

# CAVE CONSERVATION

Adapted from: *Howe Caverns' Cavern Classroom*

Great care must be taken to protect and preserve these great underground wonders. Caves are non-renewable natural resources, which benefit and enrich our lives in many ways. A few of these are:

- **Insect Control**: Caves provide shelter for many North American bats. Most feed on insects, consuming nightly more than half their own weight in insects.
- **Scientific Knowledge**: Caves provide homes for many threatened and endangered species, many of which are specially adapted to the darkness, providing biologists insight into these special adaptations.
- **Water Supply**: Many communities depend on GROUNDWATER stored in the carbonate rock aquifers for their water supply.
- **Education/Recreation**: Glenwood Caverns provides recreational and educational opportunities for thousands of students and vacationers each year.

Caves may seem eternal, having been around for hundreds of thousands or even millions of years. But every cave is sensitive, whether open to the public as a show cave or an undeveloped wild cave. The biggest threat to these fragile environments is man. This threat includes, but is not limited to:

- **Vandalism**: Occurring most often where access to a cave is free and easy. Vandalism can and still does occur in show caves. Vandalism ranges from graffiti on caves walls to the breaking and removal of speleothems or simply the casual visitor leaving trash behind. All are detrimental to the preservation of the cave's fragile environment. **It is now ILLEGAL to harm the cave environment in any way.**
- **Water Pollution**: One of the most damaging environmental problems facing society AND caves today is water pollution. Water is vital to all life.

**At any cave you may visit, remember this motto:  
Take nothing but pictures;  
Leave nothing but footprints;  
Kill nothing but time.**