As recorded in his 1889 diary, Methodist circuit rider Hal Cunningham and a party of eight relied upon lantern and torchlight to enter “the Egyptian darkness of the subterranean wonder” known today as Kickapoo Cavern.

From the time of this first written account to the present, the caves of Kickapoo Cavern State Park have stirred great curiosity and interest. The intrigue of the park, however, lies as much above ground as below, for it boasts exceptional natural diversity and a rich human history at every level.

Further Reading


Tours

Guided flashlight tours of undeveloped Kickapoo Cavern are available on scheduled dates, through advance reservation only. Participants can see the largest “speleothem” in Texas—a natural column formation rising as tall as an eight-story building. Although the cave is now mostly dry, dripping water once played an important role in shaping this and other formations, such as icicle-like stalactites and stalagmites, rippled sheets of flowstone, and moonmilk that resembles white cream cheese.

For additional information about Kickapoo Cavern tours, birding tours and bat flight observation, contact the park at:

P.O. Box 705, Bracketville, TX 78832 • (830) 563-2342

www.tpwd.texas.gov/kickapoocavern
While Kickapoo Cavern supports relatively few animal species, Stuart Bat Cave teems with life. Cave swallows build mud nests on rocky protrusions just inside the cave mouth where they raise their young. Up to a million Mexican free-tailed bats roost deep within the cave from spring through fall. At dusk, the air comes alive with a flutter of bat wings as these flying mammals stream into the night in search of insects.

Each Mexican free-tailed bat can eat up to three-quarters of its body weight in insects nightly, including mosquitoes and moths that include some agricultural pests. That's the equivalent of a 150-pound person gobbling up 450 quarter-pound hamburgers in a single day! The population of bats inhabiting Stuart Bat Cave could consume up to 10 tons of insects nightly – the weight of two elephants.

Stuart Bat Cave historically provided sustenance for people as well as bats. The Seargeant family, owners of the original ranchland, added fencing to supplement the cave's natural enclosure and created a corral for sheep and goats. Accumulated bat droppings called guano, mined from the cave until 1957, provided important income when sold as a high-quality fertilizer and explosive agent. A shaft dug into the back of the cave by guano miners has since been sealed to ensure the warm, moist conditions that bats prefer. Potentially, higher temperatures in the recesses of the cave will be suitable for a maternity colony, where female bats will give birth and raise their pups.