

2013 Trout Rock Bat Counts

by Keely Owens and Bob Hoke

The annual bat counts in the three major caves in the NSS-owned John Guilday Cave Preserve (Trout Rock) were completed on Tuesday, February 26 and March 2, 2013. Trout Cave is normally counted in odd-numbered years to reduce the impact on its small colony of endangered Indiana (*Myotis sodalis*) and this was the year for a count.

Trout Cave was counted on February 26 by Craig Stihler, Barbara Douglas, Kieran O'Malley, Rick Doyle, Jack Wallace, and Bob Hoke. New Trout and Hamilton were counted on March 2 by Keely Owens and Bob Hoke.

A cluster of 70 Indianas was in the main passage in Trout and none were seen in the side passage where they are traditionally found. Two 3-bat clusters of what appeared to be Indianas were seen in the Big Room in New Trout. This is the first observation of Indianas in that cave. There was no sign of WNS in the New Trout bats, but some bats in the other caves showed WNS symptoms.

TROUT CAVE – 2013

Area	Pip	Big Brown	Little Brown	Small Footed	Northern Long Ear	Indiana	Va. Big Ear	Total
Entrance area	2	8				70		80
Side Passage							2	2
Split in Trunk to 8-Ft Drop	10	1	2	1		9	3	26
8-Ft Drop to J-19	4							4
Maze Area	6							6
J-19 to End of Trunk	13	1	1					15
End of Trunk to Sq Room	2							2
Square Room								0
TOTAL	37	10	3	1	0	79	5	135

HAMILTON CAVE – 2013

Area	Pip	L. Brown	Va. Big Ear	Northern Long Ear	Total
Entrance to U-survey	2				2
U-Survey					0
Big Slab Room					0
Mud Ball Room					0
Big Slab Room to C-12	1	1			2
C12 to Roselyn Escalator					0
Below Roselyn. Escalator.					0
Ros. Esc. to Pre-Old Room					0
Pre-Old Room	1				1
Old Room					0
TOTAL	4	1			5

NEW TROUT CAVE – 2013

Area	Pip	Big Brown	Small Footed	Little Brown	Va. Big Ear	Indiana	Total
Entrance Passage	4	1		1	1		7
First Room							0
1st to 2nd Rm							0
Second Room	1	2					3
Bone Site							0
Big Room	1			13		6	20
TOTAL	6	3		14	1	6	30

TOTAL COUNTS BY YEAR

Year	Trout		New Trout	Hamilton
	Indiana	Total	Total	Total
1982	1(?)	1(?)	22	no count
1983	21	763	10	no count
1984	14	567	no count	32
1985	2	663	21	55
1986	no count		32	58
1987	14	962	43	101
1988	no count		44	114
1989	19	779	37	105
1990	no count		56	90
1991	10	564	37	106
1992	no count		41	161
1993	12	482	43	190
1994	no count		39	207
1995	26	593	61	273
1996	no count		58	316
1997	24	779	60	360
1998	no count		51	292
1999	19	584	29	381
2000	no count		30	547
2001	24	621	29	480
2002	no count		22	373
2003	25	465	48	361
2004	no count		29	364
2005	95	841	42	562
2006	93	—	22	513
2007	158	764	48	480
2008	no count		27	340
2009	139	543	48	473
2010	82	—	68	30
2011	90	177	40	3
2012	no count		33	3
2013	79	135	30	5

Note: a partial count was done in Trout in 2006 and 2010. Only the Indiana bat population was counted.

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The NSS purchased the [property containing Trout Cave, New Trout Cave, and Hamilton Cave in the early 1980s. Every year since then there has been bat count in the caves. Here are the results of the 2013 counts.

TROUT CAVE (Counted on February 26 by Craig Stihler, Barbara Douglas, Kieran O'Malley, Rick Doyle, Jack Wallace, and Bob Hoke). A total of 135 bats were found.

- Whoever dug under the gate in 2011 toured the cave and left dozens of chalk "out" arrows. They went to the maze and a little beyond the register, but that seems to be all. There was no evidence of anyone trying to get in after the DNR fixed the breach last summer.
- There were no Indianas in the side passage, but two Virginia Big-ears were there (the first ones we've seen in the cave). There were three other Big-ears in the main passage so it looks like we have some new guys in town.
- There was a tight cluster of about 55 Indianas in the main passage about 30 feet past the side passage where a small colony has traditionally been seen. The new cluster location is right above the main route into the cave and would not have been a viable location prior to the installation of the gate.
- There were a fair number of fresh cave rat turds about 20 feet inside the entrance. I guess they are in the cave more since cavers aren't there.
- There were lots of bat turds on the floor in the section starting about 100 feet beyond the register and extending for about 200 feet. This is the area where a summer colony of Virginia Big Ears was observed in the summer after the cave was gated and may indicate that the colony size is significant.
- The DNR folks determined that three of the bats we saw had signs of WNS.

NEW TROUT CAVE (Counted on March 2 by Keely Owens and Bob Hoke). A total of 30 bats were found.

- An active rat nest was seen about 50 feet inside the entrance. We knew the nest was active because the rat was in it and watched as we went by. He didn't want to come out.
- There was a Pip on the passage floor about 150 feet inside the cave. It was alive and had no obvious injuries. We placed it on a rock to the side and it was still there when we left the cave about an hour later. It appeared that we were the first group in the cave that day so it is unlikely that the bat was knocked off the ceiling by a caver.
- We saw no bats in the crevices in the entrance passage where they were commonly seen in the past. The bats in the passage (except the one on the floor) were all hanging openly from the ceiling.
- There was one Virginia Big-eared bat in the entrance passage a couple hundred feet inside the cave. Identification was obvious because one ear was fully extended and the other was folded up.
- There were two tight clusters of three bats each in the Big Room. They appeared to be Indianas based on their pink noses. There were also 13 Little Browns and only one Pip in the room.

HAMILTON CAVE (Counted on March 2 by Keely Owens and Bob Hoke). A total of 5 bats were found.

- The total bat population rose from three in both 2011 and 2012 to five, but this can hardly be considered a recovery. The 10 counts prior to WNS averaged about 450 bats in the cave.
- There was a Pip with WNS just inside the entrance. There was another Pip (without WNS) about 60 feet inside the entrance. There was what appeared to be a large Pip in a very high ceiling in the passage past the Slab room. There was a Pip in a low lead in the same area and a single Pip with WNS symptoms in the Pre Formation Room. Sadly, those were the only bats we saw.

There was no activity at the cave preserve during the Trout Cave count (it was done on a Tuesday). The other caves were counted on a Saturday and there were several other groups in the caves. None of the groups appeared to be experienced cavers and none were well equipped. They also didn't seem to be going very far into the caves. The visitors we talked to seemed interested in the bat count, asked why the "big cave" (Trout) was gated, and showed some interest in cave science. It would be appropriate to have a handout explaining the reasoning for the Trout closure and gating at the visitor kiosk.

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