OREGON CAVES NATIONAL MONUMENT
THE NEWSPAPER OF OREGON CAVER
VOLUME ELEVEN, 1997-1998

FORESTS AND CAVES: ROLE MODELS FOR PRESERVATION

Caves are an excellent example of habitats that remain relatively unchanged over long periods of time. They are environments which are protected from the elements, with nearly constant climatic conditions. Ancient forests are also enclosures of preservation, with their shelter and varied habitats moderating the local climate. Research at Oregon Caves National Monument focuses on the life which can exist in these two unique ecosystems. With this understanding, resource managers are better able to conserve the Monument’s resources unimpaired for future generations.

CAVE JUNCTION
The community of Cave Junction, Oregon, located at the junction of Highway 199 (Redwood Highway) and Highway 46 (Caves Highway), is the gateway to Oregon Caves National Monument. Cave Junction is a full service community providing gas, food, and lodging. Cave Junction is a ninety minute drive from Crescent City, California and a forty-five minute drive from Grants Pass, Oregon.

HIGHWAY 46
The Monument lies 20 miles east of Cave Junction at the end of Highway 46. The drive from Cave Junction to the Monument takes about 45 minutes. The final 8 miles of Highway 46 are narrow, steep, and winding. Trailers are not advised and may be parked at the Illinois Valley Visitor Information Center (see right). Gas is not available beyond Cave Junction.

VISITOR CENTER
For information about travel conditions, tours, and facilities at Oregon Caves National Monument, please stop at the Illinois Valley Visitor Information Center before proceeding to the Monument. The Center is located in the community of Cave Junction, Oregon, one-half block up Highway 46.

NO FUN FOR DOGS
National Park Service areas like Oregon Caves are not great vacation destinations for pets. Pets can only go where cars can go, roads and parking lots, and are not allowed on trails or in the cave. The parking lot is not shaded for most of the time and pets are not allowed on any trails in the Monument, nearby Forest Service areas will permit pets in designated areas.

THE WEATHER
Summers are characterized by warm, sunny days and cool nights with an occasional afternoon or evening thunderstorm. The winters are moist and cold with an average yearly snowfall of 14 feet.

WINTER TRAVEL
The final 8 miles of Highway 46 may be covered with snow or ice from November to April. When these conditions exist, tire chains are advised. The Monument’s developed area lies at approximately 4,800 feet. Snow normally accumulates near the cave entrance. The nearby trails may have patches of ice and should not be used during cold, snowy, or windy weather unless you are well prepared.

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD
Please do not feed the wildlife. Although the birds and rodents at Oregon Caves National Monument may try to convince you otherwise, their dependence on human food is not a healthy lifestyle.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE
Rodents, including squirrels and chipmunks, can carry diseases that make humans ill. Bites, besides being painful, can transmit rabies. Hantavirus, a recently diagnosed illness that is potentially fatal, can be transmitted by contact with rodents or their droppings.

EMERGENCY: DIAL 911
For medical, fire, or law enforcement emergencies, dial 911 from any phone.

Snails, Sedges, and Springblooms: "The World of the Forest"
Above the cave, in the ancient forest, we are investigating the flowering times of spring-blooming plants and the locations of epiphytic lichens, soil animals (springtails), bark beetles, snails, calypso orchids, and certain rare plants to determine how Monument life is affected by changes in climate, fire cycles, and adjoining lands.

The first, peak, and last flowering times of over 200 species of herbs, forbs, and shrubs have been monitored for the last nine years. Herbarium records at Oregon Caves suggest that some plants are flowering earlier than they did fifty years ago. There may be a link between our findings and global research which indicates that climatic warming appears to have affected flowering times where records go back over 200 years.

Due to continual fragmentation, we are increasingly concerned about the health of our old-growth forests. One way to help us understand forest dynamics is to use sensitive organisms such as lichens (small crusty plants that are part alga and part fungus) to monitor ecosystem change. In the summer of 1996, we began sampling the most common species of lichens throughout the Monument to measure their diversity and biomass in the park and neighboring forest areas. This data will help us manage the forest more effectively.

In late spring and early summer, you can often see the common small snail found on the Monument, the Pacific Forest Snail. It is a beautifully colored, hard-shelled mollusk visible on even the shortest of walks through the area. Recent studies have been made to determine its most preferred soil and rock types. It seems to favor marble over volcanic argilite soils, possibly due to the abundance of calcite carbonate in the marble, a substance needed by the snails in the building of their shells. They also prefer shady, forested areas over open and cut-over lands.

Alien, or plant species introduced from elsewhere, are a constant resource problem on the Monument, outcompeting and taking over areas of native vegetation. This is especially challenging in habitats where rare species exist. To help us understand this situation, we have initiated an ongoing project to inventory sedges, grasses, and rushes in wetland areas. These plants and habitats were chosen because similar research in other areas suggested that they would be at risk. Nine sedge, five rush, and forty-two grass species were found; none of them were rare, but many of the grasses were aliens.

These are just a few examples of the current research projects on the Monument that will help us succeed in maintaining and preserving our delicate natural heritage for future generations.
GUIDED CAVE TOURS

Guided tours of Oregon Caves are offered year round (except Christmas and Thanksgiving) by the concessionaire, the Oregon Caves Company. Guides lead you through 0.6 miles of marble cave passage and discuss natural and cultural history topics related to the cave and its preservation.

PLEASE NOTE: The cave is an environment that contains natural hazards such as uneven walking surfaces, steep grades and stairs, and low rock ceilings.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, PLEASE EXERCISE CAUTION.

WHAT ARE THE HOURS?
Hours of operation change with the seasons. You may register for tours in person at the following times (dates are subject to change):

Spring (May):
- 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Winter (October - April):
- Set times: 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.
- Closed Christmas and Thanksgiving

Summer (Memorial Day - Labor Day):
- 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Fall (September):
- 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Note: In winter, tours start at set times. In spring, summer, and fall, tours do not start at set times. Please read "When is the Next Tour?"

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?
Rates for tours are as follows:

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May My Child Go?
Special regulations pertain to children. Children must be able to climb a set of test stairs unassisted and must be at least 42 inches tall. Childcare is not available.

WILL I BE COMFORTABLE INSIDE THE CAVE?
Some people feel anxious and claustrophobic inside the cave. Where the cave ceiling is low, you must bend over and watch your head. Many of the passages are narrow and, depending on your size, there may be areas where your torso touches both walls. Water drips from the ceiling and puddles form on the uneven trail surface.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?
Wear warm clothing and good walking shoes with rubber or vibram soles. The temperature inside the cave is 41 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Centigrade) year round. The trail surface is uneven and slippery. Cameras are allowed, but be advised that the lighting inside the cave is spotty and dim, very similar to inside a house. If you use a flash, please point your camera away from visitors and your guide so that they are not temporarily blinded.

WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED?
Do not bring food, beverages, gum, or tobacco products inside the cave. These are potential food sources for animals which upset the balance of the normally low-energy cave ecosystem. Canes, staffs, and tripods are also not allowed in the cave. The delicate cave formations may be damaged by these items. Please do not touch or lean on any of the cave walls or formations. Formations are easily worn down, stained by skin oils, and are very fragile.

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JUNIOR RANGERS!

Take the time to learn some wonderful things about Oregon Caves National Monument and earn a Junior Park Ranger badge! Junior Rangers are special people who help National Park Rangers do their job of keeping Oregon Caves National Monument a beautiful and enjoyable place. Junior Rangers also learn some interesting things about Oregon Caves which they can share with their friends at home.

TO BECOME A JUNIOR RANGER, complete tasks #1 and #2 below AND all the activities listed under your age group. THEN, turn in your work at the Ranger Office in the main parking lot, the Tour Registration Booth, or the Illinois Valley Visitor Information Center to earn a badge that looks just like the ones Rangers wear on their uniforms.

1. HELP KEEP THE MONUMENT CLEAN. Pick up any litter you see and put it in a trash can where it belongs. Recycle aluminum in special containers. Be careful of traffic in the parking areas!

   (adult sign here when completed)

2. TRY THIS SCAVENGER HUNT! See how many of these you can find during your stay here.

   - Black-tailed deer
   - Stellar's jay
   - Smiling Cave Guide
   - Squirrel
   - Animal tracks or scat
   - 3 different kinds of flowers
   - Stalactite
   - Stalagmite
   - Building covered with bark
   - Marble fireplace
   - US flag
   - Waterfall
   - The Big Tree
   - Bat

   (adult signs here when completed)

   AGES 9 TO 12:
   a. Complete items #1 and #2 above.
   b. Do Which is Which?
   c. Go on a guided cave tour *.
   (Cave Guide signs here when completed)
   d. Write answers in the space provided:
      Describe one way that people have changed the cave:
      If that change has harmed the cave, how can we fix the problem?
      In what ways are old forests important for wildlife?

   AGES 6 TO 8:
   a. Complete items #1 and #2 above.
   b. Do Which is Which?
   c. Go on a guided cave tour *.
   (Cave Guide signs here when completed)
   d. Look high into the branches of trees. In the box below, draw a picture of an animal you would expect to see there:

   UNDER AGE 6:
   a. Complete items #1 and #2 above.
   b. Do Who Lives at Oregon Caves?
   c. Animals do the strangest things! Act out an animal you have seen in the park. Have an adult guess what you are.

   (adult names animal here)

   Junior Ranger Pledge:
   "I promise to protect the plants, animals, and rocks of Oregon Caves National Monument, to hike safely, and to keep this wilderness beautiful forever."

   Who Lives at Oregon Caves?
   Circle the animals you might see at Oregon Caves National Monument. Remember, there are animals that live above and below ground.

   * Note: If a child age 6 to 12 is unable to attend a cave tour in order to fulfill the requirements for a Junior Ranger badge, please stop by the Ranger Office in the main parking lot. We will describe alternative activities which will allow the child to earn a badge.

CRATER LAKE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Oregon Caves Underworld is published for park visitors by the Crater Lake Natural History Association in cooperation with the National Park Service. The Crater Lake Natural History Association is a nonprofit organization working with the National Park Service to provide programs of education, interpretation, and research in Crater Lake National Park and Oregon Caves National Monument.

To help visitors to Oregon Caves better understand, appreciate, and protect the Monument, an Association sales outlet at the Illinois Valley Visitor Center in Cave Junction offers selected publications, maps, price lists, order forms, and applications for membership in the Association. Or write to: Crater Lake Natural History Association P. O. Box 157 Crater Lake, OR 97604
TIPS FOR HIKERS

DAY HIKING

There are 6 miles of day hiking trails within the boundary of Oregon Caves National Monument. For your safety and for the preservation of the natural environment, please observe the following when hiking on Monument trails:

• Bring water and wear good hiking shoes.
• Stay on marked trails.
• Do not litter. If you pack it in, be sure to pack it out.
• Pets are not permitted on trails.
• Camping and fires are not permitted.
• Smoking is not permitted on any of the trails.
• Hunting, trapping, and/or the possession of weapons or firearms is prohibited.

BACKPACKING

The Big Tree Trail connects with a National Forest trail to Bigelow Lakes, a popular overnight backcountry hike. Surface water may contain Giardia lamblia, a protozoa which can cause disease. Treat all water or carry your own. Campfires are allowed only in designated areas. Stop at the Siskiyou National Forest Ranger Station in Cave Junction for maps and information on backcountry travel.

HIKING TRAILS

NO NAME TRAIL
Length: 1.5 miles (2.4 km)
Duration: 45 minutes to 1 hour
Elevation gain: 400 feet
The No Name Trail leads past tumbling mountain streams, mossy cliffs, and dense mixed forests.

CLIFF NATURE TRAIL
Length: 1.0 mile (1.6 km)
Duration: 45 minutes
Elevation gain: 400 feet
Trail-side signs describe some of the natural features. You’ll see tall conifer forests, marble rock outcrops, and mountain vistas.

BIG TREE TRAIL
Length: 3.5 miles (5.7 km)
Duration: 2 to 3 hours
Elevation gain: 1,100 feet
See the largest-diameter Douglas-fir tree known in Oregon. The trail meanders through an old-growth forest to striking vistas.

"The next great wonder of our undiscovered Oregon is still less known to the world and almost entirely unknown to ourselves. This is the great Marble Halls of Oregon; a cavern, greater, so far as yet known, than the great Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. Its existence was first known only a few years back and, to this hour, has been explored for the depth of but a few miles."

Joaquin Miller
Songs of the Sierras
Volume Two, 1915