

Video	Audio
	<p>&gt;&gt;SKINNER: Hi! I am Michael Skinner. Welcome to Georgia Outdoors. This time we are going caving, and we are going to start with one of the most beautiful caves in world found right here in Georgia, Blowing Hole.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Male Narrator: Who is devoting a great deal of effort and resources toward protecting Georgia’s environment? The same company that helps maintain the environment inside your home, Georgia Power. Proud sponsor of programming on GPTV.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;<b>Skinner: In southwestern Georgia there is a geological phenomenon called the Pelham Solution Escarpment. The Pelham escarpment is a steep slope between the flat Flint River Valley and the neighboring Tifton Uplands. It is a relatively young land region, and as a result the limestone in the area is much softer and more porous than in other parts of the world. When it rains, water percolates through the soil carving out openings.</b></p> <p><b>These are the caves of Southwest Georgia. There are less than a dozen known caves here but they are heralded as some of the most beautiful in the world. We’ll visit two of these caves, one, called Climax, know for its inhabitants, and another, called Glory Hole, that’s know for it’s beauty. First we’ll visit Climax.</b></p>
	<p><b>Leading the way is David Clark, a lifelong caver and photographer. He has been exploring this cave since he was a teenager.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Clark: It’s a large sinkhole entrance into a series of rooms about 130 feet down, and they’re tennis-court-sized rooms connected by little, tiny and large fissures and cracks; maybe they’re only body-sized. And what we’ll see today is we’ll climb down through the sinkhole, drop into a series of rooms and you’ll see bat colonies on the ceiling and slippery guano all over the boulders, so we’ll be watching our footing a little bit.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Skinner: Also with us is Jim Ozier, a wildlife biologist with the Department of Natural Resources Non-game and Endangered Wildlife Program.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: Climax Cave first came to our attention a few years ago when some of the local cavers recognized some conservation need here. There was significant erosion going on around the edge of the sinkhole. Another is that people were coming in, even though they didn’t have permission, tend to cause some problems, spray painting bats or starting fires or that kind of thing.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Clark: Here we go, Mike. Why don’t you rope this pack down to me when we get in here. This chimney’s about 25 feet deep, and the idea is to get in here just like Santa Claus and</p>

	<p>wedge yourself in and keep your back pressed against the wall in this chimney, and keep your hands and feet opposed to your back, press your back into the wall, and slide yourself down slowly so that you're always wedged and you won't slip.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Skinner: We are entering climax cave just before dusk. David tells us that the bats that live here will become active then. We hope to capture some of that activity on tape.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: Well, Dave, I know you've been in this cave a lot, but I think I'm going to go ahead and put my respirator on.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Clark: That's a good idea, Mike, especially with the low exposure, your first time with Histoplasmosis.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Narrator: Histoplasmosis is a fungal infection that can attack the lungs. Humans can get this infection from breathing fungal spores that grow on bat guano. It is always better to be safe than sorry.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: The bats that live up here at Climax Cave appear to spend the whole year here. We're far enough south where they don't really encounter the kind of cold temperatures that would induce hibernation. Anytime the insects are active, you might expect to see the bats out too, but they're not going to waste their time and energy flying around if they can't replenish that energy by catching insects.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Skinner: In order to disturb the bats less, we've also brought with us an infrared camera that requires very little light. The bats might not even know we are here.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: Oh, Jim. This must be the colony we're seeing here.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: Oh yeah here they are. They move around from time to time, but they're usually back in these same rooms. Typically what they'll do, they'll find a dome-shaped ceiling. That allows them to trap their body heat, and also by packing in together as tightly as they do. There might be 200 bats per square foot there.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: And what species is this?</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: This is the southeastern myotis and it occurs throughout a lot of the southeast, but it only uses certain kinds of habitats, and these caves are extremely important to this species. And there's just a few caves they use in the southeast, a few here in Georgia and there's some neighboring in Florida that harbor a major portion of the population. So if you lose one of these caves or a cave is rendered unsuitable for these bats, it could really have a big effect on the population. So what we want to do is work with the landowners, work with the public and try to keep these areas suitable.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: So there may be more roosting down the hall here?</p>

	<p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: There could be. There appears to be a smaller group a little bit farther over.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: Let's go take a look.</p> <p>&gt;&gt;Ozier: Michael, this corridor we're walking here is the same one these bats will be using in a couple hours to exit the cave. But they're here sleeping during the daytime. It's a good place to find shelter. But each night, if it's warm enough, they're going to leave to find some flying insects out, so this whole passage will be filled back and forth with flying bats and several thousand at one time. And it's quite a sight to see them coming out if it's warm enough on the outside. So if the moths or mosquitoes are active, these bats will come outside to feed. Be about another hour or two, it looks like.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Skinner: <b>It took some patience and waiting around. But when night fell, it turns out that it was indeed warm enough outside because the bats made for the cave entrance to forage for insects. We were able to get some really neat digital and infrared footage. These bats were all around us, but they never tried to bite us, or land on us, or get stuck in our hair. Bats are a benevolent species that our ecosystem needs to stay balanced. When you hear myths about bats, caves, and evil goings-on remember that bats are not something to be hated and feared they are something to be valued and protected like all things that live in caves.</b></p>
	<p><b>The other cave that we'll visit in southwest Georgia is Glory Hole cave, sometimes called blowing hole cave. We were told that this is one of the most beautiful caves in the world-- and this was from a world traveling caver. We had to come and check it out. But this cave is not for beginners with us are Paul Aughey and Bruce Brewer, two career cavers with a lot of experience in this cave.</b></p> <p><b>It's a tough climb in, but we're told the rewards are well worth it! The toughest part is the sand crawl. We'll crawl on our elbows, stomachs and toes through a narrow passage just wide enough for my shoulders and on top of that, we have to be careful not to break the formations around us, they can take hundreds of thousands of years to form. It is a tight squeeze and not for anyone with a fear of tight spaces. We'll also pass through a tight mud plug called the birth canal. Now that is tight! But finally, we're in. The room with the most formations is just around the corner. Paul explains more about the history of Glory Hole Cave.</b></p> <p>&gt;&gt;Aughey: Glory Hole has been known in this area for a really long time. The people that have lived here have been here for many, many decades, and the people before that have been living in this area and have know of this cave for a long time.</p>

Glory Hole was first discovered by a caver in 1957 and that was by E.H. Polleys. He came back with his son in 1959 and they dug through the rock and dug a number of times. It wasn't the first time they got through, and they felt all the air flow and got down eventually into a standup room and dug through into walking passage. There's a lot of sand initially in the first few passages. They don't look too impressive, but they kept digging and eventually after a couple of years, various groups helped out, they got into the formation areas. Those are the really nice areas of the cave.

>> Skinner: I gotta tell you, that was incredible.

>> Brewer: Yeah, makes all the climbing and crawling in misery worth it.

>> Skinner: I'll say, and look at this room! This is absolutely amazing. What is this?

>> Brewer: These are called Angel Wings and this is what happens when calcite, a mineral in the rock, is dissolved by rainwater. And then when it percolates through the roof into the room, it crystallizes.

>> Skinner: Are there more here in the cave?

>> Brewer: Yeah, a lot more.

>> Skinner: Can we go see some?

>> Brewer: Sure.

>> Aughey: In the 1970s this cave was open access. People could just go and pick up a key and come in here any time they wanted to, and because of that, a lot of people came and spray painted formations, spray painted arrows on the wall, broke formations, took them home, so there was a lot of damage back then. And so cavers got together, just not any particular group, just people from all over the US came here and started cleaning up the formations. This is one of them. This one actually had mud stains up here from people walking off trails. There were orange spray paint on various places. So people just come here with toothbrushes and sprayers and spray water on and clean up the formations.

>> Skinner: They just use water and toothbrushes to clean the spray paint off?

>> Aughey: Mostly. Mostly it was just spray painting—spraying the water on to get the spray paint off, but in some cases the calcite actually would come back up and grow over top of the spray paint, so it was actually in the crystal structure. So we had to use a little bit of muriatic acid, just a little bit, and that would get it down to where we could get the spray paint off and then we

	<p>would just use toothbrushes and then just water to get the acid off so that it wouldn't damage the formation anymore.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Skinner: What percentage of the formations were affected by the spray paint?</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Aughey: Um, it's hard to say in percentages, but there were some fairly large areas that were damaged. It was mostly large formations that seemed to have big orange dots and things on them. But it was all throughout the cave.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Skinner: Bruce, of all the things we've seen in the cave, I think personally this is the most remarkable. Tell us what we're looking at here.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Brewer: Well these are formations that we don't have a record of existing anywhere else in the world. We don't have a scientific name for them. We just call them "shot glasses" for obvious reason. They resemble them. What you're looking at are crystals growing up in a pool of water. They eventually merge together, form these multi-sided, multi-faced shapes, and eventually merge into this floor.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Skinner: And this is still all calcite right?</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Brewer: Yes.</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Skinner: What I think is remarkable is not only do we have shot glasses, but we also have what look like anemones growing in the water. I mean this is beautiful. Have you seen any other things like this anywhere else in the cave?</p> <p>&gt;&gt; Brewer: There are a few other places in the cave that have this in this immediate area.</p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt; Skinner: Well that was worth it. We've never seen anything like this in Georgia, and best of all we've given you a chance too, we hope you've enjoyed it. But now, we've got to climb back out the way we came in. Ah well, it was definitely worth it!</b></p> <p><b>Wow! That is the 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder of Georgia.</b></p>
	<p><b>&gt;&gt; FEMALE NARRATOR:</b> <b>Bats are an essential part of our ecosystem. They eat many insects including the pests that farmers will use chemicals to kill. One pecan farmer in Brooks County decided to forgo the usual chemical pesticides and try his hand at bat colonization. Every morning Frank Bibin and his family wake to the sounds of hundreds of thousands of bats coming home to roost in the giant bat boxes he has built and placed strategically in his orchard. These bats consume hundreds of thousands of insects each night, helping Franks Bibin's pecan trees stay healthy and chemical free. If you are interested in building a bat box</b></p>

	<b>for you yard, visit this website for more information.</b>
	<b>&gt;&gt;Skinner: For all the wonders of Georgia, the waterfalls and mountains, the rivers and valleys, it's easy to forget the wonders below ground. Caving offers an experience that you cannot get anywhere else above the earth's surface. Come with us below ground and meet a handful of cavers, both adults and children for whom caving is not only a passion, but a lifestyle.</b>
	>>Micah Lane: I have been caving all my life because my mom and dad go caving so I go. I like caving because its really fun and I like to explore it. My sister likes to cave a lot um, because she thinks its fun too.
	>>Kelsey Lane: My favorite part about caving is um climbing, getting muddy and wet.
	>>Buddy Lane: Micah and Kelsey are 11 and 9, and they have been caving ever since they have been born. And they have been in quite a few caves in different areas of the United States. I started caving when I was 14 years old. I was interested in photography and I had started looking at books and saw lots of neat pictures of caves in 1969 and started going into caves and enjoyed taking photographs of caves. And then I found out that caving was my true love in life and kept going caving ever since. And since then I have been going caving all around the world and in all sorts of different places and environments.
	>>Cressler: I AM PARTIAL TO THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES, THE CAVES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES, MOSTLY IN WHAT WE CALL THE TAG AREA WHICH STANDS FOR TENNESSEE, ALABAMA , AND GEORGIA. IN THE TRI-STAE AREA WE HAVE ABOUT 12,000 KNOWN CAVES; TENNESSEE HAVING THE MOST NUMBER OF CAVES THAN ANY STATE IN OUR COUNTRY AND IT HAS AROUND 8,000 ITSELF.
	>>Cousineau: MOST CAVES ARE FOUND EVEN TODAY BY WHAT WE CALL RIDGE WALKING. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU AND A GROUP OF FRIENDS PARCEL OUT A PIECE OF TERRITORY AND YOU WALK SOME DISTANCE FROM EACH OTHER AND YOU JUST BASICALLY DOING OLD FASHIONED RESEARCH. AND EACH TIME YOU FIND A HOLE NO MATTER HOW SMALL YOU STICK YOURSELF DOWN IN IT TO SEE IF IT GOES ANYWHERE.
	>>Ron Hilton: Well, Travis, he loves getting in the mud, he loves crawling in holes and I have a problem with that because I can't fit where he goes and I can't go after him. But he is a good caver. I have

	<p>taught him to be safe and conscious of what his surroundings are in the cave, and I think that will make him a better caver as he grows up.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Travis Hilton: My favorite time caving was when I got stuck in mud up to my waist. My dad takes me caving all the time, takes me every time I go with a group called the grotto.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Padgett: There is a caving organization called the National Speleological Society. It's <a href="http://www.caves.org">www.caves.org</a> on the web. They have local chapters all around the country called grottos. There are several here in Georgia. Those people can take you, show you how.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Cressler: THEY WELCOME BEGINNING CAVERS AND WILL TEACH THEM PROPER ETIQUETTE AND SAFETY FOR VISITING UNDERGROUND.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Cousineau: ONE OF THE BASICS IS NOT TO CAVE ALONE. YOU NEED TO BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU SO THAT IF SOMETHING SHOULD HAPPEN, YOU'LL HAVE A REPORTING PARTY TO LET THE OTHER FOLKS KNOW ABOUT IT.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Padgett: Say all three of you get lost or something happens, slide down a muddy slope and you can't get back up. Nobody knows where you are; you are going to sit there. Somebody needs to know where you are so when they get concerned, then they can call and we'll come find you. If not then you are on your own and it gets cold and dark in here.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Cressler: IT'S GENERALLY RECOMENDED THAT A PERSON CARRY THREE LIGHT SOURCES INTO A CAVE: <i>WHERE</i> YOU NEED A HELMET MOUNTED LIGHT AND THEN TWO BACK UPS. BECAUSE LIGHTS DO FAIL AND THEY FAIL FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. BATTERIES CAN GO OUT, BULBS CAN BURN OUT, AND YOU CAN LOSE LIGHT SOURCES. THEY FALL DOWN THINGS AND YOU CAN'T GET TO THEM.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Terri Holcomb: The most important things for a child to wear caving I think is, well, the helmet</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Padgett: The quality of the helmet makes a statement about the quality of the contents. The most valuable piece of property you have in your body is your head. Anything else, you break a finger, break an arm, break a leg, it will fix, but you break your head; game's over.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Terri Holcomb: And good shoes and kneepads and enough clothes to stay warm but not too hot.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Zach Holcomb: I like to go caving with my mom and dad.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt; Terri Holcomb: His father and I enjoy caving, and we thought he would enjoy crawling around in the rocks and the mud. It was just the dark part we didn't know if he would like, but he did like that. He liked it all.</p>

	>>Tim Gilbreath: This cave I came in when I was 11, the same age that my son is here with us today. It was my first cave experience here. It was a lot cleaner cave then, there wasn't quite as much use
	>>Justin Gilbreath: I have been caving since I was 9. I like caving because I can get muddy and climb rocks. My dad works at a state park with a lot of caves.
	>>Tim Gilbreath: This is a very highly used cave with a lot of visitors each year
	>>Cressler: THERE ARE CERTAIN CAVES THAT WE CALL SACRIFICIAL CAVES WHERE PEOPLE WILL GO AND HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF IMPACT. THE MAJORITY OF THE CAVES HOWEVER, RECEIVE VERY LITTLE VISITATION AND THEREFORE THE IMPACT IS MINIMAL. I THINK THAT AS THE POPULATION OF THE SOUTHEAST GROWS, CAVES WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPACTED JUST BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO LIVE NEAR THEM, WHEN THEY LIVE NEAR THEM, THEY VISIT THEM.
	Cousineau: THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY WAS FOUNDED BECAUSE WE BEGAN TO LOSE A LOT OF CAVES TO DEVELOPMENT AND THIS IS THE TYPE OF THING THAT IS HAPPENING ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES. SO WE DECIDED THAT ONE OF THE WAYS TO KEEP THEM OPEN FOR RECREATIONAL CAVING FOR EXAMPLE WAS TO JUST GO OUT AND BUY THEM. AND SOME OF THE CAVES WE'VE BOUGHT NOT SO MUCH FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES, BUT BECAUSE THEY'VE CONTAINED THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES AND WE WERE IN A POSITION TO ACT VERY RAPIDLY TO ACQUIRE THOSE AND TO PROTECT THE SPECIES WITHIN.
	>>Aulenbach: IT'S ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT CAVES ARE VERY FRAGILE. IT TAKES THEM A LONG TIME TO FORM. AND IT'S EASY TO HURT CAVE CREATURES OR DAMAGE FORMATIONS.
	>>Cressler: WELL, I LOOK AT EVERY INDIVIDUAL CAVE AS INDIVIDUAL AS A PERSON. WHEN YOU GO INTO THEM, NO TWO ARE THE SAME. SOME OF THEM ARE REALLY HORRIBLE, SOME OF THEM ARE REALLY, REALLY NICE AND I TAKE EACH ONE OF THEM FOR WHAT THEY ARE WORTH. IF IT'S FIFTY FEET LONG, I WILL LOOK AT IT JUST AS CLOSELY IF IT WERE FIVE MILES LONG.

	<p>&gt;&gt;Tim Gilbreath: The primary message that I would like to send to the children that may see this tape is this is not necessarily something that you just want to grab a flashlight out from under the kitchen cabinet and go climb in a hole in the ground.</p>
	<p>Ron Hilton: A Flashlight caver to me is a caver that goes in with one flashlight, one set of batteries in the light and maybe an extra set of batteries in his pocket and when those run out, he is stuck in the cave.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Gilbreath: You want to take an adult with you that knows a little bit about what they are doing.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Ron Hilton: A good caver should have a light on his helmet or his hat. Because you need both your hands to go through the cave because of safety precautions. They don't realize what, what it takes to rescue them. It's not like being out on a wreck out on the road. It takes several hours to rescue them from a cave. And in that several hours a lot can happen to them. Hypothermia can set in and different things like that.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Padgett: Well, cavers rescue cavers, or cavers rescue spelunkers. Sometimes it's our friends; sometimes it's these folks that just haven't got a clue how to do things. And what if you drop that flashlight down a crack? Then you're just sitting there in the dark. In cave rescue we care about caves we care about caving and we care about other cavers so we have undertaken to get specialized training, weeks and weeks and weeks of training over the years. Cave rescue is a very labor-intensive effort. Well the last episode in this cave, with a cave rescue, we had a young fellow fall. He was a thousand feet from the entrance. It took 75 people 14 hours to get him out of the cave. And it is all for free, it's a volunteer thing and this guy is hurt and needs our help so we went and helped him.</p>
	<p>Aulenbach: THE REASON WHY I THINK CAVING IS SO MUCH FUN, ITS KIND OF LIKE BEING INSIDE A MAZE TO SOME EXTENT, AND YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S AROUND THE NEXT CORNER AND THERE'S OFTEN ALOT OF PRETTY THINGS WHETHER IT'S JUST THE SHAPE OF THE CAVE PASSAGE OR FORMATIONS OR JUST THE ANIMALS THAT LIVE IN CAVES.</p>
	<p>Tim Gilbreath: Quiet and solitude probably means more to me than anything else. There's not a whole lot of phones or pagers that work under here. So it's a good place to be and I think that it's been very good for them as far as building self-confidence and giving them a new perspective on mother Earth.</p>

	<p>&gt;&gt;Lane: I think its good to have your children out caving because it gives them an experiance of the outdoors and a sense of adventure to discover new places and sometimes even have the potential to go places where no one has ever been before and they have just a great adventure of being in a unique environment that not everyone gets to experiance in life.</p>
	<p>ALMOST EVERYTIME I TALK TO SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER BEEN IN A CAVE, THEY SAY THAT THEY'RE CLAUSTROPHOBIC. AND MOST PEOPLE ACTUALLY REALLY AREN'T CLAUSTROPHOBIC, THEY JUST THINK THAT THEY ARE. AND THERE ARE DEGREES OF CLAUSTROPHOBIA. BUT THE AVERAGE PERSON THAT COMES INTO A CONFINED SPACE SUCH AS A CAVE, WHEN THEY ARE MOVING AND IT'S COOL, AND EVEN IF THE SPACE IS VERY SMALL THEY'RE NOT CLAUSTROPHOBIC, THEY NEVER EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;Travis Hilton: My favorite part about caving is getting muddy. The worst part about caving is leaving.</p>
	<p>&gt;&gt;<b>Male Narrator: Who is devoting a great deal of effort and resources toward protecting Georgia's environment? The same company that helps maintain the environment inside your home, Georgia Power. Proud sponsor of programming on GPTV.</b></p>