

# WV Cave Closures to Protect Bats

For many years, closures at important bat caves have been effective at reducing disturbance and assisting with the recovery of populations of endangered bats. However, at this time, White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) is having a dramatic negative impact on bat populations in West Virginia including species, such as the little brown bat, that a few years ago were considered both common and widespread. One of the ways that cavers can minimize their impact to the bats that remain is to avoid caves when significant bat populations are present. This can help bats survive WNS by minimizing disturbance at a time of year when they are under stress and could assist with the recovery of species in the post-WNS environment. The following list was developed to assist cavers in determining where and when significant populations of bats may be present. In general, however, the best policy for helping bats recover from WNS may be simply to avoid caves with any hibernating bats during the winter. Although minimizing winter disturbance will be beneficial to the bats, no one knows if it will be enough to allow bat populations to recover in the wake of WNS. The situation will have to be re-assessed in the future. For now, based on what we do know, we feel this effort is worthwhile.

**Criteria:**

**Winter closure (official dates for endangered bat caves -1 Sep through 15 May)**

100 or more tricolored bats (pre-WNS) or

100 or more little brown bats in winter (pre-WNS) or

Endangered bats in winter (Indiana bats or Virginia big-eared bats)

(Note: Many caves have few northern long-eared bats in winter, but the important sites are captured with the little brown bats sites above.)

**Summer closure (official dates 1 Apr through 15 Sep)**

Summer use by Virginia big-eared bats

**All year**

Summer colony of Virginia big-eared bats and

Significant concentration of hibernating bats

To be listed as an **endangered bat cave**, there has to have been a bat count with 10 or more endangered bats in the cave.

**Y-E** indicates a closure to benefit endangered bats. **Y** indicates a recommended closure that will benefit other bat species, but endangered bats are not usually present.

This list is limited to caves for which we have data. If you know of other caves which have (or had) large numbers of hibernating bats, please consider staying out of those caves in the winter also.

		Closure Season for Bat Protection				
Cave Name	County	Summer Only	Winter Only	All Year	Other	Endangered Bats
Alpena 2	Randolph		Y			
Arbogast/Cave Hollow	Tucker			Y-E		Y
Beacon	Mercer		Y			
Bear Heaven (of Bowden)	Randolph		Y-E			Y
Big Springs	Tucker		Y-E			Y
Blood	Pendleton		Y		Y-E= Aug 15 –Nov 15	Y

					Y= Nov 16 - Apr 30	
Bob Gee	Greenbrier		Y			
Bore Hole	Pocahontas		Y			
Bowden	Randolph		Y			
Buckeye Creek	Greenbrier		Y			
Caldwell	Mercer		Y			
Carpenters Pit	Pocahontas		Y			
Cass	Pocahontas		Y			
Cassell	Pocahontas		Y			
Cave Mountain	Pendleton	<b>Y-E</b>	Y			Y
Cave Rat	Pendleton		Y			
Confluence	Tucker		Y			
Cornwell	Preston		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Dreen	Pocahontas		Y			
Dyers	Hardy		Y			
Eliza (Reeds Creek)	Pendleton		Y			
Elkhorn	Grant				<b>Y-E= Jun 15 – Oct 15</b> Y= Oct 16- Apr 30	Y
Falling Spring	Randolph		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Fort Lick	Randolph		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Flute	Pendleton	<b>Y-E</b>	Y			Y
General Davis	Greenbrier		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Green Hollow	Hardy		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Gooseberry	Randolph		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Greenville Saltpeter	Monroe		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Hamilton	Pendleton		Y			
Hellhole	Pendleton		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Herb Greenshank	Pendleton		Y			
Higginbotham 1	Greenbrier		Y			
Higginbotham 4	Greenbrier		Y			
Hoffman School	Pendleton			<b>Y-E</b>		Y
Honaker	Mercer		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Indian Draft	Monroe		Y			
Izaak Walton	Randolph		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Kenny Simmons	Pendleton		Y			
Key	Pendleton		Y			
Klines Gap	Grant		Y			
Lambert 1	Pendleton	<b>Y-E</b>				Y
Laurel Creek	Monroe		Y			
Lobelia Saltpeter	Pocahontas		Y			
Luddington	Greenbrier		Y			
Marthas	Pocahontas		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
McFerrin	Greenbrier		Y			
Mill Run	Pendleton	<b>Y-E</b>	Y			Y
Miller	Monroe		Y			
Mingo-Simmons	Randolph		<b>Y-E</b>			Y
Minor Rexrode	Pendleton			<b>Y-E</b>		Y
Mitchells	Pendleton		Y			
Molers	Jefferson		Y			

Mystic	Pendleton	Y-E	Y		Y
Organ	Greenbrier		Y-E		Y
Patton	Monroe		Y-E		Y
Peacock	Grant			Y-E	Y
Piercys	Greenbrier		Y-E		Y
Piercys Mill	Greenbrier		Y		
Poor Farm	Pocahontas		Y		
Red Run (Moore)	Tucker		Y		
Ridgeville	Mineral		Y		
Ryan Hollow (mine)	Monongalia		Y		
Salt peter	Pendleton			Y-E	Y
Schoolhouse	Pendleton			Y-E	Y
Sharps	Randolph		Y		
Sinks of Gandy	Randolph		Y		
Sinnett/Thorn	Pendleton			Y-E	Y
Sites	Pendleton		Y		
Snedegars	Pocahontas		Y-E		Y
Stewart Run	Randolph		Y-E		Y
Stillhouse	Randolph		Y		
Swecker Stream	Randolph		Y		
The Portal	Pocahontas		Y		
Trout	Pendleton			Y-E	Y
Tub	Pocahontas		Y-E		Y
Two Lick Run	Randolph		Y-E		Y
Union	Monroe		Y		
Upper Beaverhole	Preston		Y		
Upper Marthas	Pocahontas		Y		

**National Forest:** All caves on National Forest lands in West Virginia and Virginia are currently closed year round.

**The Nature Conservancy:** Piercy's Cave may be open to low-impact caving in the summer with TNC approval. For current information please contact Mike Powell, Preserve Steward, at 304-637-0160 x 106 or [dpowell@tnc.org](mailto:dpowell@tnc.org) and see [www.nature.org/piercyscave](http://www.nature.org/piercyscave). All other TNC caves are closed except for approved research and surveys.

**NSS, John Guilday Preserve:** Trout Cave is closed for endangered bats. New Trout and Hamilton caves will remain open. Cavers wishing to minimize disturbance to hibernating bats should consider scheduling trips in the summer rather than the winter whenever possible.

Nothing in the list above is intended to imply that access is granted to caves during the "open" period when there is a partial-year closure for bats. Please get land owner permission before going into caves.

Cave closures for bats at sites containing **no endangered species** have no legal status, but are included solely to provide guidance to the caving community. We have not sought landowner permission for these closures.

Also, to help ensure that the WNS fungus or other potential pathogens are not being transported between caves or introduced to new environments, please clean and decontaminate clothing and gear between all cave trips. The most recent decontamination protocols can be found here: <http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome/cavers.html>