

WIND CAVE

NATIONAL PARK

South Dakota





ON THE SOUTHEASTERN FLANK of South Dakota's Black Hills, Wind Cave National Park preserves, in relatively unspoiled condition, part of the original prairie grassland. Preserved here also is a distinctly different type of limestone cavern—a series of subterranean passages and rooms, some lined with colorful calcite crystal formations.

Bison roam over the park's 44 square miles of rolling wooded and plains country. American elk, pronghorn, and many other animals also live in this part of the Black Hills.

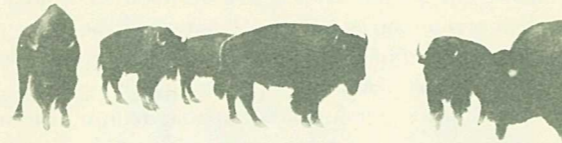
The strong currents of air that blow alternately in and out of the cave suggested the park's name. This strange phenomenon is believed to be caused by changes in atmospheric pressure. When outside pressure drops below that of the cave's interior, the wind blows outward; when it rises, the wind blows into the cave.

Stop at the cave entrance to read nature's barometer.

Biologically speaking, east meets west in Wind Cave National Park, where ponderosa pines, typical of the western mountains, grow on the same slopes with eastern bur oaks.

The park includes a prime example of mixed-grass prairie—a rich natural blending of medium-tall and short grasses—with a sprinkling of wildflowers, which lend color to the scene in spring and summer.

Here you may behold the beauty of a sea of wild grass rippling in the prairie wind.



ON THE SURFACE—*Animals*
Wind Cave National Park is a wildlife sanctuary where many species of animals that were characteristic of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains before white men came are protected.

One of the park's main attractions is its bison herd. It is a rare day that you can't see from the road at least a few of these huge, shaggy animals.

As you drive through the park, you will notice several towns of black-tailed prairie dogs. Such towns once covered many square miles of the Great Plains.

You will want to stop and watch the antics of these quick-moving little rodents. A roadside exhibit near one of the towns helps you understand their habits.

Here, too, is the graceful pronghorn ("antelope"). Swiftest of North American mammals, it is also the only species on the continent that sheds its horn sheath annually. True antelopes never shed horns or sheaths. Its tan-and-white coat and conspicuous white rump patch help you identify the pronghorn.

Among the other mammals of the park are American elk, deer, coyotes, badgers, raccoons, and several small rodents.

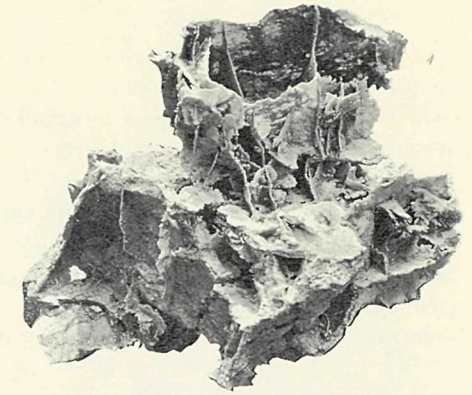
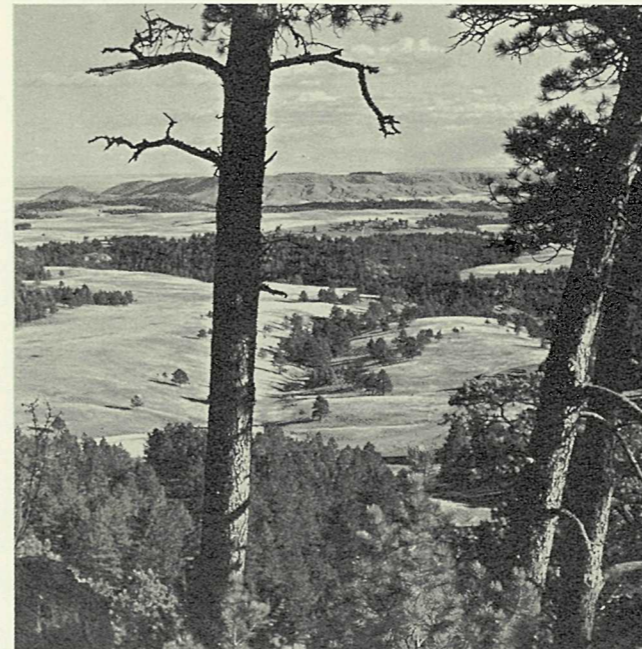
The long list of park birds includes meadowlarks, woodpeckers, warblers, chickadees, sharp-tailed grouse, kingbirds, bluebirds, and magpies.

Forests and Flowers
Great expanses of grassy plain separate this part of South Dakota from the eastern deciduous and Rocky Mountain forests, and from the desert vegetation of the Southwest. Nevertheless, the flora in Wind Cave and the rest of the Black Hills evidently has received immigrants from all these sources.

Here you can see bur oak and American elm from the east; yucca, cactus, and cottonwood from the arid southwestern plateaus; and two species of conifers—ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper—from the Rocky Mountains.

Dominant grasses in the park include representatives of both true prairie and short-grass plains. Among the former are prairie junegrass, needlegrasses, and wheatgrasses; the latter are represented by buffalograss and gramas.

Here, too, in spring and summer, is a large assortment of wildflowers. Look for pasqueflower (South Dakota's State flower), ground phlox, darkthroat shooting star, mariposa, and wallflower. Some, such as verbena, parade their colors until the crisp frosts of autumn.



The Naturalist Program

Be sure to make the visitor center one of your early stops in the park—preferably the first. Museum exhibits tell the geological story of the cave and describe the wildlife, plantlife, and early history of the park. Specimens of formations from the cave are displayed for your close examination. Free evening campfire talks are presented in the campground nightly from late June through Labor Day. If you have questions about the park, ask the uniformed ranger-naturalist on duty in the center.

Rankin Ridge Nature Trail

To help you enjoy the surface features of the park, a self-guiding nature trail leads to the summit of Rankin Ridge (elevation 5,016 feet, highest point in the park). To double your enjoyment of this walk, be sure to get a leaflet from the box at the beginning of the trail. It points out the most important features along the way.

Round trip, the trail is 1¼ miles long and takes about 1 hour. Take your camera and binoculars. From the observation post on the lookout tower you can obtain a fine panoramic view of the southern Black Hills.

ADMINISTRATION

Wind Cave National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Hot Springs, S. Dak., is in immediate charge of the park.

AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

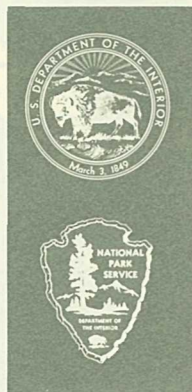
As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved for the future, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.

VISITOR-USE FEES

Fees for guide service in the cave, which includes use of the elevator, are deposited as revenue in the U.S. Treasury. They offset, in part, the cost of operating and maintaining the National Parks.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF THE
INTERIOR

National Park Service



PARK SEASONS

The popular seasons at the park are summer, spring, and autumn. Wintry weather often discourages travel in the Black Hills from November through March. The climate is relatively dry. There are frequent windy days in winter and spring, but extreme winds do not occur. Thunderstorms and hailstorms in summer and snow and icy roads in winter may temporarily disconcert the traveler, but such delays can be pleasantly and profitably spent in the visitor center looking at the exhibits.

ACCOMMODATIONS *Within the Park*

The campground, at Elk Mountain, is operated on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no utility connections for trailers, but comfort stations, water, and free wood are available. Building of campfires is limited to designated fireplaces; gas stoves and other self-contained fires, however, are permitted. Lunchroom facilities and soda-fountain service are provided by a concessioner in the visitor center during the summer.

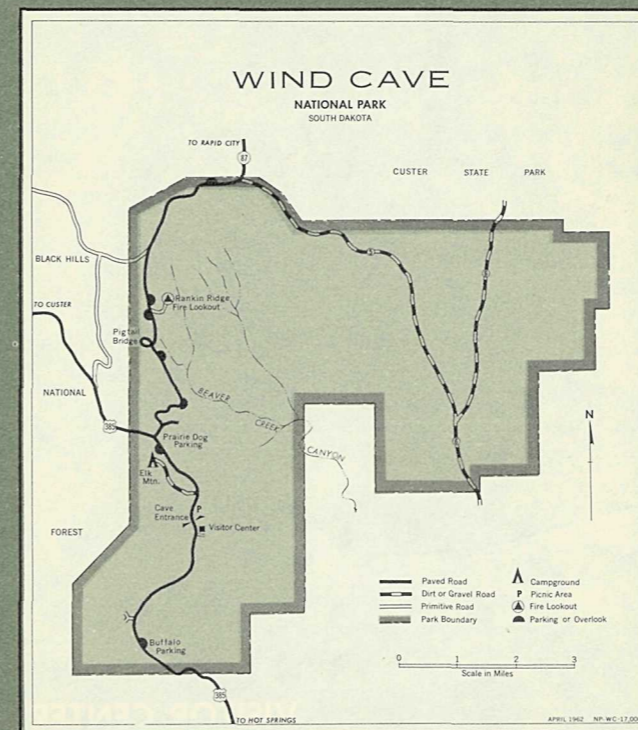
Outside the Park

There are modern motels, hotels, trailer courts, and garages in Hot Springs, Custer, and other nearby towns along approach highways to the park.

HOW TO REACH THE PARK

Wind Cave National Park is in southwestern South Dakota in the heart of the Black Hills. Main entrance routes are from the south via Hot Springs and from the north via Custer.

U.S. 385 runs through the western part of the park and connects Hot Springs and Custer. You may also approach the park by S. Dak. 87 through Custer State Park, one of the largest State parks in the Nation. Transcontinental buses serve Hot Springs, Custer, Rapid City, and Edgemont. A daily train of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad stops at Edgemont. Frontier, North Central, and Western Airlines serve Rapid City.



WIND CAVE

NATIONAL PARK

South Dakota

