

Jester Bat Count – Part I
South Resurgence Count
February 1, 2020

Participants: Sue Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, Andrew and John VanDyke, Jon Woltz
Submitted by: Duane

We all met in our usual prairie parking lot, donned the gear and headed to the cave about 11 a.m. Our goal today was to do just the south of Jester Cave as the new owners at the northern side had not responded to our letters for permission, so we were not going to trespass on their property. Sue and John had actually driven to their house in a last-minute ditch effort to obtain permission, but no one was at home. This was kind of hard to swallow as 30 years of data getting messed up when we could only do half of the cave. But it was so, and we made the best of it. Nice thing about the trip was there was no rush to get this done as we didn't have the other side to also do. Andrew had to find 10 different animal signs for a scout badge, so we kept on the look out on the way there for any bones, droppings, prints, etc...

We got to the entrance and found out our 'steppingstone' to get into the cave itself at the small pond crossing was gone... it was in the pond! This made getting in much more difficult than usual. Once we were got in, we took temps of the air, dirt, and soil along with the relative humidity at the entrance. We entered at 11:50. The cave was a bit drier than in the past. Starting in the twilight zone was when we encountered small groups of bats. John ran book while Sue, Jon and Andrew counted. Since we had adequate number of counters, Duane was able to take lots of pictures for the biologists that look at them afterwards. We saw no signs of any WNS. Duane even brought a UV light which we played with seeing the graffiti in a 'new light'! (It glows in a phosphorescence brightness!) We finally had a mat that was a bit larger than 1-foot x 1-foot so we took a packing density. That number came out to be 225.

We finally got to the big room next to Pip Hall and the water was way down. Even in the deepest part it was only to the knees. Everyone crossed on the west bank for the first time in many years! The room was almost void of tricolors. Usually we get most of our count for this section of the cave right here, this time there was only four to be found. Pip Hall was also just about void of tricolors. Duane set up shop at the usual junction getting ready to swab tricolors while the rest of the group continued on to the rest area where we stop the count. After a while Duane noticed that the voices were gone and went to investigate. They had moved past the rest area and were working back into the main passage. (lots of crawling and hunching over). D called them back as our data from at least the past 15 years had stopped at the rest area and we didn't need to skew the data any more than possible along with not doing the North side. We took a break at the rest area then started swabbing tricolors. John and Andrew were one team and Sue and Jon were the other. Duane kept book for the swabbing. We got our minimum ten Tricolors (it was pretty difficult to find ten) and then went into the main passage to get the last 15 in myotis. We completed the swabbing, packed up and left the cave at 2:10. It was about 50 degrees when we went in and an awesome 70 when we came out! We were definitely over dressed for the hike back!

We got back, changed out of wet, muddy shoes and clothes, and jumped into the cars and headed for Blair for the celebratory bat count victory dinner at Lugi's. But wait, here's the fun part! We were about 40 minutes on our way, Blair just about in site when Jon flashes his lights and we all pull over to the side of the road. Sue got a call from husband John who said the landowners on the north just called and

gave their permission! Whoop hoo! But then we looked at each other, looked at the time, and thought, it would be 45 minutes back to the area, 20 minute walk in, another 2 hours in the cave, walk back out... it was already 3:30 p.m. AND all of our wet gear was already in trash bags and we were in clean clothes. (That was the part that kinda pushed us over the edge – we really didn't relish getting into wet, COLD, soggy gear again) Plus, John V. said he was hungry <grin> so we all agreed and the decision was to do north Jester on the 3rd weekend that is usually reserved for survey trips. Onward to a great calzone and after count discussions at the table. Fun trip and had a good time!

Final Counts Resurgence: Myotis 6,877 – Tricolor 29