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James River Bat Cave Now Open for Visitors

Volunteers from BCI and the Texas Nature Conservancy (TNC) have been working hard since February to prepare the Eckert James River Bat Cave for visitors. The cave, which is summer home to approximately four million Mexican free-tailed bats, is one of the top 10 maternity sites known for the species. Located in the Texas Hill Country near Mason, the cave was purchased by the Texas Nature Conservancy last year in a cooperative venture with BCI.

In addition to assisting with management of the cave, BCI is providing interpretive services in the form of a three-panel on-site exhibit that describes the history of the cave, the bats, and the emergence.

Teams of BCI and TNC staff and members volunteered several months of Saturdays to clear brush and rocks for a road, a parking lot, and a trail to the cave. Braving both cold and heat, drizzle, scrapes and cuts, and frequent run-ins with prickly pear cactus, volunteers also laid railroad ties for seating and built a rock wall barrier to prevent visitors from interfering with the emergence.

The site is accessible by regular passenger car, but be prepared to drive several miles down a dirt road and ford at least one shallow river. Visitors will be richly rewarded; the bat flight at this cave is among the most spectacular in the United States. Nearby Mason residents have been enjoying it for years and are proud to share it with visitors.

The cave is open for visitation between May 1 and October 31. You can obtain directions by calling Sharon Reynolds at the Texas Nature Conservancy (512/224-8774) or write to TNC, P.O. Box 1440, San Antonio, TX 78295. Interpretive programs will be given periodically throughout the summer, and an intern will be present Wednesdays through Sunday to answer questions.



Volunteers worked hard over several months to get the Eckert James River Bat Cave ready for summer visitors. From left to right, Jim Loomis, Dan and Erwin Anderegg, and Garry Child.

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