Tawney’s Cave - Giles County, VA

The property containing the two roadside entrances to Tawney’s Cave has been in the Link family for generations. The Link family feels that they are fortunate to have such a superb natural treasure on their property and have always been happy to allow others to enjoy their cave. However, in recent years, the number of groups visiting Tawney’s has increased dramatically. With that rise in traffic the number of individuals behaving irresponsibly on the property and in the cave has also increased. In addition, there has been a noticeable impact on the entrance slopes and also within the cave. Several incidents of vandalism on the Link’s property finally led them to limit access to the cave, and ask local cavers about the possibility of a gate to deter unauthorized access.

The roadside entrances to Tawney’s were gated November 15th and 16th, 2003. To relieve traffic and disturbance on the Link’s property, a volunteer cave manager has agreed to manage the keys to the gate and allow cave visitors to park on his property.

Access policy:

- Parking will be at the Bat Ranch. Please do not park in front of the covered bridge or beside the road.
- Group size will be limited to a total of 12 persons.
- No more than two simultaneous groups will be allowed.
- A maximum of 5 trips will be permitted per week.
- Each cave explorer must have a helmet mounted light.
- A valid drivers license shall be required in exchange for each key. Lost key replacement is $20.
- Keys will not be issued to minors.
- Copying of keys is prohibited. You must always check out a key to enter the cave.
- Groups should plan access arrangements in advance if possible to avoid disappointment or conflicts. The manager can be contacted at (540)626-3386 between the hours of 10am-7pm.
- The granting of access by the cave manager or the Link family is not an endorsement of a group or any cave explorers ability. They are not responsible for cave explorers safety and are not a sign out.
- The Link family and cave manager reserve the right to deny or grant access to anyone, for any reason or no reason at all. The cave is on private property and visitors are guests.

Behavior Policy:

- Cave explorers should respect that they are the Link’s and Bat Ranch’s guests and behave appropriately by being quiet, courteous and keeping the cave, property, and parking area clean of trash.
- Cave explorers will lock the gate behind them while in the cave, and be sure it is securely locked after they leave the cave.
- Alcohol or other drugs do not mix with caving. Possession of alcohol or drugs on the Link’s property and/or in the cave will result in a call to the Sheriff.
- This cave is protected by Virginia State Law (Code of Virginia 10.1-1000 et. seq.). Trespassing, destruction or tampering with the signs or gate, vandalism, removal of formations, littering, and disturbance of wildlife in the cave will be prosecuted in criminal court.
- Cave explorers shall adhere to the NSS conservation policy, reprinted on back.
The National Speleological Society (NSS) Conservation Policy:

- Caves have unique scientific, recreational, and scenic values
- These values are endangered by both carelessness and intentional vandalism
- These values, once gone, cannot be recovered
- The responsibility for protecting caves must be formed by those who study and enjoy them.

Accordingly, the intention of the Society is to work for the preservation of caves with a realistic policy supported by effective programs for: the encouragement of self-discipline among cavers; education and research concerning the causes and prevention of cave damage; and special projects, including cooperation with other groups similarly dedicated to the conservation of natural areas. Specifically:

All contents of a cave -- formations, life, and loose deposits -- are significant for their enjoyment and interpretation. Therefore, caving parties should leave a cave as they find it. They should provide means for the removal of waste; limit marking to a few, small, and removable signs as are needed for surveys; and, especially, exercise extreme care not to accidentally break or soil formations, disturb life forms or unnecessarily increase the number of disfiguring paths through an area.

Scientific collection is professional, selective, and minimal. The collecting of mineral or biological material for display purposes, including previously broken or dead specimens, is never justified, as it encourages others to collect and destroy the interest of the cave.

The Society encourages projects such as:

- Establishing cave preserves
- Placing entrance gates where appropriate
- Opposing the sale of speleothems
- Supporting effective protective measures
- Cleaning and restoring over-used caves
- Cooperating with private cave owners by providing them knowledge about their cave and assisting them in protecting their cave and property from damage during cave visits
- Encouraging commercial cave owners to make use of their opportunity to aid the public in understanding caves and the importance of their conservation.

Where there is reason to believe that publication of cave locations will lead to vandalism before adequate protection can be established, the Society will oppose such publication.

For more information on cave conservation, check out the NSS web page at: http://www.caves.org/

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**THIS CAVE IS PROTECTED BY VIRGINIA STATE LAW**

(Code of Virginia 10.1-1000 et. seq.)

Caves are unique sensitive environments. Help preserve this cave for future generations to enjoy.

In Virginia it is illegal to:

- Write or mark upon the cave walls or surfaces.
- Break, deface, or remove any natural material or mineral formation.
- Litter or dump spent carbide or other waste materials.
- Disturb, harm, or remove any bats or other living organisms in the cave.
- Disturb or remove any historic or prehistoric artifacts or bones.

Thank you

The Virginia Cave Commission

For more information on the Virginia Cave Protection Act see: http://www.dcr.state.va.us/dnh/vcpa.htm