



GLOSSARY

accidental – an animal in a cave who arrived there accidentally, either by wandering in, falling, or washing in

adaptation – the process of making adjustments in response to the environment; also, adaptations are the characteristics which have survived in an animal species

anatomy – the bodily structure of animals and humans

anticline – an upward fold of sedimentary rock

aquatic – an underwater habitat; also, the animals which live in it

aquifer – an underground water reservoir

artifact – an object produced by human workmanship

bed – a layer in sedimentary rock

bedding plane – the surface of deposition of an individual sedimentary rock layer

bedrock – rock which has not been significantly eroded and is still connected to the underlying strata

black shale – a sedimentary rock formed from very fine-grained particles of materials deposited in very deep water

calcite – a mineral composed of calcium carbonate; the principal element of limestone

carbon dioxide – a gas formed during organic decomposition and respiration

carbonate rock – a rock composed largely of calcite and/or dolomite minerals which each contain the carbonate (CO_3^{2-}) ion

contours – imaginary lines that join points of equal elevation on the surface of the land

carbonic acid – a weak acid formed when carbon dioxide mixes with water

cartographer – a maker of maps

cave/cavern – naturally formed underground passageways or rooms, most commonly caused by the dissolving action of slightly acidic groundwater in beds of limestone

cave coral – a cave formation consisting of small knobby clusters

cave formations – see speleothem

cave system – a series of connecting underground passageways

caver – a person who explores caves in a safe manner while showing respect for the cave, its contents, and the land above it

chiroptera – “hand-wing”; a bat is a flying mammal of this order of classification

colony – a group of the same kind of animals or plants living or growing together

column – a cave formation formed when stalactites and stalagmites grow together, or when one of them grows all the way to the floor or ceiling

crustacean – any of a variety of mostly aquatic animals having an outer shell, segmented body, and paired and jointed legs

culture – the ideas, skills, arts, and customs of a people from a particular period or civilization

dark zone – the region in a cave beginning where the cave becomes completely dark and extending throughout the rest of the cave

deposition – the act of settling or forming (e.g., layering) by a natural process

diurnal – occurring during the day, e.g. animals which are active during the day and sleep at night

detritus – decaying plant and animal matter broken down by fungi, bacteria, and micro-organisms

dissolution – the act of breaking down a soluble component of a material (e.g., dissolving calcium carbonate in limestone)

dolomite – the predominant mineral making up dolostone

dolostone – a carbonate rock common in karst regions

drapery – cave formation which forms when drops of water run down along a slanted ceiling

echolocation – the ability of an animal to orient itself by receiving the reflection of sounds it produces, such as with bats and dolphins

ecosystem – all the interacting organisms of a community and their non-living surroundings regarded as a unit

endangered species – a plant or animal in danger of becoming extinct

entrance zone – the region just inside the opening of a cave

environment – the sum of all the surroundings affecting a creature's development and survival

erosion – removal of weathered materials

evaporation – changing a liquid or solid into a gas

flowstone – a cave formation formed when water flows down walls, over floors, or over older formations

food generalist – an animal that eats a wide variety of foods (e.g. raccoon)

food specialist – an animal that has specific food needs (e.g. bat)

food web – the recycling of organic matter by an interlocking series of food chains

fossil – a remnant or trace of an organism of a past geologic age

grotto – a name given to a chapter or organized group of cavers; old term referring to a cave

groundwater – water that infiltrates the soil and is stored in slowly flowing reservoirs (aquifers); used loosely to refer to any water beneath the land surface

guano – a rich manure of bat dung

habitat – the arrangement of food, water, shelter, and space suitable to an animal's needs

helictites – cave formations that grow as small, twisted structures that project at varying angles

hydrologist – a scientist who studies water, in particular, its flow and chemistry in the natural world

hydrology – the scientific study of the properties, distribution, and effects of water on the earth's surface, in the soil and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere

insect – any of many small invertebrate animals having a segmented body and three pairs of legs

insectivore – any order of generally small mammals that are active mainly at night and feed primarily on insects

karst – a terrain where the topography is formed by dissolving rock, usually limestone, and is generally characterized by sinkholes, underground streams, and caves

karst windows – places where groundwater is exposed in the bottom of a sinkhole

larva – (plural larvae) the wingless, often worm-like, juvenile or sexually immature forms of insects which undergo metamorphosis to become adults (as when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly)

leaching – the process of extracting (a soluble substance) from some material by water filtering down through the material

limestone – a sedimentary rock consisting primarily of calcium carbonate

losing streams – streams that lose some of their flow into underlying karst groundwater

mammal – an animal that has fur, gives live birth, and nurses its young

mineral – an inorganic substance occurring naturally in the earth and having definite physical and chemical properties

natural selection – the process by which individuals with the best features to live in a particular environment survived at least long enough to pass on those features to their offspring

nocturnal – active during the night

nursery colony – area where mother bats keep their pups together with other pups

paleontologist – scientist who studies prehistoric forms of life through the study of plant and animal fossils

pollutant – substance in the water, air, or soil that leads to unhealthy conditions for human, plant, or animal habitation

predator – an animal that hunts other animals for food

prey – an animal that is hunted or caught for food

pup – baby bat

reservoir – a place where water is collected and can be drawn, both above ground or below ground (see aquifer)

salt peter – a potassium nitrate compound often found in dry caves and used in making gun powder

sandstone – a sedimentary rock formed by sand grains from ancient rivers and coastlines cementing together by minerals deposited from ancient groundwater

sedimentary – rock layers formed by or from sediment

seepage – liquid leaking or dripping very slowly through small openings

septic system – an underground tank and drain field that contains household waste to be decomposed

show cave – cave which has been made available for safe public exploration and guided tours

sinkhole – depression in the ground caused by the collapse of underlying rock (containing passageways formed in limestone), that provides direct conduits for surface water (and contaminants) to enter underground water supplies with little filtration

sinking streams – streams that disappear underground at their downstream ends

soda straws – cave formations that grow as thin-walled hollow tubes by water running down the inside them and depositing rings of calcite around their tips

soluble – capable of being dissolved

solutional cave – the most common cave, mostly formed through dissolution of soluble rocks

speleology – the scientific study of the cave environment, including both the physical, chemical, and the biological aspects

speleothems (cave formations) – secondary mineral deposits formed in caves, caused by the dissolution of minerals (such as calcite) and their subsequent deposition in crystalline form in growing layers and a variety of shapes

spelunker – an outdated term referring to a caver

spring – a natural flow of water from the ground, often the source of an above-ground stream

stalactites – common cave formations which hang down from the ceiling

stalagmites – common cave formations which rise up from the cave floor

strata – layers formed in rock or soil

surveying – accurate measuring of cave passages, typically using hand-held precision instruments, in order to produce a map of the entire cave

syncline – a downward fold of sedimentary rock

terrestrial – a habitat on land; also, the animals which live in it

travertine – thin layers of calcite which, over time, become layered rock

troglobite – an animal that lives its whole life in a cave and is specifically adapted to its particular environment

troglophile – an animal that lives in a cave but can also live above ground

trogloxene – an animal that visits caves for part of its activities

twilight zone – the region inside a cave where the light from the entrance begins to diminish

watershed – an area of land where all water collects and drains into a common body of water (e.g. ocean, river, lake)

water table – the top of an unconfined aquifer; indicates the level at which all below it is saturated with water

weathering – natural breaking up of materials by various methods

well – a hole or shaft that is dug or drilled to tap into an underground source of water

