

About the property

This 83-acre property, permanently protected in 2017 as a nature preserve, includes one of Wisconsin's longest natural cavern systems and provides hibernacula for three species of bats (see next panel). The land provides valuable habitat including native remnant prairie, limestone cliffs and rock outcrops, oak savanna, and oak-hickory forests.

The rich, mature oaks on the property provide habitat for the state-threatened cerulean warbler, observed nesting on the site in 2016. Birders can also enjoy populations of scarlet tanagers, blue-winged warblers, yellow-billed cuckoos, and wood thrushes. The prairie and savanna are home to the prairie ringneck snake, a state-listed species of "Special Concern."

The site will be utilized for education and research, providing opportunities for school groups to learn about area bat populations, geology, and natural history.

The previous owners, Delores and Ray Gaidowski, and their daughter, Carole Porter, were committed to ensuring the land and cavern were cared for. According to Carole, her mother "asked me time and again to please keep the property in its natural state. An answer to all my family's prayers came when I was introduced to Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Being the last steward of my family's property, I can now rest assured that my parents' final wishes will indeed be granted."

Activities allowed

The property is open for hiking, hunting, birding, and cross-country skiing.

Activities NOT allowed

The property is closed to pets, biking, motorized vehicles, caving, and spelunking.

Please respect landowners near Conservancy tracts by observing property boundaries.

About the cavern and the bats

The site was a commercial show cave for over 60 years and was used by area schools, tourists, and residents. The cavern, which maintains a constant 48 degrees year-round, will be available for public viewing **only through guided tours in spring and summer** (cave is closed during bat hibernation, August 15–May 15).

Bats are a vital part of our ecosystem, eating up to 1,200 mosquitos per hour, and Kickapoo Caverns is a hibernaculum (winter hibernating quarters) for three species: the federally and state-threatened northern long-eared, the state-threatened little brown, and the state-threatened eastern pipistrelle. The site's location—near the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers—has regional significance because the rivers are used as bat migration corridors.

For information on cavern tour dates, become a member of the Conservancy (mississippivalleyconservancy.org/get-involved/membership).



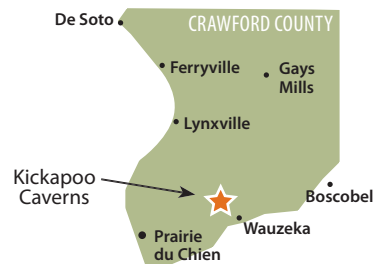
Northern long-eared
Al Hicks/NYDEC



Little brown
Ann Froeschauer/USFWS



Eastern pipistrelle
USFWS



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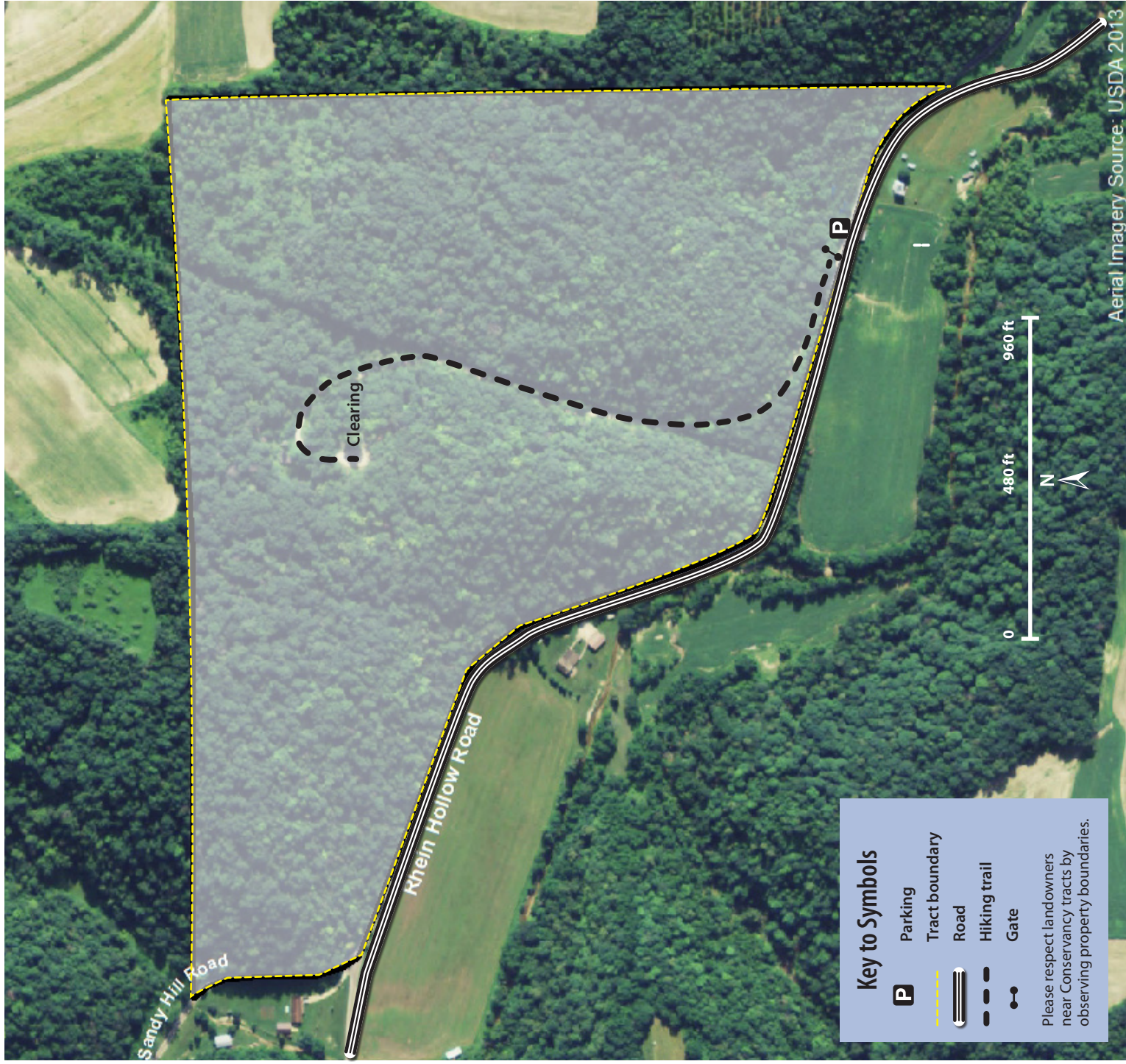


PROPERTY MAP

Kickapoo Caverns

Crawford County, Wisconsin





Kickapoo Caverns (54850 Rhein Hollow Road, Wauzeka, WI)

How to get there:

From Prairie du Chien: Head east on Hwy 27 N for 8.9 mi. Turn right (east) onto County Rd N and go just over ¼ mi. Turn right (south) onto Dutch Ridge Rd and go 0.8 mi. Turn a very slight left (east) onto Rhein Hollow Rd. Go 3.7 mi to the gate at 54850 Rhein Hollow Rd, on the left (north side of the road).

From La Crosse: Take Hwy 35 south 40 mi. Turn left (east) at Lynxville onto County Road F and go 3.5 mi. Turn right (south) onto Hwy 27 S and go 6.6 mi. Turn left onto County Road N and go just over ¼ mi. Turn right (south) onto Dutch Ridge Rd and go 0.8 mi. Turn a very slight left (east) onto Rhein Hollow Rd. Go 3.7 mi to the gate at 54850 Rhein Hollow Rd, on the left (north side of the road).

From Wauzeka: Head west on Highway 60 for 2.2 mi. Turn right (north) onto Dutch Ridge Rd and go 1 mi. Stay straight onto Rhein Hollow Rd and go 1.1 mi. Look for the gate at 54850 Rhein Hollow Rd, on the right.

Parking: East of gate on the shoulder of Rhein Hollow Rd.

Access: A steep, 4-mi (one-way) trail starts at the gate and ends in a clearing at the top of the hill.

Find guides to hiking on other MVC properties at mississippivalleyconservancy.org.