- ☑ On May 4, Brad Barcom and Keith Dunlap supervised new crushed stone being spread on the access lane at the Sullivan Cave Preserve. Prior to the spreading, Brad performed some preparatory grading of ruts in the lane with his utility tractor. Some drainage work was also completed to hopefully prevent future rutting. Approximately 60 tons of stone was used, costing over \$1,000. This is a good example of how members' dues and donations are used to maintain our properties. 🦋



*photo courtesy Keith Dunlap*

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR IKC DUES!**

## W.T.F. (WHAT'S THAT FUNGUS?)

*article and photo by Chris Schotter*

My wife and I are fortunate enough to have an Indiana bat hibernaculum less than a mile away from our house on our neighbor's property. It's actually easiest to access Swinney Cave by driving the easement across our land and across our neighbor's fields to the cave. In years past, the bat researchers would park on our property and then walk to the cave to keep from rutting up the fields which are usually soggy in January/February. If the schedule works out, I like to use the trips as an excuse to tag along and hang out with bat people while they count bats. I first noticed an unusual fungus on a tree at the bottom of the entrance on a trip there in 2018. It was about a foot long and oddly shaped, like a skeleton hand with a mitten on. At the time, I didn't think much of it other than it was strange looking. There are lots of unusual mushrooms in the world, and I didn't think about it again until this past winter.

On this year's census in January, I once again tagged along to meet a new crew of bat counters and to take some photos of the signatures that I'd seen in the cave on my last trip that are relatives of the current owner. I was the last one to climb down into the cave and as I got closer, I realized the log was still there, and the thing growing on it was now about three feet tall! The rest of the group had not noticed, thinking it was just a tree limb. Once I pointed it out to them, they were all impressed. None of us had seen anything like it before. The rest of the trip was a fun excursion in a short cave to count bats and take photos. Before leaving, I got some photos of the funky fungus on the log, and so began my journey down a rabbit hole to identify an unusual mushroom.

Outside of a handful of wild mushrooms I like to eat, I know next to nothing about mushrooms in our area. So, I sent the photo of the one I found to a few people that I thought might know. I knew

my cousin Steve was an avid edible wild mushroom collector and had taken a class or two on them in college. He had no idea, but suggested I check on iNaturalist ([iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org)) and possibly reach out to see if his former professor, Steve Russell, was still at Purdue. iNaturalist is a free, community-science platform that allows users to get identification suggestions, share findings with others, and contribute data to scientific research.

I also sent the photo to Carla Striegel-Winner, IKC Board Member. Carla knows more about plants and trees than most people I know, and I thought she might know mushrooms too. She

didn't, but asked if it was okay to send the photo to others who might know – IKC Board member Danyeale Green and DNR State Botanist Scott Namestnik. Neither of them had any idea what it was either. But Scott suggested we get a sample of it and send it in to Steve Russell, who now heads a fungus DNA mapping organization called MycoMap ([MycoMap.org](https://www.mycomap.org)). MycoMap just happens to partner with iNaturalist. Looks like all fungus roads lead back to Steve Russell and iNaturalist!

Steve relayed to me through Scott that he had a general idea of what it



could be, but a DNA test would be needed to confirm. They sent me a link to their site with the protocols and steps needed to collect and preserve a sample and send it in, which was more complex than I expected. I needed to create an iNaturalist account and record an observation for the mushroom, download and print out MycoMap sample forms, include a unique numbered form with each sample in a baggie, get a photo of the mushroom with the form so the specimen number was visible, collect the samples, dry them in my dehydrator, and finally mail them off to the Mycota Lab.

Several steps, but it all sounded easy enough and I was excited to get started. But then it snowed.



And then it snowed some more and stayed below freezing for weeks. I just kept feeding my wood stove and waited for it to melt so I could go back to the cave. The Swinney Cave entrance is steep and requires a handline on a good day. Add over a foot of snow to it and it just wasn't going to happen until the snow was gone. Finally, it thawed and by mid-February was looking much better. Monica and I decided on a Valentine's Day hike to go get the mushroom samples and some more photos. After 15 years together, I knew a perfect Valentine's Day for us would be to hike out to a cave and collect fungus samples. The cave had mostly thawed, though there was still snow in the lower shaded areas and it was like a muddy slip and slide all the way down. I was glad I had my vertical gear with me! The downside to it all thawing out was that what would have been a massive two-foot diameter icicle in the entrance room was just a large pile of ice chunks on the floor. I'm guessing a week earlier, it would have made a fantastic photo. Knowing there were a few hundred bats still sleeping further back in the cave, we didn't venture past the entrance room. I got several photos and measured the length of the mushroom at 3.3 feet tall! It wasn't easy to cut a small piece off. This wasn't a soft mushroom, but closer to the texture of tree bark. A small saw would have been better, but after some work, I managed to cut off a small piece with my pocketknife without tearing the whole thing off the log. I got two samples, one from the three-foot-long projection and another of the smaller nubs growing on the log. Back home, I dried the two samples in my dehydrator for a day and then got them packed up and shipped out to the Mycota Lab. The website listed the backlog and processing time at 3-4 months. Cue the Jeopardy music as I waited patiently to learn what this thing was.

Towards the end of April, I finally got a message

notice on iNaturalist! I quickly opened the message hoping for something new or extravagant... Darn, it was Artist's Bracket (*Ganoderma applanatum*), a common Ganoderma (polypore) which is a shelf-type mushroom typically found on hardwood trees. That was a letdown, but at least I knew what it was. The Artist Bracket gets its name from an old tradition of drawing on the pale underside of the mushroom with a toothpick or stick. A little pressure leaves a mark like a bruise, the mushroom can then be dried, preserving it as a type of folk art. Neat, but it didn't explain why this one looked totally dif-

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By Stephen Russell  
April 29  
Forward Primer: ITS1F Reverse Primer: ITS4 iNat Report Association: 338626934 - *Ganoderma applanatum*

1 GTCTAACAAAGGTTTCGGTA GGTGAACCTG CCGAAGATCATTATGAGT TTTGACTGGG  
61 TTGTAGCTGG CCTTCGAGG CATGTGCACC CCGTCTCAT CCACCTACCA CCTGTGCACT  
121 TAYTGTGGGT ATCAGATCTG GAAAGCTGCTCTTTTACCAG AGCTTGTGAA GCGTGTCTGT  
181 GCCTCGTTTT ATCACAACA CTATAAGTA TCAGAAATGTG TATTAGATG TAAGCCATCT  
241 ATATACAAC TTCACCAACG GATCTCTTGG CTCCTGCATC GATGAAAGACCGACCGAAAT  
301 CGAATAAGTA ATGTGAATG CAGAATTCAG TGAATCATCG AATCTTTGAA CCGACCTTGC  
361 CTCCTTGGT ATTCCGAGGA CCGTCCCTGT TTGAGTGTCA TGAATCTTC AACCTATAAG  
421 CTTTTTGGT TTGTAGGCTT GCACTTGGAG CTTCTCGGC CTTATYGGT CCGCTCCTCT  
481 TAAATGCATT AGCTTGATTC CTTCGGATG GGCTCTCGGT GTGATAATAT CTAGCCCGCG  
541 ACCGTGAAGCGTTTGGCGAG CTTCTAACYG TCTCATTTGA GACACAACTTATGACCTCT  
601 GACCTCAAT CAGGTAGGAC TACCOCCTGA AC

GenBank Submission Date: 04/29/2026 Run Name: Run137\_Summary Plate Number: 10 Cell Number: 02 Type: No

*DNA molecule sequencing results*

ferent than any I had ever seen in the woods or in internet searches. I reached back out to Steve to see what he thought caused such a strange/abnormal growth pattern. He replied, "It is not uncommon for *Ganoderma* spp. to form 'antlers' when cultivated in controlled conditions. Typically, this is initiated by increasing the relative levels of CO<sub>2</sub>." Caves often have higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub> compared to surface air. This cave doesn't have a high enough level to notice breathing trouble or headaches, but is apparently enough to alter the growth of a mushroom. It wasn't the outcome I was hoping for, but it was interesting. Not every mystery mushroom turns out to be a new species, but sometimes the journey is the discovery. 🦇

...News Briefs, continued from page 5

want to make sure you know the IKC will have a display booth at the high school, so please come check it out. We will not be staffing the booth full time, but will be there certain hours. The IKC will be involved in other ways as well. Info on our caves and preserves will be at Cave Central and there will likely be some led trips to our caves too. As a platinum sponsor of the convention, we will have an ad (see page 9) in the Program and a similar flyer in each convention swag bag. At our booth we will have stickers, glow-in-the-dark 40th Anniversary buttons and bottle openers (for a small donation), and other handouts. We are also a primary sponsor of CaveSim (see page 9).

- ❑ The IKC has gained *twelve* new members in the last quarter. Welcome Shantelle Brown, Jared Chambers, Jordan Burgess, Tyler Frederick, Wyatt Fritz, Aaron Martinez, Megan Schipp, Riley Sherman, Mason Thomas, Vincent Thome, Mark Wilhelm, and Mark Wilson. IKC membership currently stands at 359. 🦇

## WAYNE CAVE PATRON: THE EVERTON REGIME

by Dave Everton

*Editor's note: As you may have read on page 5, the IKC Board appointed a new Cave Patron for Wayne Cave. This was by no means a negative reflection on Dave, but rather an opportunity to widen our volunteer base timed with our transition to the new cave permit system. Subsequently, I asked Dave to expound upon his experiences and observations as the long-time Cave Patron for Wayne Cave.*

This article will summarize my 20+ years of service in holding the position of the IKC's Wayne Cave Patron.

I volunteered to become the Wayne Cave Patron and took over the position in January of 2006, succeeding Tom Willett who had asked to be replaced after serving in that position for six years. I was already serving the IKC as the Bloomington Indiana Grotto (BIG) Liaison, so the addition of the Cave Patron duty was easy. The primary difference between the two positions is that typically I already knew most BIG cavers and it wasn't hard to figure out if they were qualified. The Cave Patron of any IKC cave can be contacted by anyone inside or outside the organization and therefore a bit more communication is required to ensure the cavers requesting access understand what they are getting themselves into, are adequately prepared, and have the proper cave conservation ethics.

One of my biggest concerns in determining how to guide the uninitiated was during winter trips. I tried to stress to the trip leader that it only takes one person in the group to hate, rebel, or balk in the crawl and that could either ruin the trip for everyone or create a situation in which the person could be potentially miserable waiting for hours for the rest of the group to exit, whether still inside the cave or waiting outside. I also stressed to the uninitiated leaders that Wayne is not a good first-time cave for most cavers. I have taken first-timers there once in a great while, but only after

painting a picture of hell (so to speak) to them.

Thankfully, I am not aware of any terrible incidents or rescues during my time serving as Cave Patron (speaking of which, Wayne Cave was the first cave rescue I ever participated in, circa 1984, after a trip leader fell somewhere near the Camp II area. I was not yet affiliated with organized caving, but my friend Doug Bennett heard about the rescue and we ended up helping in the crawlway). I do recall an incident which understandably created some tension for a group of very experienced Near Normal Grotto cavers when the water started rising rapidly not far from Camp I. Those cavers had special sen-

sitivity to rising water because they were involved in a near drowning during a trip to an Illinois cave in their past.

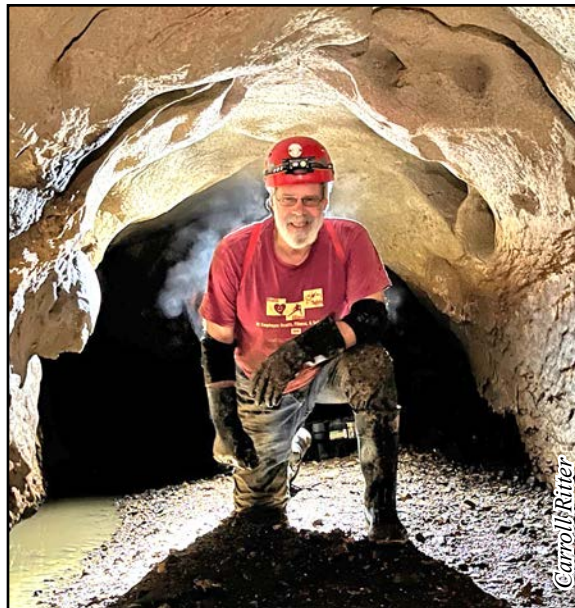
The biggest single problem reported to me during my many years was the weight of the gate upon exiting the cave. Yes, it was heavy, but I suspect many cavers did not have a good technique in trying to open it. Regardless, that issue was rectified on January 11, 2023 when Keith Dunlap replaced the old gate with

a much lighter-weight version he had fabricated. It should be noted that the heavier gate was at one time required due to multiple gates being vandalized during the infancy of the IKC, with each iteration having more "armor" added.

Administratively, serving as the Wayne Cave Patron required just a little bit of extra work in the form of annual reports to the organization. In fact, my first Wayne Cave Patron annual report was for 2005 on behalf of the outgoing Cave Patron Willett. He and Keith Dunlap provided me the basic info to complete that report.

Over all of this time, I have been required to track visitors and compile numbers from the start. However, it wasn't until I started writing this article that I compiled the final statistics. Here they are:

- Wayne Cave (2006-2026): 408 trips by 1,639 cavers.



- That results in an average of 19 trips and 78 cavers per year.

Disclaimer: although I was careful to review annual reports in the compilation statistics, they should not be considered an official record of the Indiana Karst Conservancy.

During the time of serving as the Wayne Cave Patron, I led 13 trips into the cave.

It has been my honor to serve the IKC as Wayne Cave Patron for the past 20+ years. It has been a way for me to serve the organiza-

tion without attending meetings, which have never been my cup of tea. We all have various interests and mine have not included IKC meetings, although I certainly understand their importance and appreciate those who serve in that way!

I close with similar words which I most often ended my annual reports: “As always, the (outgoing) Cave Patron thanks the IKC for its continued support, preservation of, and access to Wayne Cave!!” Long live the IKC! 🦋

## IN SEARCH OF SPIDERS

*The Second of Our 2026 Quarterly Field Events*

**SATURDAY, August 15th – 6 PM to 9 PM EDT**

**Buddha Karst Preserve, Lawrence County**



Spiders thrive in nearly every habitat on Earth – including caves and karst landscapes. Join spider expert and IKC member Dr Marc Milne for a hands-on exploration of Indiana’s spider diversity. Participants will learn how to search for, collect, and observe spiders from a range of habitats using tools such as a beating sheet, litter reducer, manual aspirator, and a vacuum sampler. Dr Milne will introduce us to the most common families of spiders found in Indiana and help identify specimens collected during the program. This event is perfect for anyone eager to learn more about these fascinating creatures.

Registration for this field trip will open on July 10, but you may go to [IKCField-TourAugust2026.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/IKC-Field-Tour-August-2026) at any time and have a reminder sent to you. There will also be optional pre-hike stewardship opportunities starting at 4:30 PM, and we will provide volunteers a light meal before the hike.

Questions? Contact Carla Striegel-Winner ([IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com](mailto:IndianaKarstConservancy.info@gmail.com)).

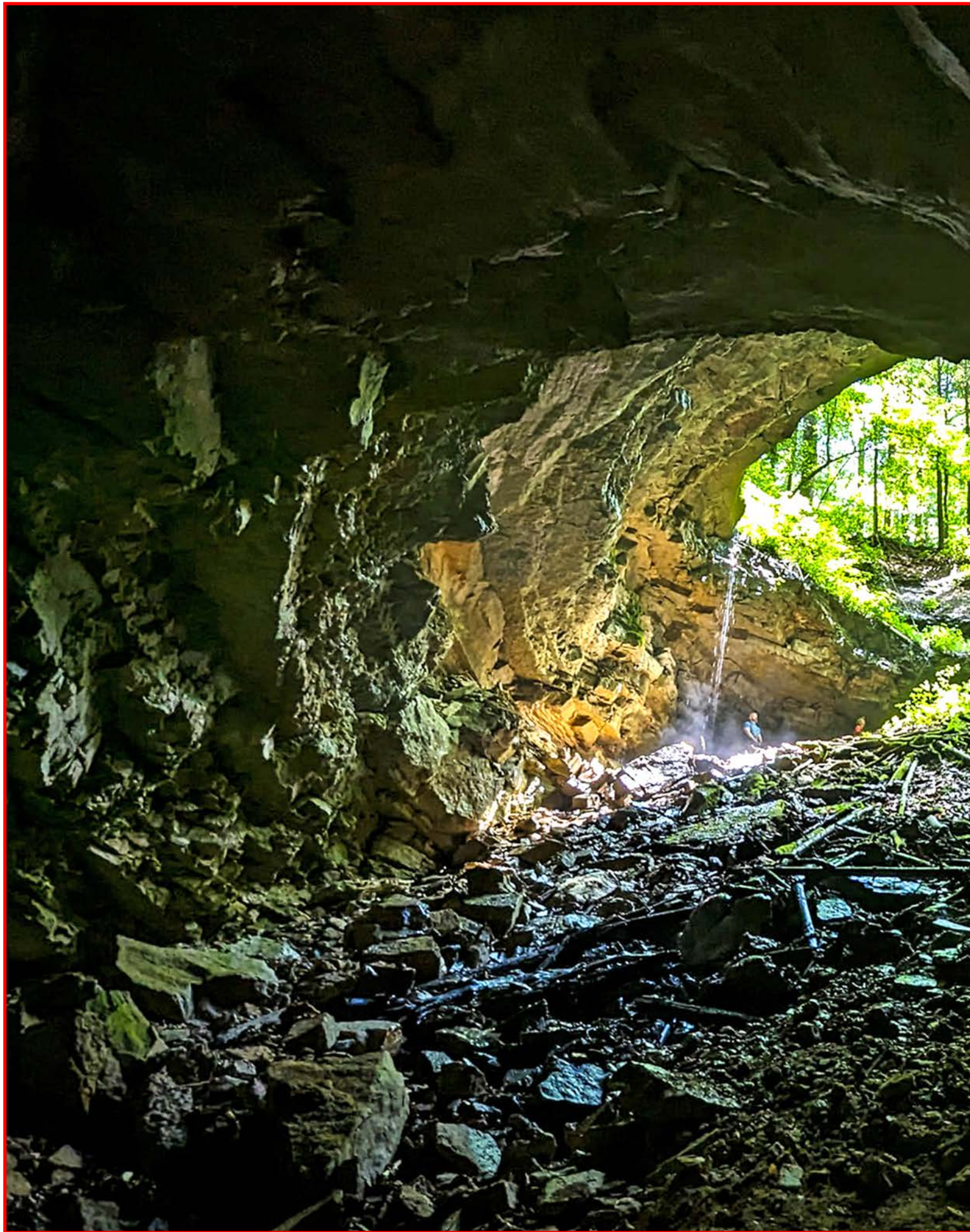


photo courtesy Central Indiana Land Trust

**Center spread:** One of the more intriguing caves on the Hoosier National Forest is Fuzzy Hole in Lawrence County. The huge entrance was created by a collapse in 1958. See more about this cave on the back cover.

Photograph by Jordan Lacy (2024)







## ANNUAL PROPERTY MANAGER/CAVE PATRON REPORTS

Each year at the Annual Business meeting, the IKC Property Managers and Cave Patrons are asked to present a verbal summary and submit a written report describing the prior year's activities and incidents, and to present any future goals and recommendations needing to be implemented. The following is a compilation of their CY 2025 reports:

### Buddha Property Report (Keith Dunlap)

This was the IKC's 24th year of ownership of the Buddha Karst Nature Preserve and we continue our long-term stewardship projects.

The parking area and perimeter trail were mowed twice (May and August). Some trimming along the trails was also done.

Some invasive treatments were completed in 2025 including stiltgrass on the trail and Johnson grass along the county road.

I did some grapevine cutting near the Buddha entrance area.

The dead ash tree adjacent to the parking lot gate dropped a large limb, partially blocking the access to the parking area. The limb was cut up and moved to allow the gate to swing fully.

There is a very large chinkapin oak on the north side of the property that fell across the perimeter trail in 2021 and will eventually need to be removed from the trail. This was the first year visitors could not duck under the tree, but the temporary off-trail diversion is easy.

On May 10, I observed what appeared to be per-



photo courtesy Richard Vernier

haps some "pollution" (field run-off, sewage, ??) pooled in the stagnant stream upstream of the Buddha entrance. I sent photos to Scott Frosch, but did not follow up.

The foot bridge at the back of the property was removed as the deck boards were rotting and could become a safety hazard. I plan to replace the bridge in 2026, with a similar design to the replacement bridge Tom Sollman constructed at the Shawnee Karst Preserve.

The IKC sponsored the Big Day bird hike on October 11 with about 20 participants.

The planted trees on the property are hitting their stride and looking great.

There were no major management problems or concerns encountered during 2025.

2026 activities I hope to accomplish:

- Continue mowing the trails.
- Continue working on the grapevines (next target area is the SW corner).
- Continue bushy invasive treatments as necessary.
- Continue addressing the stiltgrass on the trails (herbicide treatment).
- Remove the fallen oak off the trail (now blocking the trail).
- Continue removing the dying Ash tree by the parking lot gate as it drops limbs.
- Reconstruct the loop trail foot bridge at the back of the property.

### Buddha Cave Patron Report (Jeff Cody)

Buddha had a total of six cave trips in 2025, all arranged through myself. No one reported anything unusual to me. A total of 22 people filled out waivers for these trips. Many reported lower water levels during the August Cave Capers trips, also the early November trips. I came down in September to inspect things and look around inside the entrance. Knee replacement surgery early in the year has kept me out of caves, keeping me to the entrance room. The property all looked well. We had a slight increase in visitation from the previous year. I am happy to see the cave not getting over-used. Also nice to report to the



Board that all is well inside the cave. I typically will bring Windex and some rags to clean up the kiosk signs. Also I will bring some brown paint and a brush to touch up areas on the kiosk that may need it. Little details like this can make a difference, especially when we have visitors for an outreach day like we had this year.

Buddha Trips in 2025:

**June 2:** Party of five led by Ben Smith

**Aug 9:** Party of four led by Jeff Gosell (Cave Capers trip)

**Aug 11:** Party of four (Capers return home trip)

**Sept 20:** Party of two led by Jeff Cody (property and entrance area inspection)

**Nov 5:** Party of three led by Hayden Young

**Nov 8:** Party of four led by Scott Frosch

#### Lowry Property Report (Jasper Beavers)

Lowry had little official visitation this year. I went about once per month, or so, to check on the property and do maintenance which consisted of moving dead trees and limbs from the driveway. On May 1, five of us did a garlic mustard pull. We covered the entire property fairly quickly and pulled less than in previous years, so we seem to be getting it under control.

#### Lowry Cave Patron Report (Jasper Beavers)

There was a total of five permitted trips for the year. On 7/13 and 7/15, Mark Wilhelm visited to set and remove beetle traps. Dylan Scott had permission for a group of 3 to visit on 8/9 and 8/10, but I don't believe they went. Carla Striegel-Winner took a group of 16 EMG members on 8/24. Alex Taul took 11 BIG members on 10/18.

#### Orangeville Rise Report (Carla Striegel-Winner)

Year seven of being Property Manager, and the Orangeville Rise continues to make me smile every time I visit. I get to see it muddy and brown, blue green and low, and everything in between. The most eventful days of the year were the 80 some degree Weed Wrangle (whew!) and finally removing the rope swing that I stressed about for months.

- **Property Visits** – I continue to stop by about once a month, usually picking my uncle up at the First Chance Center Day Program in Paoli after our snack at Lost River Market. He walks



photo courtesy Carla Striegel-Winner

the roadside areas picking up litter while I weed-eat. If no weed-eating is to be done, I pick up trash as well. We always have a few pieces of litter, much of it gets recycled. Enjoyable work!!

- **Scientific Research Permit** – This was supposed to be year five of ten for Indiana Geological and Water Survey (IGWS) having a permit to collect a water sample from the Orangeville Rise once during dry season. McKailey Sabaj has taken over the sampling, but due to limited funding they had to reduce the number of springs being monitored in 2025 and the Orangeville Rise was cut. McKailey says it likely looks the same for 2026 monitoring. For past info, the IGWS springs database is available here: [igws.indiana.edu/research/water](https://igws.indiana.edu/research/water) and click on “springs database”.
- **Weed Wrangle Event** – I worked with Orange County Invasives Partnership (OCIP) to hold an event on April 30, 2025. Also for the second year, the group decided to hold a pull at nearby Wesley Chapel Gulf from 3-5 PM and then at Orangeville from 5-7 PM on a weeknight. That evening ended up being incredibly hot, and after one participant



photo courtesy OCIP



literally laid on the road saying they did not feel well (this longtime IKC member will remain unnamed), we decided to call it quits after less than an hour. We did get some garlic mustard and other invasives taken care of. After our patient sat in an air-conditioned vehicle for a few minutes and had some water and a snack, they were good to go. Helping with the pull were IKC regulars as well as folks from the Lost River Watershed, the Orange County SWCD, and Invasive Species Specialist for OCIP, Emily Finch. Emily reached out to me to repeat the event in April of 2026 (see below) and we will hope for cooler weather.

- General Invasives and Property Management** – I continue to monitor and work on the invasives at the 3-acre property. We have star of Bethlehem, day lilies, etc, in addition to multiflora rose, air potato, winter creeper, and stiltgrass. Every rain and flood event brings new seeds, so really we are just a good example of proper stewardship and we do a decent job of keeping on top of it. I did some cut and paint on woody shrubs. Oh, did I mention bush honeysuckle? And a burning bush or two? Anyway, there really are some nice natives there as well. The rope that showed up on one of the trees above the Rise in the last half of 2024 was finally removed with the help of Keith Dunlap. I safely tied him to a tree above the bluff while he used his battery-operated long-handled pole-trimmer. Completely safe. You may have read about this in a Facebook post or in the *IKC Update*. Glad we got to it before a certain IKC member came along with his .22 to try to shoot the rope out – you know who you are!! I did not clean up flood litter, as the place becomes a literal jungle once warm weather hits and one cannot even wade through the vegetation, much less look for flood litter. Perhaps we will see and remove some during the Weed Wrangle.
- Advocacy** – I continued to correspond with local folks and also with agencies such as the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves, Hoosier National Forest, and Orange County Invasives Specialist. Every time we do an Orangeville Rise Facebook post, it gets lots of attention and seems well liked. I love that we own a preserve that everyone can enjoy from the roadside. I often see locals and visitors stopping to check on the Rise. Hope you do too!

**2026 Goals** – Garlic Mustard Pull Weed Wrangle

on Thursday, April 23 from 5-7 PM ET will be hosted with OCIP for a third year. I need to hit the multiflora rose with chemical this year. I also plan to continue monthly visits, other invasives management, and continue advocating for the property.

#### **Robinson Ladder Property (John Benton)**

**Early June:** IKC member Jamie Winner mowed the access lane and camping areas.

**June 27:** Carla Striegel-Winner met Liz Winlock, new Executive Director of Buffalo Trace Land Trust at the property for a quick intro to the preserve. They observed the cave entrance, the barn, chestnut tree planting, and went to Clarks Ford Road to see the bluffs over Blue River. It was a “get to know” outing.

**July 20:** IKC member Keith Dunlap mowed inside the fenced chestnut plantation, on top of the ridge with his walk-behind mower. It was very hot and humid, so he did not get it finished. It was the first time in approximately three years this area was mowed. Keith returned on August 2 and finished the mowing inside the fence. Several of the chestnut trees were showing signs of the fungus. Keith estimated perhaps a dozen of the original 50 chestnut trees planted remain. Keith also treated the chestnuts with fungicide. He also sprayed a tank of herbicide on invasives along the access lane.

**Late July:** Keith Dunlap reported a large tree that had been leaning for a few years is now slumped over the barn, but does not appear to have damaged the roof (yet). Removal will be needed at some point.

**August 3:** Jamie Winner mowed the usual areas with his tractor/mower, in prep for upcoming Cave Capers.

**August 16:** Bat biologists Goni Iskali (IKC) and



photo courtesy Chris Schotter



Aaron McAlexander (WEST) led an IKC Focus on Fauna field event at the RLC property, demonstrating bat observation techniques, monitoring, equipment, and answering questions. The event was well-attended and offered volunteers several stewardship opportunities on the property. Over the 5-6 days that the monitoring devices were deployed, ten different bat species were detected, of which six were cave-dwelling bats (refer to *IKC Update #159* for full details).

**October 29:** Jamie Winner did a third mowing at the property.

**November 7:** Volunteer work day. Several IKC members and the re-activated Harrison-Crawford Grotto members joined together to trim numerous overhanging limbs from the access lane, replaced the old lane gate post, and did prep work to install the new lane gate.



photo courtesy Keith Dunlap

**November 29:** Keith Dunlap and Chris Schotter returned to hang the new drive gate on the concreted post installed a few weeks prior. The old steel gate was removed to be recycled.

**Future** – Three mowings a year seem to work well. Ongoing treatment of invasives as needed, mainly autumn olive, and tree of heaven (seedlings keep sprouting). Overhead limb removal in the fall of 2025 has the access lane in pretty good shape. Water level in the wildlife pond seems to be dependent on rainfall. The tree over the barn should be addressed in 2026.

Thanks to Jamie, Keith, and Carla for using their equipment at RLCP! Some hand tools remain stored in the barn by the Property Manager.

**RL Cave Patron Report (John Benton)**

**June:** Several Harrison-Crawford Grotto members: Hammonds, Gresham, and Harris visited the

cave and Breakdown Falls Cave.

**August 7-10:** A couple of trips to RLC during Cave Capers.

**September:** Two IKC members camped at the property, checking sites for upcoming 2026 NSS Convention.

Robinson Ladder Cave is closed for visitation due to hibernating bats from September 1 to April 30 each year.

**Shawnee Property Report (Keith Dunlap)**

This was the IKC’s 14th full year of ownership of the original 50-acre tract and the 5th full year of owning the expanded (17-acre) property.

The shorter loop trails starting from the shed area were mowed several times. The longer perimeter trail was not mowed as it is mostly shaded and didn’t really need it.

The smaller open prairie on the 17-acre tract west of the shed was mowed using two walk-behind brush mowers on March 11 in lieu of prescribed burning. Mowing the field seems to be effective in controlling the tulip poplar and other saplings trying to sprout, and also stimulating the native grasses. Mowing this field (and the other two on even years) biennially will keep the fields open to add biological diversity habitat to the property.

There were a couple of requests made to camp at Shawnee during this report year. One used the more private site on the 50-acre tract, while the other camped near the shed.



photo courtesy Keith Dunlap

Tom Sollman, assisted by Keith Dunlap, replaced the foot bridge in August. The old bridge had several rotted decking boards after 14 years.

The IKC Board meeting was held at the property



on September 28. Prior to the meeting, several stewardship projects were accomplished including clearing a downed tree on one of the trails, removing the old foot bridge debris, picking up trash along SR 60, branch trimming for sight-line visibility where you pull out onto the highway, and two teams working on cutting and stump treatment of autumn olive on the west end of the 17-acre tract.

There were several invasive treatment sessions completed along the trails and the open areas. Also sericea lespedeza was treated in one area where it was observed.

There was no progress on the kiosk made during 2025 and we need to decide if the location should be moved to the new driveway.

The IKC entrance to Upper Twin continues to enlarge/constrict with each heavy rain. The ravine feeding the entrance swallow hole continues to erode and needs some stabilization attention.

There were no known management problems or concerns encountered during 2025.

2026 activities I hope to accomplish:

- Mow the larger western prairie area and the smaller eastern opening near the 4000 lane gate in early March in lieu of burning.
- Concentrate on cut and stump treatment of autumn olive on the west end of the 17-acre tract.
- Apply weed treatment around the tree seedlings planted on the 17-acre tract.
- Install a driveway gate on the 3918 driveway.
- Complete the kiosk.
- Continue work to clean out the shed and replace its door frame for better security.

### **Upper Twin Cave Patron Report (Dave Everton)**

Per IKC policy, all trips to this cave are Patron-arranged. There were five trips (one more than last year) with a total of 34 cavers including the Patron. Perhaps coincidentally, all trips were made during the period the IDNR allows access to their portion of the cave (November 1 through May 15). That supports the belief that most cavers want to complete a through-trip instead of going in and back out the IKC entrance.

The Patron was not made aware of any negative issues taking place during any of the trips. As al-

ways, he thanks the IKC for its continued support, preservation of, and access to Upper Twin Cave!

### **Sullivan Property Report (Joe Kinder)**

This was the IKC's 27th full year of ownership and we continue our long-term stewardship projects, but otherwise we are in "maintenance mode".

**Feb 6:** I contacted Izzy's and requested they service the porta-potty soon since we had received a lot of visits over the winter months. They were able to service the unit the next day.

**April 8:** I contacted Izzy's and requested they service the porta-potty soon. They were able to service the unit on April 14.

**May 14:** Goni Iskali was asked recently by a local wildlife rehabilitator if they could release 11 big brown bats at the Sullivan Cave Preserve that had been rehabbed over winter. The IKC Board was all in favor, so Goni (a bat biologist), and staff of The Pipsqueakery released the bats on the property. Thank you Goni and members from The Pipsqueakery!

**May 17:** I met Keith Dunlap at the Sullivan Cave Preserve. We worked on the following tasks:

- Picked up sticks and debris around the camping and fire pit area as well as along the parking lot and driveway.
- We were then able to mow and weed-eat around the camping area, the parking lot, and driveway areas.
- Keith sprayed invasives and we greased the cave gate.
- We were able to blow leaves off the driveway and parking areas, as well as the camping area, the shed area, and the path down to the cave.
- I cleaned and stocked the porta-potty with TP.

**June 29:** Summer IKC quarterly meeting included the following updates:

- Paul Uglum stepped down as the Sullivan Cave Patron. I would like to thank Paul for serving as the Sullivan Cave Patron for 10 years and appreciate all of his hard work over the past decade. Four people expressed their interest in becoming the new Cave Patron. Ultimately Goni Iskali was appointed interim Cave Patron, and the Board will have an opportunity to make a final vote appointing the new Cave Patron at the fall IKC meeting. Brad Barcom, Goni's



husband and IKC member, will be helping Goni with Cave Patron responsibilities.

- Jerry Lewis reached out on behalf of Mark Wilhelm to collect a few beetle specimens under the supervision of Jerry Lewis in Sullivan Cave and other IKC managed caves. The Board voted and Matt Selig approved the research permit.

**July 2:** Keith Dunlap was on site and worked on invasive removal specifically utilizing a tank of Crossbow to target multiflora rose. Keith reported that recent rains over two days the previous week, totaling 5½ inches, plugged one of the culverts under the driveway, creating a washout, and at another location along the drive a large gully in the middle of the drive formed.

**July 6:** I had scheduled a workday with many volunteers to tackle many tasks prior to an upcoming Wilderness First Aid class camping; unfortunately I was sick and unable to attend, but the workday continued as planned. The others accomplished:

- Goni Iskali dug open the culvert that was recently plugged from heavy rain events.
- Brad Barcom worked on mowing the camping area.
- Laura Demarest and Cris Seuell worked on weed-eating and weeding areas around the property as needed.



photo courtesy Carla Striegel-Winner

- Jeff Cody worked on applying another coat of roofing sealant on the shed roof.
- Keith Dunlap worked on spraying invasives throughout the property with help from Cris Seuell.

Thank you, everyone, for your help, greatly appreciated.

**August 6:** I contacted Izzy's and requested they service the porta-potty soon. They were able to service the unit later that week.

**Sept 14:** Keith Dunlap was on site and mowed the overflow parking area with his DR Brush Mower.

**Sept 28:** At the fall IKC meeting, I made a motion to approve Goni Iskali as the new Sullivan Cave Patron. The motion passed, and I want to thank Goni for serving in this new role. Brad Barcom will be assisting Goni with the cave patron responsibilities. Thank you Goni and Brad!

**Oct 24:** Keith Dunlap changed out the lock on the Sullivan Cave gate and informed me, Goni Iskali, and Brad Barcom via text. Keith also mowed the camping area for me. Thank you Keith!

**Oct 29:** I put a request into Izzy's to service the porta-potty as soon as feasible; they arrived the next day and serviced the unit.

**Oct 31:** The Windy City Grotto and the Central Indiana Grotto scheduled a joint Halloween camp-out at the Sullivan Cave Preserve for the weekend, so I wanted to arrive prior to their event and work on cleaning up the property a bit with the following tasks completed:

- I blew leaves away from the camping area and fire pit area to make it more suitable for weekend campers. I also blew leaves away from the driveway and parking areas.
- I worked on mowing and weed-eating the camping area, parking lot and the gravel drive.
- After several requests from recent visitors to restock the property with firewood, I scheduled and picked up a log splitter in Bloomington on my way down to the property. I worked on splitting some of the wood near the front entrance, but a lot of that wood was rotting and not suitable. I had a couple of dead elm trees picked out to cut down, which I did and worked on splitting them. I was able to get some of the wood stacked, but later several WCG and CIG members helped me finish stacking the wood.

I believe everyone had a good weekend and stayed warm. I certainly enjoyed camping with those who attended and really appreciated the help with stacking the firewood, thank you to the WCG and CIG.

**Nov 15:** Goni Iskali and Brad Barcom were able to install an electronic lock box at the Sullivan Property that would allow for easier access to the cave gate key for visitors.

**Nov 21:** Goni Iskali informed Keith Dunlap and



me via text that she and Brad Barcom replaced the key in the rescue lock box as well as the lock by the entrance gate.

**Nov 30:** Goni Iskali had been working on updating the Sullivan Cave Management Plan with assistance from me, Brad Barcom, and Keith Dunlap. She provided the finalized copy to Matt Selig and requested he add it to the agenda for the next IKC meeting to request Board approval of the updated plan.

**Dec 13:** Several items were covered during the Winter IKC meeting which included the following:

- Goni Iskali and I requested Board approval of the updated Sullivan Cave Management Plan. The main changes to the plan included the new online permit system and the addition of recommended minimum and maximum number of cavers for each group. The motion was made and passed unanimously. Goni later requested Bruce Bowman to post the updated Management Plan on the IKC website which he was able to do. Thank you Goni, Brad, and Keith for your work updating the Management Plan!
- Goni gave an update on the online registration system for Sullivan Cave and mentioned the system has greatly streamlined the registration process for cavers and campers. Brad Barcom and Tim Harris have been working on drafting a user manual for Cave Patrons/Property Managers on how to use the system. Matt, Keith, and Goni will meet to discuss next steps as far as rollout with Cave Patrons/Property Managers.
- Keith Dunlap, with the assistance of Bill Baus, recently recorded a new Quitclaim deed listing the two IKC Sullivan tracts on the same deed. This allowed Keith to request the Lawrence County Assessor’s Office to merge the two tax parcels to slightly lower our property taxes going forward.
- Keith Dunlap informed the Board that he had acquired another tract of land adjacent to the Sullivan property. All told, there are now approximately 100 acres of protected land related to Sullivan Cave.

**Additional Notes:**

- Several members/visitors and a few groups took advantage of the camping area and firewood over the past year. Goni Iskali, the Cave Patron, gen-

erally manages permission for camping. Locks are also serviced by Goni and Brad Barcom.

- There were no major management problems or concerns encountered during 2025.

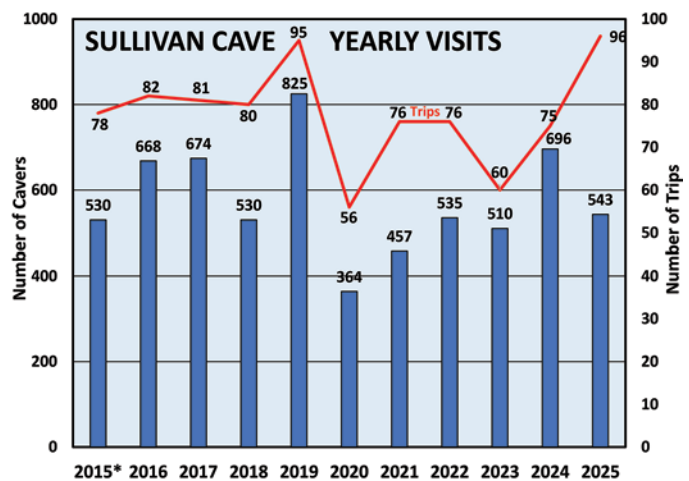
**2026 activities I hope to accomplish:**

- Still looking to install a gutter on the woodshed and utilize the rain barrel Danyele and Tymme donated.
- Work with Keith and volunteers to potentially construct an informational kiosk.
- Work with other IKC Property Managers and members to help me better understand forest management and dealing with invasives.
- Schedule workdays with volunteers to continue cleaning up the property and I would like to work on constructing a loop trail.
- Perhaps spray the camping area again in August with Clethodim to control the stiltgrass infestation (left this task in the report from Keith, will work with him on this).
- Over-seed the camping area in the fall with grass seed that will be hardier (left this task in the report from Keith, will work with him on this).

**Sullivan Cave Patron Report (Goni Iskali)**

This report covers the updates and activities at Sullivan Cave from January through December 2025. Paul Uglum was the Cave Patron for the first half of 2025, and I, Goni Iskali, became the Cave Patron in the second half. Brad Barcom has also greatly assisted me in my cave patron responsibilities.

Sullivan Cave continues to be the most popular cave managed by the IKC with a trip scheduled almost every week on average. Fall and summer are the most



popular seasons, with winter (December through February) having lower visitation. The total number of cavers for 2025 is estimated at 543 people, which is similar to the last few years (total cavers ranged between 535 and 696 from 2022 to 2025). The number of trips was 96 in 2025, perhaps higher due to the lowered number of cavers per trip allowed.

The most noteworthy updates regarding Sullivan Cave this year included the modernization of the process for accessing the cave and updates to the Management Plan. More specifically, these included:

1) Transitioning from email requests and paper waivers to an online permitting and waiver system. Paul Uglum helped set up this system while he was the Cave Patron. We then tested the system when I first became the Patron in June, and we officially launched it on November 1, 2025 after receiving approval from the IKC Board. The new online system has greatly helped with organizing trip requests and waivers, and also ensures that all waivers submitted are complete, organized, and saved for easier access, if necessary. In addition, the online system has now created a central point of approval and waiver storage, as only the Cave Patrons can approve trips after receiving all the waivers.

2) The cave gate key is now stored and accessed on the property via a lock box that generates temporary codes for each trip. This avoids having multiple copies of the key being available at the same time and having to mail the key for each trip. This system has not only created an efficiency in accessing the key, but it protects somewhat against the key being lost, not returned, or duplicated. It also allows the keys and locks to be changed out more often without having to distribute new keys to various key holders.

3) The Sullivan Cave Preserve Management Plan was updated and approved by the Board during the December 2025 meeting. The most noteworthy updates to the plan included relevant updates related to the new online permitting system and the established limit of 12 people per trip for both the cave and camping area. The updated Management Plan can be found on the IKC website.

### **Conservation and Restoration Updates and Priorities:**

Nate Vignes led multiple restoration trips into Sullivan Cave in 2025. The primary activities during these trips were removing the graffiti with wire brushing and then covering up/camouflag-



photo courtesy Nate Vignes

ing what was left with a thin mud slurry. The primary areas of focus to date have been in the Backbreaker passage. A more detailed explanation of the cave restoration activities can be found in an article in *IKC Update #159*.

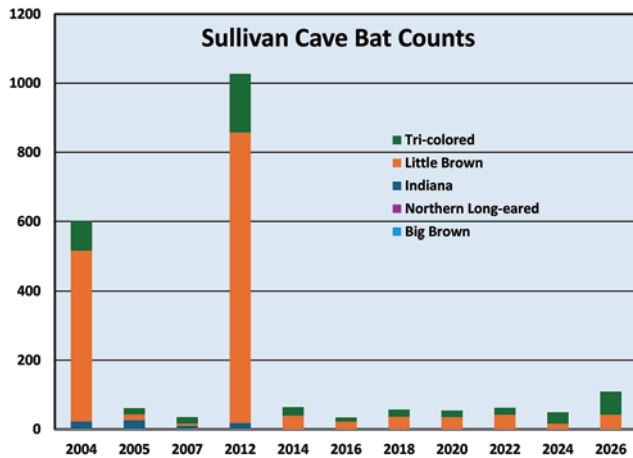
Nate will continue to lead restoration trips focusing on graffiti removal in 2026 with the next trip scheduled for March 21-22, 2026. Nate also continues to notify the Board before each restoration trip and regarding the restoration activities, and any noteworthy updates after each trip.

In addition, Brad and I have focused on educating groups about cave conservation before granting trip requests (i.e., do not chalk, leave cairns, or make any other marks in the cave), and have instructed trip leaders to alert us of any signs of potential vandalism. We did not notice any signs of new graffiti or vandalism in 2025, and have noticed a decreased number of cairns in the cave (we continue to remove any remnants of cairns as we do our regular checkup visits). One group retrieved a bear tooth from the cave, but the tooth was returned to the IKC and the trip leader was notified that this was not acceptable. In addition, the IKC President wrote an article about best practices if any fossils or artifacts are found in IKC caves or on properties to educate our membership and this article can be found in *IKC Update #159*.

The passage leading to the section of the Merry-Go-Round area collapsed in the summer of 2025, likely due to heavy rains. The climb-down passage is covered with mud and large boulders and continues to be off-limits to any cavers due to safety reasons. The Board has decided to not disturb or open up this area, but rather let nature take its course.

One of my primary focuses this year as the Cave Patron and bat biologist has been to ensure that trip leaders are educated about how to avoid disturbing





bats at Sullivan Cave, especially during the sensitive hibernation period in the winter. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) completed its biennial survey of bats in February 2026 and was excited to note that the total number of bats more than doubled since 2024. Tricolored bat numbers also more than doubled and were the main contributors to this overall increase. Little brown bats were the second most common bats counted, and I observed a cluster of 52 little brown bats in December 2025 near the South-Y area of the cave (but the cluster was much smaller during the IDNR survey). Trip leaders were asked to avoid these areas or navigate them very quietly while giving the bats as much space as possible. We look forward to hopefully continuing to see the numbers of bats in the cave increase in subsequent years. We also look forward to having a safe and productive 2026 at Sullivan Cave!

**Wayne Property Report (Cris Seuell)**

**Spring:** This time was spent preparing for the final EQIP grant inspection. A workday was held on March 9 to comb Tracts 2 and 3 for all the types of honeysuckle as well as autumn olive saplings. New emergency contact signs were installed. March 30 and April 6 were spent grid-walking most of the property with Keith while counting/cutting grapevines. We passed inspection and got the last check. Our EQIP contract is now completed. On May 10, a moth event was held at Wayne. Many moths were documented (see *IKC Update #157*). Various trips were made to the property to clear the open area by the parking lot of small trees. Some of the grass was line-trimmed a few times, but the rest was left unmowed. A huge tree top fell across the trail just past Tiparillo Pit. Instead of chainsawing, a reroute was built around it and the creek crossing was improved.

**Summer:** In June the garlic mustard was pulled on the Connection ridge. This will need to be done again in 2026. A large amount of stiltgrass was observed on the northeast corner. June 29 was the quarterly IKC meeting which was held at Wayne Preserve after a workday. IKC and BIG members heroically rolled tires uphill and hauled scrap metal and bags of trash, amassing a huge pile. Keith took some people to the northwest corner to put herbicide on the persistent autumn olives. On August 3, Clethodim was applied to the stiltgrass on the Connection tract. This herbicide is grass-specific and best applied before it seeds out, but after the long germination season. Less herbicide is used this way. I went back and sprayed on the 12th to get the ones I missed. On Sept 21, some of the previously flagged trail route was cleared of woody brush and small trees to prepare for the installation of the Connection loop trail. Observed a 90-95% coverage of dead stiltgrass. I will respray next August. And the next, etc. Lots of Perilla were already flowering. This can be sprayed in 2026 before it flowers.

**Fall:** Nov 11 was spent clearing more trail and pin flagging the rest of the way to Jim’s Hole. On Nov 16, we had seven volunteers join us to install trail on the Connection property. Barbed wire was removed from the trees along the old property line. Some weird old cylindrical tanks were pulled out of a ditch and put by the trail to be hauled up the hill later.

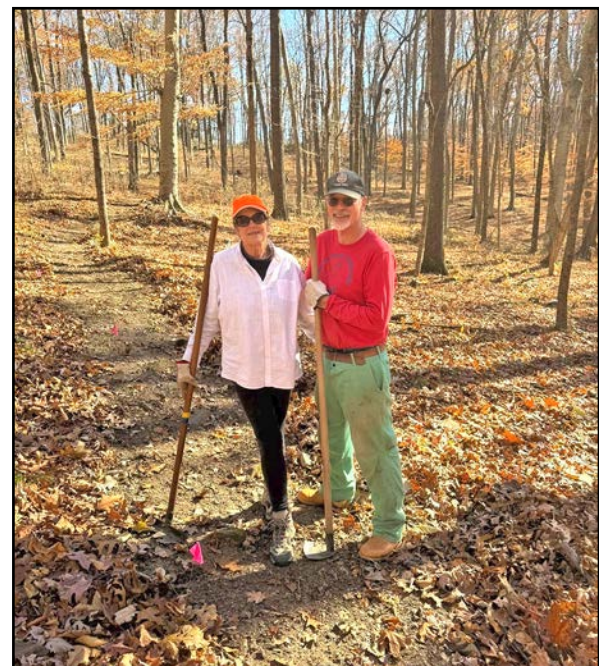


photo courtesy Rob Miller

**Winter:** A few trips were made to walk the trail and remove limbs and small trees that had fallen.

**Future Activities:** Continue working on the Connection trail. Finish the reroute around tornado



damage on east side of main loop trail. These are huge trunks so this is easier. Repair the woodpecker damage on the kiosk. Get trash, recycling, and tires hauled off. Monitor and remove invasives.

#### **Wayne Cave Patron Report (Dave Everton)**

Ten different groups arranged visitation through me between March and November. Three of those visits were led by Cris Seuell and her crew who are working to solve more mysteries in the expanded system after establishing a connection to nearby Studebaker Cave. The Near Normal Grotto and Evansville Metropolitan Grotto each had one trip of eight cavers.

Therefore, the total number of trips for the year was twelve with a total of 72 cavers, some of whom were repeat visitors.

The Cave Patron was not made aware of any negative incidents or issues during any of the visits. Property Manager Cris has been taking care of lock maintenance.

As always, the Cave Patron thanks the IKC for its continued support, preservation of, and access to Wayne Cave!

#### **Shiloh Cave Patron Report (James Adams)**

The Indiana Karst Conservancy has continued, with the permission of the landowner, to permit up to six recreational trips into Shiloh Cave for the general caving community per calendar year. Each trip is limited to 10 participants with three vehicles on the property. During 2025, all six of these trips were taken into the cave. These visits allowed 54 cavers to visit Shiloh Cave.

One scheduled trip was cancelled by the trip leader and was replaced by another group on standby. Also, a research collection trip was scheduled in December for students and advisors from the Department of Biology at Western Kentucky University in order to study a particular cave beetle as part of a master's degree thesis. This trip was postponed due to weather conditions and is expected to be rescheduled in the spring 2026.

By the end of 2025, four recreational trips into Shiloh Cave were already scheduled for 2026. Our relationship remains solid with the landowner and no negative issues have been noted.

#### **Suicide Cave Patron Report (Kevin Smith)**

In 2025, Suicide Cave hosted six authorized trips, welcoming a total of 28 cavers representing multiple

caving organizations. No issues were reported during any of these visits.

A new gate lock was installed on October 17, and a new key was placed in the emergency lock box. The updated lock features a longer shackle, making it easier to access and unlock. While on site, I cleaned up the cave entrance and applied WD-40 to the bolt cutters. I had planned to prune vegetation along the south side of the road where vehicles are directed to park during visitation; however, pruning was not necessary at this time.

I would also like to thank Danyele Green for her assistance with key management.

The Indiana Karst Conservancy (IKC) extends its sincere appreciation for the opportunity to continue stewardship of Suicide Cave. This stewardship is made possible through the generosity of Charlie and Will Biel, owners and stewards of the Arrow Hill Ranch Forestry and Wildlife Sanctuary.

#### **Henderson Park Access Coordinator (Scott Frosch)**

In 2025, there were twelve registered cave trips totaling 87 cavers.

3/22 – Nate Vignes, CIG,

6/03 – Ben Smith, Colorado,

6/06 – Ryan Hammond, HCG,

6/28 – Zack Snyder, CIG,

6/29 – Amanda Beach, WCG,

7/06 – Megan Fletcher, BIG,

7/12 – Ken Schnautz, EMG,

9/26 – Aaron French

10/03 – Mark Wilhelm, WKU

10/11 – Tony Akers

10/11 – Hannah Lee, Lost River Hostel

11/15 – Justin Davis, kids trip

#### **Spring Mill Access Coordinator (Dave Everton)**

In January 2014, the Indiana Karst Conservancy and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources signed a Letter of Understanding to create an Interim Cave Access Program to facilitate access to Bronson-Donaldson and Upper Twin Caves in Spring Mill State Park, and Endless and River Caves in the Cave River Valley Natural Area. The agreement was initially a two-year one, but has been renewed five times and continues to require renewal every two years.



During 2025, the following trips took place:

- Endless Cave: 20 trips with 194 cavers
- River Cave: 15 trips with 136 cavers
- Upper Twin: 5 trips with 34 cavers
- Bronson-Donaldson: 26 trips with 189 cavers

Total number of trips: 66 trips with 326 cavers (which could be misleading since many cavers visited two caves per trip). 2024's totals were 49 trips with 329 cavers.

The Interim Access Coordinator participated in one trip to Endless and one trip to Upper Twin and Bronson-Donaldson Cave during 2025.

Cavers are typically eager to go caving, but very seldom do they report back on how the trip went. The Coordinator was not informed of any problems on any of the trips.

#### Indian Creek CE Report (Bambi Dunlap)

I visited the conservation easement on September 17 with Keith Dunlap to tour the property, identify property line markers, and conduct a thorough annual inspection. Only a few minor items were noted. Letters have been mailed out to property owners with copies sent to TNC. All tasks are complete. 🐦

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## ANNUAL SICIM CONFERENCE

by Danyele Green

March 30th marked the annual conference for the State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management (SICIM) in Noblesville. SICIM was originally formed from the collaboration of several invasive-focused non-profits in Southern Indiana in 2008. Since its inception, growth is continuing in the form of the organizing of smaller areas (typically a county) into groups called CISMA's (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas) that make up the larger SICIM non-profit. Think of each CISMA as a scoop of ice cream making up the SICIM sundae. These smaller groups came into being as part of the 2018 Indiana Invasives Initiative (III), which pulls together non-profits across the state and works together with the USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service).

For those who have heard of or participate in Weed Wrangles....this is a result of the III.

OK, enough acronyms for today... now on to the rest of the story. I was able to attend on behalf of the IKC and was so grateful for the opportunity to take a break from work to learn from area experts, such as Dr Zhao Ma from Purdue University, whose research presentation enlightened everyone attending in regard to what it is

that really shapes change in people's minds. The result of her studies, which are still ongoing, is that social and emotional aspects, not incentives and education, are the driving force behind decision-making processes. I also attended a session comparing strategies for managing Japanese stiltgrass from Cheryl Coon (US Forest Service) and learned about new invasive pests from Will Drews (Indiana DNR), which we are now seeing, or should be on the lookout for as they move closer into Indiana. Lastly, I attended a session by John Ketzenberger from The Nature Conservancy on how to 'frame our message'. His focus was on the importance of our organizations being involved on the political front, thus ensuring those representing Hoosiers at the local, state, and federal levels are armed with

facts and learn what is happening within our communities' natural areas.

In addition to the great sessions and educational opportunities, it was great to see several familiar faces who attended past IKC-sponsored Wilderness First Aid courses and from my local hometown CISMA, the MC-IRIS (ok, one more acronym: Monroe County – Identify and Reduce Invasive Species). 🐦



*Invasive Japanese stiltgrass at Wayne Cave Preserve*

# MOTHING AT THE SHAWNEE KARST PRESERVE

article and images by Steve Morris

*Editor's note: The following was adapted from an email exchange with Steve Morris covering his moth sampling at the Shawnee Karst Preserve on April 23, 2026. Steve has an active IKC scientific research permit to collect moths on our preserves.*

As promised, here is my report for my night spent at Shawnee Karst. I was flying solo this time, so did not attempt to document every single moth that came to my light. My focus was on species that might provide a decent picture of the moth diversity at this property.

Of the 22 species I documented, twelve are species that we had not documented yet on other Indiana Karst Conservancy properties. None of these moths were new to me. However, a couple were new to me for Indiana, and many were new to Indiana for April on BugGuide ([BugGuide.net](http://BugGuide.net)). Pictures of all of these moths can be seen on that website (and below). Just type Shawnee Karst Preserve into the search box, hit search, and the images should come up (or [click here](#)).

Size of these moths ranged from 5 mm to over 30 mm in length. On the website you can click on any of the images to see detailed info that was reported.

I did find one insect that was new to me. It is a parasitic fly known as *Hemyda aurata*. This was the first report of this insect for Indiana on BugGuide. The host for larvae of this fly is *Podisus maculiventris*, known by the common name of Spined Soldier Bug. Interestingly, the Spined Soldier Bug is also predatory, feeding on a wide variety of insects. If you go to the Info page for *Hemyda aurata* on BugGuide, at the bottom of the page is a link to the info page for *Podisus maculiventris*.

I only set up at the driveway loop in the woods. Chances are, I probably would have gotten some different species had I also sampled in one of the open fields. And although I only reported on a couple dozen species, there were at least two or three times that many moths on my screen tent that evening. It was quite exciting! 🦋



### INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY TREASURY REPORT

#### Income/Expense Statement From January 1, 2026 to March 31, 2026

## INCOME:

Dues Apportionment and Residuals	1,681.66	
Donations - General	3,421.02	
Donations - Land Acquisition Fund	1,505.00	
OCR training	1,540.00	
General Investment Earnings	1,902.26	
		\$10,049.94

## EXPENSES:

IKC Update (printing, production, mailing)	938.43	
Education / Outreach	3,011.41	
ILPA renewal	750.00	
Stewardship / Conservation	506.73	
Business (renewal/election mailing, PayPal fees, etc)	960.53	
OCR training	2,812.04	
Transfers to/from restricted funds/other adjustments	1,505.00	
		(\$10,484.14)

NET OPERATING EXCESS (DEFICIT) THIS PERIOD:

(\$434.20)

#### Balance Sheet March 31, 2026

## ASSETS:

Checking / CD / Brokerage / Endowment accounts	946,690.78	
Wayne Cave Preserve (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>\$1,833,703.94</u>

## FUNDS &amp; OPERATING EXCESS:

Land Acquisition Restricted Fund	126,569.39	
Deferred Dues Restricted Fund (351 members)	13,420.00	
Stewardship Endowment Fund (-3.7% for Q1)	159,798.59	
Gale & Ray Beach Endowment Fund (-3.7% for Q1)	543,596.12	
Previous General Fund (total)	103,754.04	
Net Excess (Deficit) This Period	-434.20	
Current General Fund (unrestricted)	103,319.84	
Current General Fund (committed)	6,182.01	
Real Estate Basis (excluding value of CE)	887,000.00	

Total Liabilities &amp; Operating Excess

\$1,833,703.94

# IKC ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

Sunday, March 22, 2026–1:00 PM EDT

Monroe County Public Library – 600 West Temperance Square, Ellettsville, IN

**Board Members Present:**

- Matt Selig, President
- Goniela Iskali, Secretary
- Keith Dunlap, Treasurer
- Bill Baus
- Brandon Chasteen
- Bruce Bowman
- Jeff Cody
- Laura Demarest
- Scott Frosch
- Danyelee Green
- Joe Kinder
- Cris Seuell
- Tom Sollman
- Carla Striegel-Winner
- Richard Vernier

\* represented by proxy (see below)

**Board Members Absent:**

None

**Others Present:** Tim Harris, Kevin Romanak, and Sue Vernier.

**Call to Order – IKC Exempt Purpose & Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Matt Selig, President, at 1:00 PM EDT.

**Acceptance of Proxies**

No proxies, all Board members present.

**Approval of Previous Minutes**

No edits were proposed to the last meeting minutes as published in the March 2026 *IKC Update*. *Bruce made a motion to approve the minutes. Brandon seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.*

**Email Motions Since Last Meeting**

Approval of the 2026 election slate presented to the Board by the Nomination Committee. *The slate was approved with 13 Yes and 2 abstentions.*

After some discussion, the Board approved donating up to \$2,500 to offset some of the costs for the Orientation to Cave Rescue Training (more info about the training below). *The motion was approved with 14 Yes and 1 abstention.*

**2026 Election Results**

Bill, Danyelee, and Cris were appointed to the Nomination Committee at the December 2025 Board meeting. Bill and Danyelee were appointed by Matt to be the Election Tellers and reported the results of the 2026

election. Bruce Bowman, Scott Frosch, Tom Sollman and Richard Vernier were re-elected to the Board and Matt Selig, Goni Iskali, and Keith Dunlap were re-elected to the President, Secretary, and Treasurer positions, respectively.

**Treasurer Report**

Keith outlined the current financial status of the organization:

Assets:

Cash assets totaling	\$946,256.32
Land assets totaling	\$887,000.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,833,256.32</b>

Dedicated Funds:

Land Acquisition Fund	\$126,509.39
Stewardship Endowment	\$159,124.84
Gale & Ray Beach Endowment	\$541,541.51
Deferred Dues (as of 01/01/25)	\$11,515.00
General (unrestricted) Fund	\$107,565.58
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>\$946,256.32</b>

Current members: 351 with 127 members yet to renew (but dues are not due until the end of the month).

Keith will reach out to members who have yet to renew in April.

The annual growth rate of the Stewardship Endowment Fund is 10.6%. The annual growth rate of the Gale and Ray Beach Endowment Fund is 7.9% (the original investment was \$400,000), and this is lower because this money was invested about six months later at a higher buy-in price than the Stewardship Endowment Fund.

**2026 Indiana Cave Symposium**

The Symposium will occur on April 18th, 2026, and the final details are currently being refined. More information about the program and speakers was posted on the ICS website by Aaron Valandra. Carla is looking for volunteers to help with setup and cleanup afterwards because this worked out well last year to expedite the process. Brandon will oversee the setup before the event. A sign-up sheet was sent around, and Brandon and Carla will contact volunteers closer to the date. The pre-Symposium Tour is heading out at about 12:30 PM from the event center and requires preregistration. Bill is also leading a trip to Storm’s Pit before the Symposium.

**Education/Outreach Committee**

On February 10, Noble Crossing Elementary School in Noblesville hosted its annual family night and the IKC was present at the event. The main audience was elementary school children and their families (roughly 600 total). Scott helped with the event to educate



families about caves and conservation.

Indiana State Library's summer reading theme for 2026 is "Unearth a Story" and is looking for cave-related programs. Carla led a webinar to relay cave info to the librarians, and she also offered the local grottos as a resource for further cave education.

The spring event, "Discovery Day", will be held on April 11 at Henderson Park. Danyele, Goni, Richard and Sue Vernier will also attend and can help with the event. More information about this event and other annual events can be found on the IKC website. Carla passed around the flyer showing all four quarterly events.

The next IKC meeting will be held at Wyandotte Cave. The cave tour before the meeting is open to IKC members, but they need to sign up. Board members do not need to sign up, but will need to let Carla know if they plan to participate, and if they bring family and friends then they will need to have them sign up. Carla passed around a flyer about the event.

The IKC has outgrown the free Mailchimp limits. The IKC uses this to email/communicate with members. Constant Contact and Gmail Workspace can also be options, but Mailchimp is cheaper and the IKC info is already incorporated in it. Danyele asked if Mailchimp can handle event sign-ups so we can integrate communications in one place. We are currently using a free version of JotForm for events, but the free version is somewhat limited. Carla will research options and make a determination on which email and/or event program to use going forward. *Carla made a motion to spend up to \$200 annually for an email service. Cris seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **IKC 40th Anniversary Planning**

Carla updated the Board that the 40th anniversary stickers were sent to members with the renewal notices. The decision was made to not sell these stickers, but rather to gift them to members and/or use them as a promotion tool for the IKC. The first 40th Anniversary issue of the *IKC Update* went out in March and the logo was added to the cover. Carla is investigating setting up a temporary online "store" to sell other 40th anniversary swag (t-shirts, hats, etc.) that can be ordered within a two-week period and can be picked up at the Cave Symposium.

#### **ILPA Update**

The annual Winter Gathering/conference and reception was held on February 23rd and attended by Matt, Brandon, and Keith. The Board members who attended noted that this event was inspiring and another great success. The event is free to ILPA members. May 15th is ILPA's "Spring Gathering" at Fort Ben State Park and it's usually held outdoors. The key benefits of the event include networking with other conservancies. The fall "Stewardship Gathering" will be a 3-4 day event that will be held in September in southern

Indiana. The location and dates are still TBD, but it will likely be in the Bloomington area. The focus of the event is stewardship and education.

The IKC winning a Quarry Life Award will be mentioned in the ILPA annual report.

#### **Website Strategy**

Matt noted that the IKC is looking for a new webmaster and recommended that the Board set up an *ad hoc* committee to further research this topic. Bruce Bowman has been our webmaster for over 29 years and has maintained the IKC website during this time as a volunteer, but he would like to see the position go to someone with a more updated skill set. Bruce's recommendation is to get our own domain and not be a sub-domain under the NSS's *caves.org* website. The new website would likely take a lot of work up front to transfer the information and would have an annual cost associated with it. If we continue with the current domain, we would need to make software updates to the current version, which would also require work. Bruce offered to continue to be the web manager for a few more months until the position is filled. Options discussed by the Board included filling the position with a volunteer in our membership or contracting out the position if no volunteers with the proper skills within our membership are available. We can also set up a hybrid position to have an internal volunteer managing a contractor. Carla will ask other land trusts at the next ILPA meeting about how they are managing their websites. Laura recommended that we hire out the task of setting up the new website because it's way too big of an ask for someone to volunteer their time, and the IKC can reach out for bids to determine the best option. Then ideally, once the setup is complete, we can inquire if the website builder can volunteer to maintain it for a cost or if an IKC member can volunteer to maintain it. Tim Harris noted that he has experience in this field and can help advise and can participate on the *ad hoc* committee. Matt, Bruce, Danyele and Tim volunteered to be on the *ad hoc* committee. Carla would also like to be involved in making decisions as the Outreach Coordinator, but not be part of the committee. Carla also noted an ILPA Marketing Peer Group Zoom on the subject would be on March 24 at 12 noon for anyone interested in attending.

#### **Land Acquisition**

Danyele provided an update that the IKC had been pursuing an acquisition opportunity last year, but the owner has decided to not sell for now.

#### **2026 NSS Convention**

Laura is co-chairing the NSS Convention (July 6-10 in Corydon) and provided an update for the Board. Laura noted that due to the IKC's donation of \$2,500 for CaveSim, the IKC was awarded the "platinum" sponsor tier. This tier offers a half-page ad (needs to be designed), a one-week convention pass, four tick-



ets to the salon and four banquet tickets, and inclusion in the convention packet. Keith suggested that the tickets for the salon and banquet can be gifted to landowners as appreciation gifts. Laura will also inquire if the one-week pass can be an IKC badge that can be shared via multiple Board members. Vendor booths are full, but educational booths are still available, and Carla will reach out to Emily Davis to reserve a space. Representatives at educational booths can present information, but not sell any merchandise. Laura will also host a Q&A session at the Cave Symposium to relay more information about the Convention.

### **2026 Orientation to Cave Rescue**

Laura reported that the next Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) class will be held in Harrison County on March 28-29th, and the class is now full. Harrison County Emergency Management Agency is providing the meeting space at the Government Center free of charge. The IKC also sponsored this training event for up to 20 licensed first responders and government agency personnel, but fewer than 20 signed up so OCR won't use the full amount of IKC sponsorship allocation. The registration website link for the class will be turned off and there will not be a waiting list.

### **The Online Permit Request System**

Goni gave an update that Matt, Keith, and Goni met in January to discuss next steps for rolling out the online system to other IKC-owned caves/preserves. It was decided during the meeting that Wayne Cave Preserve would be the next property to be enrolled in the system due to the high interest for caving and/or camping. After Wayne Cave is enrolled, the next four IKC properties with caves (Lowry, Robinson Ladder, Shawnee/Upper Twin, and Buddha) would be enrolled. The goal would be to enroll Wayne Cave in the next 30 days and then the next four caves before the next Board meeting in June. The IKC has not yet decided if non-IKC owned properties that are being managed by the IKC will be enrolled in the online system.

### **Wayne Cave Patron**

Goni gave an update that Brad and Goni worked with Dave Everton (current Cave Patron) and Cris (current Property Manager and Director) to introduce them to the online system. During these conversations, Dave noted that he would be open to someone else taking over the patronage responsibilities for Wayne Cave. Brandon expressed interest in the position and he lives right next to Wayne Cave. *Scott made a motion to appoint Brandon Chasteen as Cave Patron and Laura seconded it. The motion passed with 14 yes with 1 abstention.*

*Keith also made a motion to purchase two additional electronic key boxes (one for Wayne and one as a backup for Wayne or other IKC properties) for up to \$400 and Cris seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.*

There will be an orderly Cave Patron transition from Dave (using paper waivers) to Brandon (using the online system) over the next month.

### **2025 Cave Patron and Property Manager Reports**

The 2025 annual reports for the IKC caves and properties were summarized in a document distributed to the Board prior to the meeting (and the report will be included in its entirety in the June *IKC Update* – see pages 22-32), so the following summary includes only the most noteworthy updates for the Board.

**Buddha Karst Nature Preserve** – Keith noted that there were no issues with the property last year. Jeff noted that visitation for 2025 remained about the same and there were no other updates for the Board.

**Lowry Karst Preserve** – no other updates for the Board.

**Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve** – The main updates from Carla were that they continued invasive plant eradication and the rope swing was removed. 2025 was also supposed to be year 5 out of 10 for Indiana Geological and Water Survey (IGWS) water quality research, but IGWS did not monitor in 2025 and reported that they also don't think that they will be able to monitor in 2026 due to funding being pulled.

**Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve** – no other updates for the Board.

**Shawnee Karst Preserve** – Keith stated that efforts last year focused on replacing the small bridge (Tom worked on it) and autumn olive control. No other updates for the Board for Upper Twin Cave.

**Sullivan Cave Preserve** – Joe didn't have any additional updates other than those summarized. Danyelee noted that she has a log splitter to loan out for splitting wood, and Keith also noted that our property neighbor (and IKC member) can also loan us a splitter. Goni didn't have any other updates besides noting that Nate Vignes is continuing to do restoration work at Sullivan Cave today with the help of the Near Normal Grotto. Future restoration trips and plans will be announced to the Board.

**Wayne Cave Preserve** – The main update from Cris was that the EQIP grant was fully disbursed in 2025 to the Wayne Cave Property (~\$44,000 total over the past 5 years), after the property met the benchmarks for invasives and grapevine control. Wayne also suffered some storm damage in 2025 and thus clean-up and trail re-routing are ongoing. No other updates from the Cave Patron for the Board.

**Indian Creek Conservation Easement** – The annual inspection and paperwork were completed, and no other updates for the Board.

**Henderson Park** – no other updates for the Board.



**Shiloh Cave** – no other updates for the Board.

**Suicide Cave** – no other updates for the Board.

**Spring Mill/Cave River Valley** – no other updates for the Board.

#### Recent (2026) Upcoming Preserves Projects

**Sullivan Cave Preserve** – Joe noted the driveway needs to be graded and new crushed stone added, and there is a large rut in the driveway adjacent to the upper/overflow parking area. Brad Barcom has volunteered to help grade and spread the stone, and he also gathered quotes from local stone providers. *Joe made a motion to spend up to \$1,500 on stone for the driveway and to address ruts that have been created. Carla seconded it. The motion passed with 14 votes and 1 abstention.*

Bruce asked if the money for this project would come out of general funds or the Stewardship Fund and Keith noted that it would be the general fund because the Stewardship Fund needs to reach \$350,000 before we can take distributions from it. Joe also asked Carla to arrange a volunteer event and will send Carla some optional dates to see if they're available/don't coincide with other IKC events.

**Wayne Cave Preserve** – Cris is planning a workday with volunteers on April 12. Other tasks on her wish list include grading the driveway (although she noted that no stone is needed at the moment). Cris also has to repair critter damage on the kiosk and will continue to work on trail maintenance and invasives. The most recent tornado that occurred this spring touched down at Wayne and therefore, 2026 will also need to focus on rerouting trails and cleaning up from that damage.

Keith noted that one of the survey pins is missing and it must be replaced by a licensed surveyor. *Keith made a motion for up to \$500 to replace the survey pin. Richard seconded it. The motion passed with 14 votes and 1 abstention.*

**Buddha Karst Nature Preserve** – Keith noted that the foot bridge was in bad shape and was taken out in 2025. The bridge is used to cross a small creek and to accommodate the mower, therefore Keith would like to replace it in 2026. *Keith made a motion for \$300 to replace the foot bridge. Jeff seconded it. The motion passed with 14 votes and 1 abstention.*

Carla also noted that the summer event will be at Buddha and spiders will be collected for identification as part of that event, therefore a scientific research permit will be requested. Carla also reached out to the Nature Preserves point of contact, and they have already approved and sent their permit for the collection activity.

**Shawnee Karst Preserve** – Keith would like to focus on autumn olive control in the upcoming year.

**Orangeville Rise Nature Preserve** – Orange County Invasives Partnership and IKC will lead a weed wran-

gle event on April 23 from 5 to 7 PM.

**Robinson Ladder Cave Preserve** – John Benton will be looking for bids to take down a tree that's threatening the barn. He is still gathering quotes and therefore is not ready to make a motion to the Board.

**Lowry Karst Preserve** – no updates. However, new graffiti was noted in 2025 and therefore the Board considered posting signs, including educational signage or trail cams. An IKC member offered to donate two trail cams to monitor access. Keith suggested that we put one of them up at Lowry with a "surveillance" sign.

**Suicide Cave** – the Cave Patron requested to schedule a volunteer workday to maintain/enlarge the parking area.

**Shiloh Cave** – Danyelee expressed concern that cave trips at Shiloh are getting reserved years in advance and sometimes not getting used. This cave has a six trips per year limitation of up to 10 people per trip, and therefore this really limits who can visit the cave. The Board discussed how to make trips more available to cavers and make sure that the requested trips take full advantage within these limitations. Keith will reach out to Jim Adams (the Cave Patron) to discuss some ideas.

#### Items from the Floor

- Bruce offered to donate an herbicide applicator to the IKC that he had made.
- Carla showed the Board the new IKC property "Invasive Strike Team" kits that will be distributed to the most active Property Managers. These kits were bought from the White-nose Syndrome grant that was awarded to the IKC by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources for bat habitat improvements. The IKC now has five of these kits and some will need to be shared between Property Managers. Tim Harris mentioned that the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts can also loan equipment for invasives control.
- Matt encouraged the Board to think about what the IKC will look like in the next 40 years.

#### Next Meeting Date and Place Selection

The next IKC Quarterly meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 14, 2026 at 2:00 PM EDT at Wyandotte Cave (7315 S Wyandotte Cave Road, Leavenworth IN) with a cave tour planned at 9 AM EDT. A lunch will be held at the shelter house at 1 PM EDT, and the Board discussed if this should be pitch-in or not. All Board members are welcome and the cave tour is also open to IKC members and guests who sign up (limit of 20 participants excluding Board members).

#### Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 PM EDT.

*Respectfully compiled and submitted by Goni Iskali, IKC Secretary* 🐦

...OCR training, continued from page 14

personnel, and set up communication between the surface and the patient(s). For this mock scenario, one caver (Kevin Romanak) had taken a fall resulting in a broken femur injury that would require him to be carried out in a litter. His other caving friends also experienced misfortune: Stephanie Stoops simulated a pneumothorax (collapsed lung) injury, also necessitating a carry-out evacuation. Anmar Mirza became lost and stuck in a small crevice and Stephen Bishop ran out of light on the way out of the cave to call for assistance. Obviously, this is a very far-fetched scenario to have so many accidents on one trip, but all patients modeled their situations after incidents that have resulted in rescue in real life!

Students worked in teams over the course of several hours to treat the two most serious patients and transport them in litters up a steep slope and through some tight and awkward areas on the way to the entrance. Careful coordination took place to ensure the mock patient was not injured “for real” during the training, and NCRC Instructors silently observed and gave occasional feedback to keep the operation running smoothly and safely for all.

Post-rescue, the class gathered at the cave’s entrance before dismissal to debrief so that all would understand the full scenario and the Instructors could provide critiques and give each student an OCR course completion card. After a day of hands-on experience, students shared many eye-opening realizations that will undoubtedly help them become safer and more prepared in the future.



photo courtesy NCRC Central Region

This is the third OCR seminar that the IKC has hosted (and provided fee discounts to members, first responders, and agency staff) with much positive feedback received. The IKC would like to thank Harrison County EMA, the Department of Natural Resources, course participants, Instructors, and specialists for taking the time to make our caving community stronger and safer! Many thanks also to IKC Director Carla Striegel-Winner who arrived early on Saturday to ensure IKC-provided coffee, breakfast, and snacks were plentiful, and prepared an informational booth and packets of IKC materials for participants. This OCR provided a valuable opportunity for the cave community and local rescue personnel to work together to build trust and familiarity before needing to work together in the event of a real rescue. This was especially important ahead of the upcoming NSS Convention, when over 1,000 cavers will be visiting Harrison County this summer – and we can certainly all agree that the best rescues are the ones that are prevented! 🦋



**INDIANA KARST CONSERVANCY – NEW MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM**

I would like to help the IKC protect Indiana’s unique caves and karst features. Use the QR code below or complete this form and mail to: **IKC, PO Box 2401, Indianapolis IN 46206.**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for IKC membership dues at \$20/year (please pro-rate \$1.66/month to expire on March 31st).

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ donation to the general fund (to be used for education, stewardship, etc).

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ donation to the restricted cave/land acquisition fund.

I know of an area worthy of protection, please contact me.

I would like to volunteer to help, please contact me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

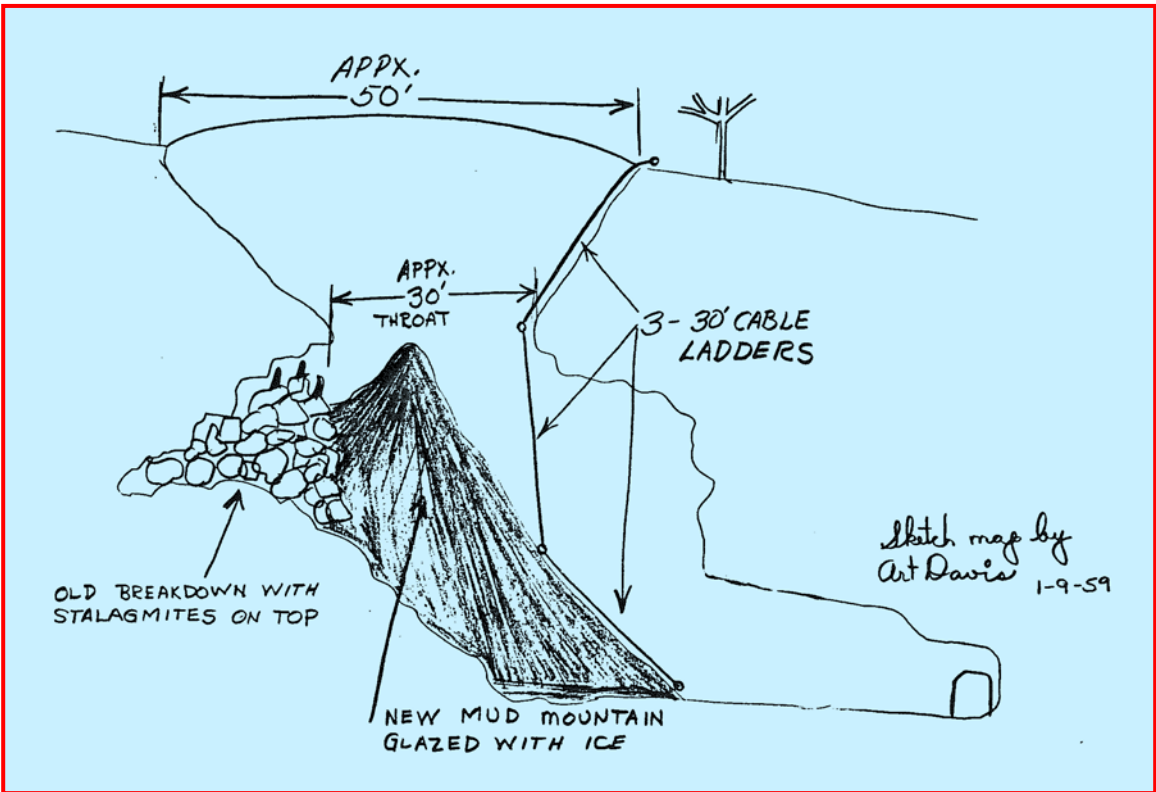
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  cell

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter:  digital PDF  printed/mailed





*Fuzzy Hole on the Hoosier National Forest in Lawrence County. This pit cave was suddenly formed when a dome collapsed in the summer of 1958, and was first explored in January 1959. A classic example of karst dynamics. Photograph by Jordan Lacy (2024). Sketch map by Art Davis (1959). Also see the center spread for another photo of this impressive pit cave.*