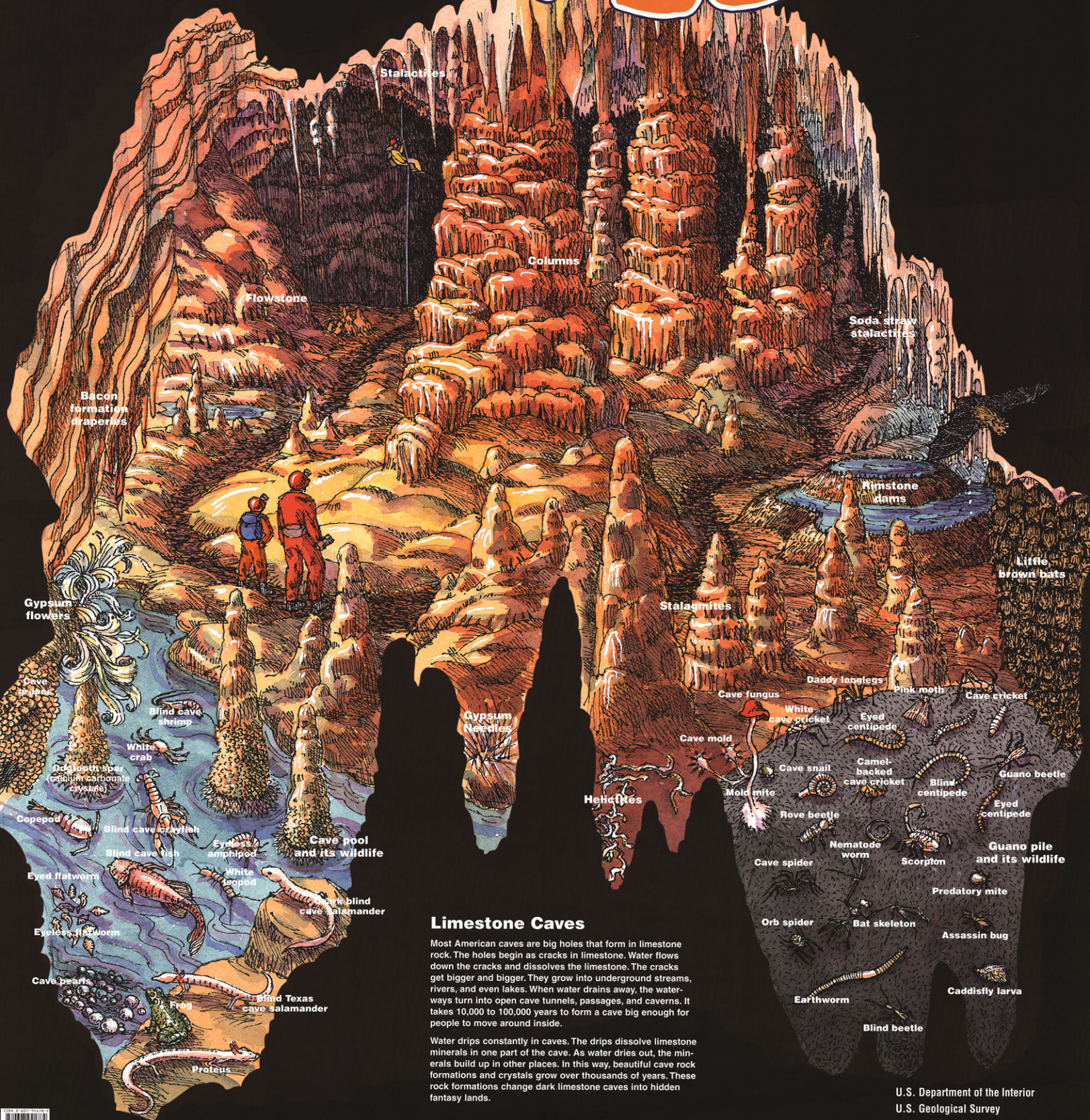


EXPLORING CAVES

This poster can be used with a series of lesson plans designed for elementary school students. These plans are available on the Internet at www.usgs.gov/education/caves. Additional information on caves is also available at this site.



Stalactites

Columns

Flowstone

Soda straw stalactites

Bacon formation draperies

Rimstone dams

Little brown bats

Gypsum flowers

Stalagmites

Daddy longlegs

Pink moth

Cave cricket

Cave grasses

Blind cave shrimp

Gypsum Needles

Cave fungus

White cave cricket

Eyed centipede

White crab

Cave mold

Cave snail

Camel-backed cave cricket

Blind centipede

Guano beetle

Big tooth spur (Bibullin carbonate crystals)

Copepod

Blind cave crayfish

Eyeless amphipod

Cave pool and its wildlife

Helicifex

Mold mite

Rove beetle

Nematode worm

Scorpion

Guano pile and its wildlife

Eyed flatworm

Blind cave fish

White leopod

Blind cave salamander

Cave spider

Orb spider

Bat skeleton

Assassin bug

Eyeless flatworm

Cave pearls

Frog

Blind Texas cave salamander

Earthworm

Blind beetle

Caddisfly larva

Blind cave salamander

Protus

Limestone Caves

Most American caves are big holes that form in limestone rock. The holes begin as cracks in limestone. Water flows down the cracks and dissolves the limestone. The cracks get bigger and bigger. They grow into underground streams, rivers, and even lakes. When water drains away, the waterways turn into open cave tunnels, passages, and caverns. It takes 10,000 to 100,000 years to form a cave big enough for people to move around inside.

Water drips constantly in caves. The drips dissolve limestone minerals in one part of the cave. As water dries out, the minerals build up in other places. In this way, beautiful cave rock formations and crystals grow over thousands of years. These rock formations change dark limestone caves into hidden fantasy lands.