



# 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 ( $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ ) 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)

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**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

