

Jester Bat Count – Part II
Train/Homestead/Glade Passages
February 15, 2020

Participants: Dale Amlee, Steve Beleu, Sue Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, Jon Woltz
Submitted by Duane

We all agreed on meeting at 11 a.m. at our usual crossroads out in the country. I arrived and soon Jon pulled up. We were talking when we noted a truck coming out of the north gate. We watched it approach and waved and he pulled in. We finally met the new landowner! Nice guy! He was telling us about the floods they had last year after we said it looked like there was a lot of water that came out resurgence. He said they got about eleven inches in four hours back last spring! No wonder the cave had debris on the ceiling! Just then Sue, Steve, and Dale came in. Sue was able to meet the person she had been talking to over the phone. After a little more chat, he left us to do our count.

We went into Train Tunnel first to find a massive log (or should I say Tree) jam across the entrance. After climbing over, we took temperature and humidity readings. A ten-minute exploration ended us with seven Tricolor (pips), two big ear, and one myotis. We go in to, hopefully, get a few big ear counts!

Then on to Glade and Homestead entrances. Dale and Duane went down to Homestead while Jon, Steve, and Sue went into Glade. We do Homestead for the same reason as Train, we hope to find some big ears. It payed off with three in a group and one solo later. Meanwhile, Steve has taken the roll of book and Sue and Jon are counting splitting the cave down the middle of the ceiling. There were a few decent mats right in the first opening like usual. Nothing like the wall covering 15 years ago but not too shabby either. They ended up being our only giant-sized mats (a couple of 2 sq. ft. mats) though there were a few smaller ones down in the cave. Packing rate was 270 bats per square foot. (15x18)

It was wetter than normal, and evidence of flooding was everywhere. While the team surveyed the main passage, Dale and Duane took off into the side passages to get the counts in there. Some locations are thirty feet higher than the main passage yet in the ceiling here too, branches and even logs were jammed into any crevasse or crack no matter where... ceiling, wall, floor. LOTS of flooding went through here! Mounds of decades of guano in one of the summer roosts that we always climbed over for decades were gone... down to raw rock once again. The further into the cave we went, the less counts of bat we found in the passages until our last two had zero bats in attendance. But there were limbs the size of my arm on the shelves next to the ceiling in our high passage, so I wonder if a flood came in the late fall and washed some away? We've never had a zero count in the last passages.

We came out and headed to the back section near the high-water room where we usually end the count and started there and counted back toward the group as our exit was eventually Stovepipe. We met the three just as we got to the Stovepipe passage out. Good timing! We belly crawled out of Stovepipe, hiked back to the cave entrance to get our emergency beacon, and then back to the cars. A little change of clothes and once again we could be seen (and accepted) in public. On to Lugi's in Blair for the celebration of a successful bat count!

Glade/Homestead totals: Myotis 8,682 – Tricolor 36 – Big Ear 4

2020 TOTALS for Jester Cave (All): Myotis 13,163 – Tricolor 72 – Big Ear 6