

American Cave and Karst Center

- A Place for Everyone

Dan Opel

I. Introduction

The American Cave and Karst Center - the name might lead one to believe that this museum is a place for specially - focused, highly technical cavers, and scientists. While the museum will appeal to these individuals, it will by no means exclude anyone else. In fact, this article will demonstrate that the museum is a place for everyone! The following categories will show those who will find something of interest to themselves in the museum :

II. Children

In the section of the museum that explains the food chain, children (and adults) will receive a practical explanation of the levels of a cave food web. To draw their attention and to help explain, the web will

be electronically-lit to act as a pinball game.

In this version of pinball, the visitor can manipulate the flight of the ball, tracking it with the lights which come on revealing specific members of the chain.

Hopefully, what might be a very confusing fiid pyramid with many arrows, can be an easily-understood, fun lesson.

Yet another attraction appealing to children will be the exhibit that allows the child to be a bat. Actually, he or she will have a chance to understand echolocation by "flying". Here, the participant will don a headpiece that will not permit vision, but one that will emit sounds to help the child maneuver through the cave. He will have a steering wheel to control the flight, and increasingly loud sounds will warn him that he's getting too close to a wall. The game will end when the bat cannot negotiate a turn in the cave.

III. History Buffs

Photos, murals, and exhibits showing the people and caves from prehistoric to present times will be of interest to those interested in history. Art, tools, bones, and other artifacts will be displayed to show how prehistoric men lived, how caves have been used domestically, how caves have been explored, and how caves have been studied.

Complete explanation panels will accompany each area and its exhibits.

IV. People Interested in Geography

Caves and Karstlands of the world will be displayed by maps in the museum. Each location of these areas will show up on the map of the world. Additionally, fifteen cave states will be featured for those interested in U.S. geography. Each states map will reveal the location of the prominent caves, highlighting special features from the state's celebrated caves.

V. Ecology-Conscious People

The distribution, origins, movement uses, and storage of groundwater will be exhibited in the museum. Springs, artesian water, thermal springs, and geysers will all be addressed and explained.

This area will also explain the importance of clean water, the science behind hydrology, and even what makes a good well. The culmination of this area will be a computer game which will make the player a water resource manager. At the end of this manager's

“solutions” concerning water usage, he will receive a computer printout of how well he “managed” the water.

VI. Biology Admirers

Biology of caves will be divided into three cave regions : the entrance, the twilight cave, and the inner cave. This realm will include exhibits of life from trees, mammals, birds, and other life on the exterior, to cave-dependent microscopic life in the cave's inner depths.

A special section will concentrate on bats and their roles in caves. This will be the section that includes the echolocation challenge.

VII. Scholars

The third floor of the museum will one day house the most complete library on the topic of caves, groundwater, and karst regions. The plan is to slowly build this so that eventually scholars from elementary to graduate school and beyond will have a place to research and study.

VIII. Everyone

The lobby of the museum will display murals explaining caves and their significance. The cave formation which will be in view, as well, will hopefully draw people so that we can educate each visitor. Whether it is something that I've mentioned or any of the numerous aspects that I omitted, the American Cave and Karst Center is a place for everyone.

Finally, the most important piece missing from this project is financial support. With tax-deductible contributions, we can reach our goal of opening the doors in the coming year.