Vocabulary Terms- Structural Geology

Cave – A large underground chamber, typically of natural origin, in a hillside or a cliff.

Calcite – A carbonate mineral that is found in cave formations in a cave.

Carbonic Acid – A weak acid responsible for the dissolution of limestone in the genesis of creating a cave or cavern.

Cave Shield - A thin circular disc of calcite projecting from a cave wall at any upward inclination, commonly a meter or more in diameter and with the underside draped with stalactites and curtains.

Cave Column – When a stalactite and stalagmite grow and fuse together forming a speleothem extending from floor to ceiling.

Dissolution - capable of being dissolved or liquefied

Flowstone - A layered deposit of calcium carbonate, left by thin sheets of flowing water, as in a cave.

Groundwater – Water occupying space or pores within the ground.

Karst – A landscape typified of limestone and consisting of caves, underground streams, sinking streams, and springs and sinkholes.

Limestone - A sedimentary rock consisting predominantly of calcium carbonate, varieties of which are formed from the skeletons of marine microorganisms and coral.

Soluble - Capable of being dissolved or liquefied

Speleothems – Commonly known as cave formations — are secondary mineral deposits formed in a cave. Speleothems typically form in limestone or dolostone solutional caves.

Stalagmite - A deposit, usually of calcium carbonate, more or less resembling an inverted stalactite, formed on the floor of a cave or the like by the dripping of percolating calcareous water.

Stalactite - a deposit, usually of calcium carbonate, shaped like an icicle, hanging from the roof of a cave or the like, and formed by the dripping of percolating calcareous water.

Topography – The relief features or surface configuration of an area of landscape.

Fun Facts

In the state of Missouri where MSB resides, there are over 7,000 caves documented. Most of them are in the Ozarks.

Blanchard Springs Caverns is the 2nd largest cave in the state (7 miles), dwarfed by Fitton Cave in first place (17.5 miles). (Compiled by U.S Longest Caves by State)

Some of the speleothems in Blanchard Springs Cavern are estimated to be 2 to 5 million years old.

The age of Blanchard Springs Caverns is unknown. It is believed to be 50 to 70 million years old.

The rocks that the cave was created in had its origin in a shallow sea approximately 350 million years ago.

Soda straws (first stage stalactites) grow from the ceiling as water runs down inside them and deposits rings of calcite at their tips.

In 1955, explorers discovered a 1,000-year-old Native American skeleton in the cave. The skeleton had a fractured skull, fractured ribs, and a fractured leg. How this explorer entered the cave is unknown.

Most of the bats residing in the cave are North American Gray Bats, a federally listed endangered species.

The largest known colony in the world of Indiana Bats is found in a mine under the city of Hannibal, Missouri. It is estimated to contain 168, 000 hibernating bats in the winter season.

The cave temperature of Blanchard Springs Caverns is 58 F year round and a relative humidity near 100%.

Sad Fact: All bats in North America are under threat from "White Nose Syndrome", a fungus inadvertently brought to the U.S. and spreading westward. It has killed millions of bats and presently no cure can be found. To avoid spreading the fungus, our tour group decontaminated their shoes after the tour.