

# Cave Week 2024 Report



# About Cave Week

Cave Week is set aside as a time to enjoy, celebrate, and recognize all of our connection to these unique environments. Caves provide recreational opportunities for millions of people each year. These sensitive environments serve as a habitat for many living creatures, preserve our past, and provide opportunities for scientific advancements. The focus of the week is on the importance, geology, history, biology, current research, exploration, and restoration of caves around the world. All are invited to join this celebration of the underground world.

## Cave Week 2024 Goals and Objectives

1. [Create an organizing committee and start developing a strategic plan with a purpose, vision and to answer “What is Cave Week?”](#)
2. [Identify cave week partners and develop tracking mechanisms](#)
3. [Review/expand resources including a communications plan, logo and branding guide](#)
4. [Develop metrics to assess growth and plan future improvement](#)

## Executive Summary

Cave Week 2024 took place June 2-8, 2024. This was the first time the National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI) organized the event. Previously, it had been led by the National Park Service (NPS). NCKRI established an organizing committee with representatives from NPS, National Caves Association (NCA), National Speleological Society (NSS), US Forest Service (USFS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This committee guided the development of activities and coordinated with partnering organizations to promote and celebrate the event. The chosen dates for Cave Week 2025 are June 1-7th.

70 different organizations participated in Cave Week 2024 including 20 NPS units and 20 NCA members. This is an increase from the 18 total participating organizations, including 16 NPS units, that participated in 2022.

In 2023 the Cave Week toolkit was developed and made accessible by NCKRI. The Cave Week toolkit contains a communications plan that outlined resources and methods to celebrate Cave Week, social media templates via Canva, images, diagrams, activities and spreadsheets that contained vetted links to online education materials.

For 2024 Cave Week, the 2023 toolkit was updated and expanded. In addition to the 2023 materials, it now includes a logo and branding kit. The Cave Week mailing list sent out three newsletters to provide

information about webinars, the Cave Week toolkit, communications plan, and other updates. Cave Week resources were also distributed via Cave Week partners and newly created Cave Week Facebook and Instagram pages. In July, a survey was sent out to get feedback on successes and needs for future planning efforts. The url [caveweek.org](http://caveweek.org) was purchased to facilitate creating a dedicated cave week website.

This is the first year that metrics have been collected to track growth, the number of partnering organizations, communication channels, and the number of participants. Nine of 70 different organizations shared their metrics for use in this report.

<b>Channels/Mechanism of Reach</b>	<b>Total Reach</b>
Cave Week Webinars	200
Cave Week websites	7048
Cave Week Facebook	684388
Cave Week Instagram	58190
Cave Week in person events at NCKRI	674
IG #caveweek used	733

The remainder of this report provides insight into those who participated in Cave week, details about the toolkit for cave week, and what metrics were developed to assess the success of events.



Families do an activity identifying bat calls during Cave night at NCKRI headquarters. Photo courtesy of Inspired by Science

## Organizers, Partners and Participants

### Organizing Committee

The organizing committee was made up of members of NCKRI (Devra Willingham, Raquel Lugo and Pat Seiser), NPS (Dan Pawlak, Rebecca Rolland, Grace Braver, Georgia Schneider), NCA (Ann Dunlavy), NSS (Jennifer Young, Emily Davis), USFS (Lima Soto) and the BLM (Kyle Voyles). This committee focused on creating the infrastructure to support widespread celebration of Cave week such as expanding and modifying resources, as well as disseminating information to partners.

### New Partners

This year we saw support from new organizations which included 20 members of the NCA, four state geological surveys, the NSS and the Asociación de Montañismo y Escalada of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. A list of partners can be found in Appendix A.

## Toolkit and Resources

The [Cave Week toolkit](#) provides digital resources and a [communications plan](#) which acts as a guide for creating a Cave Week social media campaign or event. This year, a branding kit was added as described below.

### Branding Kit and Templates

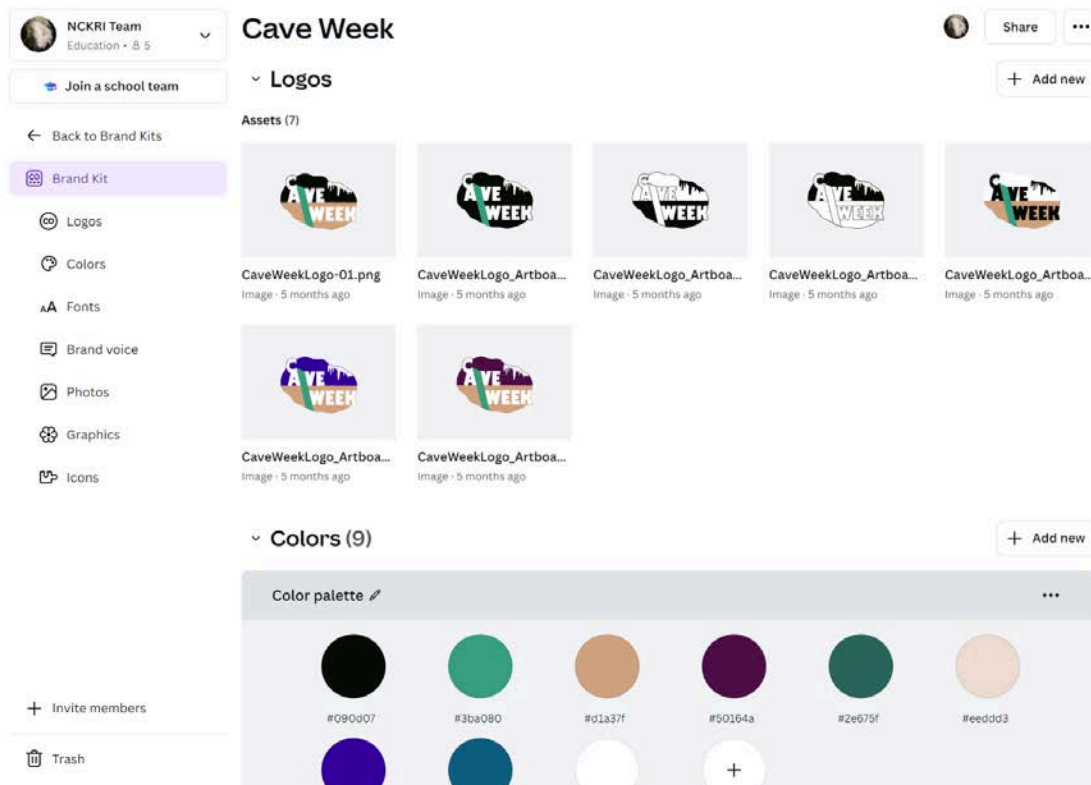
A branding kit and social media templates ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) were created using Canva, a cloud based program, with a color palette, logo, photos, graphics and fonts. The use of the branding kit is not required. The results of the post Cave Week survey showed many partners found the branding kit and templates very useful to quickly make materials.

## Logo

The branding kit includes multiple Cave Week logos. For 2025 a team will assess logo use and modify color palette if necessary.



Three most used logos during Cave Week.



Logos and color palette from Canva template.

## Font

Font choices help form an identity since different shapes elicit different reactions.

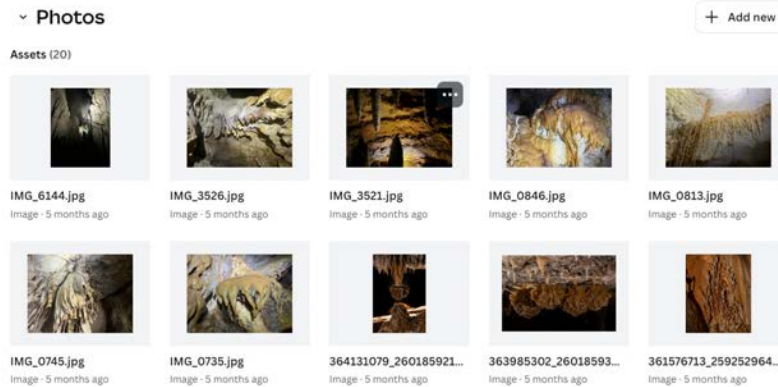
**Titles: Gills Sans Bold**

Main Text: Gordita (Canva) or Spectral Normal

Supplemental or Complimentary Text: Open Sauce (Canva) or Open Sans

## Photos

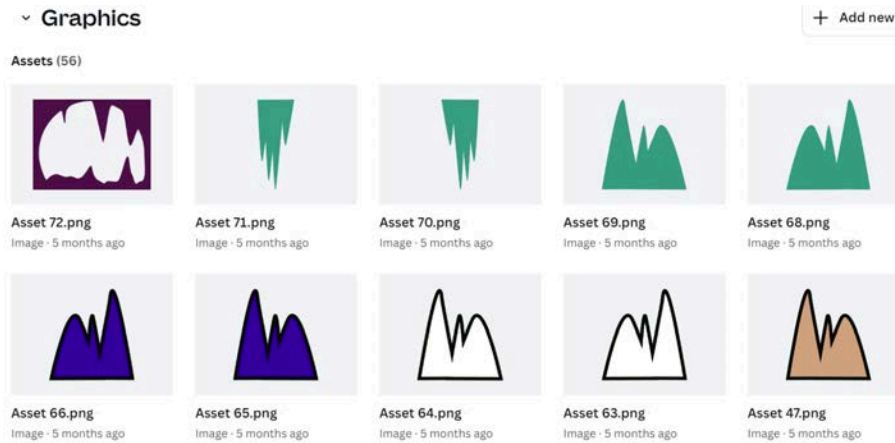
Photos were added to the branding kit that could be used by partners to make Cave Week materials. All photos were either taken by NCKRI staff or permission from the photographer was received to be used for Cave Week.



Screenshot of the branding kit created through Canva showing photos that partners can use for their materials.

## Graphics

Graphics were created for outreach or social media materials using the Cave Week color palette.



Screenshot of the branding kit created in Canva showing graphics that can be incorporated in digital or printed materials.

## Social Media Templates

The different branding elements were used to create media templates for partners to make their own social media campaign or cave week materials.



Example of Cave Week templates being used by a Cave Week participant. Photo courtesy of Cave Talk.

Bats are a key component of many ecosystems around the world. They play a crucial role in agriculture production by pollinating, dispersing seeds or helping control pests. Many bat species use caves as shelter for hibernating and roosting which is critical in a bat's life cycle. Unfortunately, bat's population has been declining dramatically due to White Nose Syndrome, a fungal disease affecting hibernating bats.

This, along with habitat alteration and roosts disturbances, has put major stresses on bat populations and many species are now endangered.

Want to help bats? Here are some things that you can do in your home:

- ✓ Build or establish bat houses for roosting
- 🌻 Plant flowers that attract insects that bats like to eat
- 🌳 Incorporate trees
- ✗ Avoid garden pesticides

For more information on how you can help bats: <https://www.batcon.org/creating-a-garden-for-bats/>  
[#CaveWeek](#) [#bat](#) [#cave](#) [#batgarden](#) [#WNS](#) [#WhiteNoseSyndrome](#) [#batconservation](#) [#bathouse](#)

## Other Resources

Within the Cave Week Toolkit are other resources such as diagrams, cave safety information, cave trivia, and spreadsheets of various cave related topics which were reviewed and expanded on. This is an area in which Cave Week can easily grow and expand its usability.

## Measuring Reach and Impact

To track growth, data about partners, media channels and reach were collected. Reach is defined as the number of different people who saw a piece of content via a specific medium or platform. Impact is defined as the quality of the reach or the quality of a connection to an individual or agency.

### Cave Week Mailing List

The Cave Week mailing list is maintained by NCKRI staff via Constant Contact with over 200 subscribers. Three newsletters were sent out with a 63% average open rate . Cave Week subscribers are predominantly people who work for a public agency (NPS, USFS, state ), a show cave or volunteer at a non-profit associated with caves (NSS, cave conservancy). [April 1, 2024](#), announced the “Celebrate Cave Week” webinar, linked to the Cave Week Toolkit and explained the 2024 communications plan, [May 16, 2024](#) announced more upcoming events and [June 26, 2024](#) provided a recap and solicited feedback. Information about Cave Week also went out to the NCKRI News on [June 6, 2024](#) to over 2500 people with a 50% open rate.

## Websites

The [NPS Cave Week webpage](#), which includes a description of Cave Week and resources about NPS cave parks, received 448 views during Cave Week. [NCKRI also created a Cave Week webpage](#), which included links to the Cave Week toolkit, mailing list signup and links to Cave Week partners. The url “caveweek.org” was purchased in preparation for the development of a Cave Week website.

## Gifs

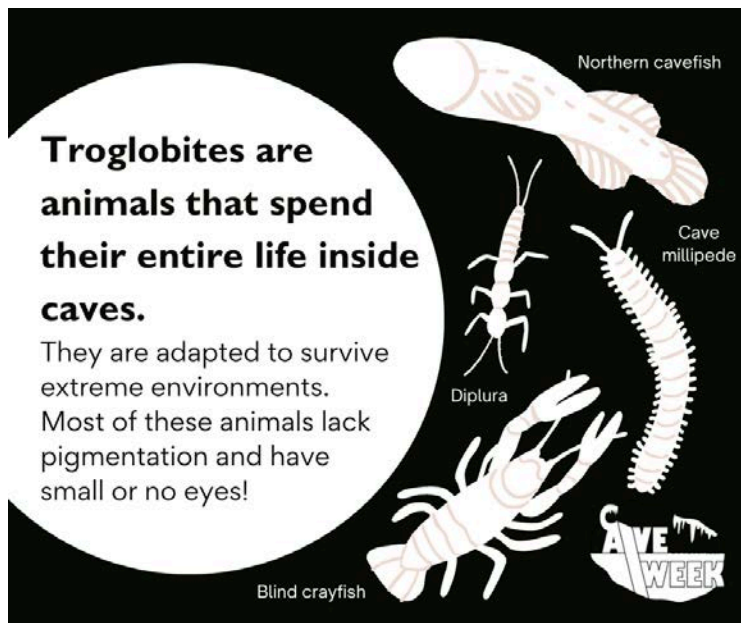
A Cave Week gif was created that was shared via social media and text messaging through Tenor (@[nckri](#)) and Giphy (@[caveeducation](#)). Giphy tracks views, so the number of people who have seen the gif, while Tenor tracks shares, the number of different people who have shared the gif.

Gif platform	Metric
Giphy	351,000 views
Tenor	Shares 6

## Social Media

A Cave Week instagram account ([@caveweek](#)) was created this year which currently has 48 followers and Cave Week facebook ([@caveweek](#)) was also created which currently has 82 followers.

Social Media Platform	Total Reach (9 partners reported)
Cave Week Facebook	684388
Cave Week Instagram	58190
IG #caveweek used	733



Example social media for Cave Week

## In-Person Events

At NCKRI headquarters there were three in-person events during Cave Week with over 675 people in attendance. Many Cave Week partners organized in person events but did not share their number of participants. Some partners celebrated by talking about Cave Week during their guided tours; others gave discounts on tickets. Inner Space Cavern had multiple special events from snacks, to read-a-longs and other children's activities.

## Online Events

There were two Cave Week webinars that were live via zoom and later posted on NCKRI's YouTube channel. "[Celebrate Cave Week 2024! What is Cave Week and what resources are available?](#)" was attended by 30 people and, as of 12/31/2024 has 100 views via youtube. "[Cave Week: Book Reading of CAVES](#)", received over 60 via youtube (as of 12/31/2024) and 41 during the live event.

## Periodicals and Podcast

Cave Week was featured in multiple periodicals and podcasts this year. A Cave Week article was in the June 2024 edition of the [National Speleological Society News](#), which is available to the society's more than 8000 members. The 98th episode of [The Caving Podcast](#) interviewed Raquel Lugo of NCKRI and Dan Pawlak, the originator of Cave Week. There were further reminders in the May and June episodes, with a total reach of 2218 plays. The [National Caves Association](#) publication featured Cave Week articles in the May, June and July that went out to over 100 show caves. NCA's *Cave Talk* podcast interviewed Devra Willingham in a two part episode talking about cave education and ways to participate in Cave Week that came out during Cave Week.

## Post Cave Week Survey

Thank you for celebrating Cave Week with us and helping us report on the activities that occurred during Cave Week. Please answer the following questions to help us collect information about the reach/success of Cave Week, so that Cave Week leadership can improve your experience. If you have any metrics that can help us measure the reach of Cave Week please include it in your answers.



After Cave Week a survey was sent to Cave Week partners via the Cave Week mailing list, the organizing committee and social media. Some partners like the US Forest Service and National Caves Association further sent out the survey through their mailing lists. The survey was used to gather information such as the organization participation, resource use and needs. There were also questions to assess reach/impact of Cave Week events. We received 19 responses from partners from show caves, caving non-profits and the US Forest Service. Most of these organizations who responded to the survey could not share metrics for various reasons.

## Results

- 56% first time partners.
- 78% celebrated through social media
- 39% celebrate with educational events.
- 47% used the social media templates
  - “Super helpful to have materials to pull from, especially since non-geologists (non-cavers) are participating in the development of outreach materials.”
- 61% used other parts of the Cave Week toolkit with the most popular materials being:
  - Online Resources/Helpful Websites (70%), Logo (40%), Cave and Karst Word of the Week (40%) and Ideas for Events (40%)
- 56% watched either the 2023 or the 2024 “Celebrate Cave Week” webinar

## Other Comments:

- “This was our first year trying to implement cave week. We did a small social media rollout to make sure our workload was manageable so that we can build upon each. The Cave Week toolkit

was SO helpful. It broke the ice to actually implement a cave week and was successful. See below our social media stats ....”

- “I thought the preparation for Cave Week was very thorough and I liked how the communications and social media guide was open to the public online.”
- “As I am beginning my internship as a Cave Manager, cave week came at the perfect time to ease me into the caving environment, and made me even more excited to work with caves and alongside grottos.”
- “I would have liked to see more webinars for Cave Week.”

## Future Opportunities

NCKRI has dedicated staff and resources to help support the creation of new materials and expanding Cave Week’s reach.

### Things to consider for 2025

1. Develop Cave Week website, expand social media presence and shareable media
2. Create clear roles of the organizing committee and developing sub committees
3. Improve reporting mechanism and share via Cave Week media channels
4. Review survey and revise toolkit based on feedback

### Moving forward

In early 2025 Cave Week planning with the organizing committee will begin by reviewing the 2024 celebration, developing a strategic plan and goals for the new year. The committee will also assess the resources and platforms created the year before, create a plan for improvement and implementation while ensuring alignment to Cave Week’s purpose, which centers around people learning and understanding their connection to caves.

# Appendixes

## Appendix A: Cave Week Partners

<b>Name of Cave partner</b>	<b>Agency</b>
America's National parks	National Geographic
American Cave Conservation Association	Nonprofit
Asociación de Montañismo y Escalada of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	University
Banff National Park	Parks Canada
Black Hills Parks and Forest Association	NPS
Blue Springs Caverns Park	show cave
BLM Montana/Dakotas	BLM
Bridal Cave	show cave
Bureau of Land Management	BLM
Bureau of Land management- New Mexico	BLM
California State Parks Inland Empire District	state park
Carlsbad Caverns NP	NPS
Cave of the Mounds NNL	NNL
Caves, Lakes and Corvettes	Tourism office
Channel Island NP	NPS
Cibola NF & NG	NF
Craters of the Moon NM	NPS
Cumberland Caverns	show cave
Descent Caving Magazine	publisher
Diamond Cave	show cave
El Malpais NM	NPS
Endless caverns resort	show cave
Explore Nature (NPS)	NPS
Glasgow-Barren County KY Tourism	tourism office
Golden Gate National Recreation Area	NPS
Grand Caverns	show cave
Grand Canyon NP	NPS
Great Basin NP	NPS
Great Basin NP foundation	NPS
Hidden River Cave/American Cave Museum	show cave
Inner Space Caverns	show cave
Island Kayaking	tourism
Jewel Cave NP	NPS
Karst Waters Institute	Nonprofit

Kartchner Caverns State Park	state park
Kentucky Geological Survey	geological survey
Lincoln Caverns	show cave
Lincoln National Forest	NF
Longhorn Caverns State Park	state park
Lynn Camp Launch	tourism
Mammoth Cave Biosphere Region	biosphere
Mammoth Cave NP	NPS
Melrose Caverns	show cave
Merlin Tuttle's Bat Conservation	nonprofit
National Caves Association	nonprofit
National Park Service	NPS
National Parks Conservation Association	nonprofit
National Parks Family	NPS
National Speleological Society	nonprofit
Nature Conservancy in Tennessee	conservancy
Nature Explorers Club	nonprofit
National Caves and Karst Research Institute	Research Center
Ohio Geological Survey	geological survey
Onyx Cave	show cave
Oregon Caves NM and preserve	NPS
Penns Cave	show cave
Rushmore	show cave
Squire Boone Caverns	show cave
Stark Caverns	show cave
Texas state Parks	state park
Timpanogos Cave NM	NPS
US attorney Nevada	public figure
US Fish and Wildlife Service	USFWS
USGS Astrogeology	geological survey
Virginia DCR	state agency
Virginia State Parks	state park
Visit Cave city Kentucky	tourism office
West Virginia nature Conservancy	conservancy
Wind Cave NP	NPS
Wisconsin Geological and Natural History survey	geological survey