CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC

C.O.G.nizance

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bat count is coming up soon, check with John VanDyke for further details.

***The Next meeting is December 12, 2025 at 8:00 pm central time on Google Meet. Becky will send out invitations.**

The National White-nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocol (March 2024) outlines procedures to effectively clean and disinfect clothing, footwear, and equipment that may have been exposed to *Pd*, and can help reduce the risk of human-assisted spread of the fungus. The recommendations are based on the best available evidence to date.

Key changes to the current update compared to October 2020 include the following:
-Ethanol, Formula 409 and Hibiclens are removed from the approved disinfection product table.
-Isopropanol concentration is narrowed to 50-70%.the previous protocol, >50% isopropanol was approved.
-The WNS management areas map is updated to reflect the current status of Pd and WNS occurrence in the US. Hawai'i, Alaska, and Puerto Rico are added to the map of management areas.
- Guidelines for movement of gear and when to decontaminate gear are stated in a bulleted list rather than a diagram.
-Additional information is provided regarding decontamination of mist-nets, harp traps and acoustic equipment.

from https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/mmedia-education/national-wns-decontamination-protocol-u-s

TREASURER'S REPORT

December 2025 TREASURER'S REPORT

INCOME		EXPENSES
Dividends	$ 0.01	
CASH	$ 6.05	
CHECKING	**$ 300.60**	
SAVINGS	**$ 1235.25**	
TOTAL	**$ 1541.20**	

12/5/2025

PREPARED BY TREASURER
JOHN TALBOT NSS #30254

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO MEETING
NOVEMBER 14, 2025

ATTENDING: Sue Bozeman, Becky Hunsinger—virtual meeting facilitator, John Talbot, Lil Town, Carole and Dale Town, Duane Del Vecchio, Steve Beleu
PRESIDING: S. Beleu
START: 8:15
OLD BUSINESS – We had bat count news from John Van Dyke: bat count is set for December 6, 10:00. John and his family, Duane, and Jon Woltz will comprise our team this year. Duane noted that we need to also maintain our normal bat count in February to have consistent annual data. Becky may try to attend the bat count in February, but not in December.
NEW BUSINESS – none
TREASURER'S REPORT – Treasurer Emeritus John Talbot read his report.
END: 8:41

TRIP REPORTS

Short web report on WNS Data Gathering Trip in Jester
http://ddvdude.org/old%20news/2025/wnstest25/index.htm

POTPOURRI

Great Basin National Park launches Introduction to Wild Caving Tour
Date: July 14, 2025
Great Basin National Park launches Introduction to Wild Caving Tour, providing a new way to explore ancient Lehman Caves - Great Basin National Park (U.S. National Park Service)

In-depth ranger-guided tour invites adventurous visitors off the paved trail into sections of Lehman Caves never before seen by the public Contact: Travis Mason-Bushman, 775-293-2146

BAKER, Nev. – Visitors to Great Basin National Park can now explore the park's 10-million-year-old Lehman Caves from a new perspective by joining an Introduction to Wild Caving Tour. As staff capacity permits, three-hour ranger-guided tours will be offered into wild sections of Nevada's longest cave on Saturdays and Sundays through Labor Day weekend. These tours visit areas of Lehman Caves which have been closed to the public since 1981, restoring access to some of the most spectacular rooms in the cave.

"The Introduction to Wild Caving Tour provides Great Basin visitors with an opportunity to explore the wild side of Lehman Caves," Great Basin National Park Superintendent Ashley Adams said. "We're pleased to unlock new visitor experiences in the park and encourage greater understanding of cave resources.

(Continued on page 3)

Funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, the new wild caving tour is part of an interdisciplinary project to expand scientific knowledge and public appreciation of wild

caves in Great Basin National Park and the surrounding area. While Lehman Caves are the largest and most accessible, there are 39 other caves within the park's 77,180 acres. Park cave ecologist Gretchen Baker spearheaded the effort to study these resources and, as an avid caver, sought an opportunity to give park visitors a chance to experience wild caving.

Tour participants will receive an orientation to safe and sensitive off-trail caving techniques before entering the caves. After following Lehman Caves' paved trail to its end, visitors will leave lighted rooms behind and enter a spectacular realm of the cave long unseen by the public. Rising through the Royal Gorge, the group will scramble up boulders into the football field-sized Talus Room. Those who choose the optional squeeze into the Behman Annex – never before open to the public – will find delicate helictites and calcite formations. Then the tour will venture under the Talus Room's 80-foot vaulted ceilings to the West Room and back to the developed part of the cave. Along the way, the ranger guide will explain the cave's intricate natural and cultural history, pointing out 19th-century inscriptions and million-year-old geological formations.

The Introduction to Wild Caving Tour is limited to eight participants. Tickets are $40 and are available only by advanced reservations online at https://recreation.gov. The tour is open to adults 16 and over; those under 18 will need parental permission. Participants should be prepared to take part in off-trail hiking and rock scrambling, and should be comfortable in dark spaces. Complete information about the tour is available at https://go.nps.gov/LehmanCaves.

World's biggest spiderweb discovered inside 'Sulfur Cave' with 111,000 arachnids living in pitch black

By Sascha Pare published November 4, 2025

World's biggest spiderweb discovered inside 'Sulfur Cave' with 111,000 arachnids living in pitch black | Live Science

A giant colonial spiderweb in a sulfuric cave on the border between Greece and Albania may be the largest ever found — and it was built by spiders we didn't know liked the company of others.

Researchers have discovered more than 111,000 spiders thriving in what appears to be the world's biggest spiderweb, deep inside a pitch-black cave on the Albanian-Greek border.

The "extraordinary" colony consists of a colossal web in a permanently dark zone of the cavern, according to a study published Oct. 17 in the journal Subterranean Biology. The web stretches 1,140 square feet (106 square meters) along the wall of a narrow, low-ceilinged passage near the entrance of the cave. It is a patchwork of thousands of individual, funnel-shaped webs, the researchers noted.

This is the first evidence of colonial behavior in two common spider species and likely represents the largest spiderweb in the world, said study lead author István Urák, an associate professor of biology at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania in Romania.

"The natural world still holds countless surprises for us," Urák told Live Science in an email. "If I were to attempt to put into words all the emotions that surged through me [when I saw the web], I would highlight admiration, respect, and gratitude. You have to experience it to truly know what it feels like."

(Continued on page 4)

The spider megacity is located in Sulfur Cave, a cavern that was hollowed out by sulfuric acid formed from the oxidation of hydrogen sulfide in groundwater. While the researchers revealed tantalizing new information about Sulfur Cave's spider colony, they weren't the first to see the giant

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web. Cavers with the Czech Speleological Society discovered it in 2022 during an expedition in the Vromoner Canyon. A team of scientists then visited the cave in 2024, plucking specimens from the web that Urák analyzed before going on his own expedition to Sulfur Cave.

This analysis revealed that two spider species live in the colony: Tegenaria domestica, known as the barn funnel weaver or domestic house spider, and Prinerigone vagans. On their visit to the cave, Urák and his colleagues estimated there were about 69,000 T. domestica and more than 42,000 P. vagans specimens. DNA analyses for the new research also confirmed that these are the dominant species in the colony, Urák said.

Sulfur Cave's spider colony is one of the largest ever documented, and the species involved weren't previously known to assemble and cooperate in this way, Urák said. T. domestica and P. vagans are widespread near human dwellings, but the colony is "a unique case of two species cohabiting within the same web structure in these huge numbers," he said.

Scientists would normally expect barn funnel weavers to prey on P. vagans, but the lack of light in the cave may impair the spiders' vision, according to the study.

The spiders instead eat non-biting midges, which in turn feast on white microbial biofilms — slimy secretions that protect microorganisms against threats in their environment — from sulfur-oxidizing bacteria in the cave. A sulfur-rich stream fed by natural springs flows through Sulfur Cave, filling the cavern with hydrogen sulfide and helping microbes, midges and their predators survive, the researchers wrote in the study.

The spiders' sulfur-rich diet influences their microbiomes, causing them to be significantly less diverse than the microbiomes of spiders from the same two species outside the cave, gut

Molecular data also showed that the spiders inside the cave were genetically different from their relatives living outside, suggesting the cave-dwellers have adapted to their dingy surroundings.

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"Often, we think we know a species completely, that we understand everything about it, yet unexpected discoveries can still occur," Urák said. "Some species exhibit remarkable genetic plasticity, which typically becomes apparent only under extreme conditions. Such conditions can elicit behaviors that are not observed under 'normal' circumstances."

It's important to preserve the colony, despite challenges that might arise from the location of the cave between two countries, Urák said. In the meantime, the researchers are working on another study that will reveal further clues about Sulfur Cave's inhabitants, he added.

5,500-year-old wildcat found in Glencurran Cave rewrites Ireland's prehistoric wildlife history

by Dario Radley

November 30, 2025

5,500-year-old wildcat found in Glencurran Cave rewrites Ireland's prehistoric wildlife history | Archaeology News Online Magazine

A new archaeological and genetic study has furnished the earliest direct evidence that European wildcats once roamed prehistoric Ireland. Researchers have identified wildcat remains from Glencurran Cave in the Burren, County Clare, dating to roughly 3600 BCE. The finding confirms that the species lived on the island more than 5,500 years ago, settling a long-standing uncertainty about Ireland's early fauna.

The discovery was made through excavations led by Dr. Marion Dowd of the Atlantic Technological University. Although small numbers of cat bones have been recovered from Mesolithic and Neolithic sites over the past decades, none had ever been radiocarbon dated. This left open the possibility that earlier finds represented intrusive domestic cats rather than true prehistoric wildlife. The new study provides the first unequivocal confirmation that European wildcats were present in Ireland during the Neolithic.

A total of 39 bones from a single adult animal were excavated within Glencurran Cave. The remains did not show any signs of butchery, burning, or other evidence of human activity, and thus, the cat had died naturally. Identification by zooarchaeologist Margaret McCarthy showed that all the bones belonged to a wildcat, and radiocarbon dating carried out at Queen's University Belfast confirmed their Neolithic age.

Ancient DNA work later conducted at the University of Rome Tor Vergata strengthened this conclusion. Genetic analysis revealed that the animal belonged to a lineage of European wildcats distinct from both domestic cats and Near Eastern wildcats. The DNA also showed that the Glencurran specimen was a male and genetically closer to wildcats from regions such as Italy and Spain than to the modern Scottish population.

The findings help interpret an otherwise complex picture. Medieval texts do refer to wildcats in Ireland, but such descriptions might refer to feral domestic cats, and misidentifications with pine martens are known. Given the very limited number of securely dated remains, there has been much debate about whether wildcats were ever native to Ireland or were introduced by people. The new evidence shows that they were present at least by the Neolithic, but many questions still remain open: whether the first wildcats arrived during the Mesolithic, or instead with the first farming communities, is not known; neither is the overall distribution of the species nor when it eventually disappeared.

Wildcats once ranged broadly across Europe but experienced a sharp decline in recent centuries due to habitat loss, persecution, and hybridization with domestic cats. They are elusive animals and avoid human contact; they prefer woodland environments, and such characteristics might explain why prehistoric remains in Ireland are rare.

Researchers emphasize that scientific testing needs to be extended to all cat remains found within Irish archaeological contexts. It is only through the combination of radiocarbon dating with ancient DNA analysis that true prehistoric wildcats can be differentiated from later domestic cats, thus allowing researchers to trace when the species arrived, how it adapted to the Irish environment, and the circumstances of its disappearance. The Glencurran find represents a significant step toward reconstructing Ireland's ancient ecosystems.

Friday
December 12, 2025
There will be a virtual meeting.
See you online!

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Xmas lights as illumination in caves Press
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