

Announcing the 54th Annual WSS Hodag Hunt Festival September 7-9, 2018

We are happy to announce the 54th annual Wisconsin Speleological Society (WSS) Hodag Hunt Festival is scheduled and we are set for yet another fun and adventurous caving celebration weekend. This year's event will be held at Yellowstone Lake State Park in southwest Wisconsin. This area of the state is in the glacial driftless area, so hills and valleys abound with scenic driving views around every corner. Keeping with the tradition of trying something new, this is the first time a WSS Hodag Hunt Festival has ever been held at Yellowstone Lake State Park.

Yellowstone Lake State Park is a 1,000-acre park, and has a 455-acre lake, which offers visitors ample space to enjoy camping, swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, biking and picnicking. More information can be found about Yellowstone Lake State Park at their official website (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/yellowstone/>).

The Yellowstone Lake State Park site was chosen because of its proximity to Cave of the Mounds and other local attractions. Cave of the Mounds happens to be one of the most spectacular Show Caves in the Midwest and is also officially and appropriately recognized as a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Government. We are happy to announce we have arranged for a large discount tour rate (\$10 cash per person) for registered Hodag attendees at Cave of the Mounds and our picnic supper and WSS auction will be in the historic Brigham Barn on the Cave of the Mounds property. More information and driving directions to Cave of the Mounds can be found on their official website at (<http://www.caveofthemounds.com>).

The WSS Hodag Hunt Festival is a yearly weekend caving jubilee for cavers from Wisconsin and the surrounding states. It is a great time to get together for exploring caves during the day, later reconnecting and relaxing with fellow cavers, and above all, having lots of social fun and camaraderie. You do not have to be a WSS member or be affiliated with any other caving grotto to attend. Everyone is welcome! We do encourage new attendees to join the WSS if they are interested.

At a minimum for caving equipment needs, a protective hard helmet and hands-free lights of some sort are a must. Hiking boots, protective clothing, and knee pads are highly recommended for any of the Hodag caving trips. You will want to bring a camera, too, as there will be spectacular photo opportunities and memorable moments that you will want to capture for a lifetime during the whole weekend of the 54th Hodag Hunt Festival celebration.

Please note we do have two very important **equipment requirements** for everyone who is going into the caves during the Hodag Hunt: 1) **Everyone needs to have clean caving equipment** to protect against the spread of the devastating White-Nose Syndrome (WNS). See the WSS website information at (<http://www.wisconsin caves.org/WNS>) for the latest updates on WNS. The link also provides the latest decontamination protocols from the US Fish and Wildlife Service for your caving gear; and 2) **No one may use caving equipment and clothing in Wisconsin caves that has been in caves outside of Wisconsin** per Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources regulations. A decontamination station will be provided by the WSS for the outing to keep your equipment clean.

Hodag Fun: The WSS uses the Hodag Hunt Festival weekend as a caving social gathering and uses the funds raised at the Hodag auction to support its various caving activities throughout the year. Please do bring items for the auction and some extra money for the great buys and interesting finds you will see at the auction. The weekend will be full of great wild caving trips to some of the more popular undeveloped caves in the area. Cave of the Mounds is just one of the commercial caves you could take in for the weekend. Other Show Caves in Iowa are also an easy driving distance away.

Camping: Camping this year for the WSS Hodag Festival is at Yellowstone Lake State Park. The park provides a panoramic view of 455-acre Yellowstone Lake. Park features include 112 camping sites that vary from single tent, group, to large camper with electric and water individual sites. Park amenities include full shower facilities, toilet bathrooms, a playground area, beach swimming access, hiking trails, and a comfort station. Yellowstone Lake State Park is a Wisconsin State Park, so **Wisconsin Park admission stickers are REQUIRED** on all vehicles using the park and must be properly attached. Information on State Park stickers and their costs can be found at (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/admission.html>). Park stickers can be purchased upon your arrival at the park.

Group Site Camping: The WSS has reserved a large group site for tent camping at Yellowstone Lake State Park, site #201, for those who will be camping in tents. Site #201 does have electricity and a fire pit for nightly get togethers. A bathroom facility is right next door. The shower building and a large playground area are a short walking distance from the site. There is also an ample supply of parking next to group site #201 for all vehicles. Parking or driving on the grass is prohibited. This year there is not a separate fee for camping in the group site #201 for Hodag registered attendees. Camping fees are covered by your Hodag registration. Folks arriving to Yellowstone Lake State Park, who plan on staying at group site #201, need to check in at the Ranger Station to announce where they will be staying to get a camping pass for their vehicle. With a Wisconsin State Park sticker for your vehicle, you are then free to enter the park for your weekend stay.

Individual Campsites: There is an abundance of individual campsites available in the park. Folks with large or small campers, or even a person with a tent that wants more privacy, can pick between having full, just partial hookups, or no hookups for their camp sites. Expenditures for individual sites are not covered by your Hodag registration. Reservations for sites can be made in advance by visiting the Park's official website (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/yellowstone/>).



Firewood: Bringing your own firewood is **not allowed** at Wisconsin State Parks from more than 10 miles away from the destination campground, unless it is certified by WI DATCP. The Friends of Yellowstone Lake State Park sell firewood at the park office for \$5 a bundle. The proceeds go right back into the park to provide educational programs for visitors.

Meals: You are on your own for breakfast, lunch, and Friday night dinner. A short 10-minute drive from the Park will get you to historic Blanchardville. Five restaurants in town give a large selection on breakfast, lunch, and dinner possibilities. Great food selections can be found at: Lady Dawn's, Viking Cafe, The Pecatonica Grapevine, Dawn's Place, and the Gnarly Oak Restaurant and Bar. The Viking Café is locally known for its great Viking breakfast skillet, so don't miss out on a great breakfast. The WSS Hodag supper will be served Saturday evening. It is an all-you-can-eat picnic-style meal of brats, hotdogs, burgers, coleslaw, potato salad, and other typical picnic favorites and will be served in the renovated Brigham Barn right at the Cave of the Mounds.

Hodag Wild Caving Trips: Saturday trips will be offered from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and Sunday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Sign-up sheets will be available after Saturday breakfast. A **9:30 welcome and trip briefing on Saturday is required** for everyone to attend, if you are participating in any planned WSS trip activities. For caving trips, everyone needs to be aware of White Nose Syndrome decontamination protocol in order to participate. Decontamination info will be provided at Registration and in the Hodag Festival Guidebook.

Alternative Caving Activities: There will be plenty of alternative activities other than caving. A 50-minute drive to Madison will give you access to Olbrich Botanical Gardens, the Wisconsin State Capital, Memorial Union Terrace at the University of Wisconsin, the Henry Vilas Zoo and countless museums, restaurants, parks, and lakes. A 30-minute drive will take you to scenic and historic Mount Horeb. Their attractions include Little Norway, Bothan Vineyards, Fisher King Winery, Deer Valley Lodge & Golf Course, the Grumpy Troll Microbrewery Pub, Havens Petting Farm, and so much more. An even shorter 10-minute drive from the Park will get you to Squeaky Wheel Saloon - Hollandale, Nick Engelbert's Grandview - Hollandale, Pec Time River Rafting and Tubing Inc - Argyle, New Glarus Brewing Company - New Glarus, (home of the Spotted Cow), Toy Train Barn - Argyle, and the Swiss Historical Village - New Glarus.

Cost: Pre-Registration is \$10 per person. On-site registration is \$11 per person. There is no registration charge for children 15 and under. Brats, hotdogs, burgers, and all-you-can-eat picnic style fixin's is \$6 for adults, \$3 for children 2-12, no charge for children under 2. See separate registration form for more specific cost breakdowns.

Driving Directions: To get there from Madison, head west on U.S. Highway 18/151 toward Dodgeville. Take the State Highway 78 South exit at Mount Horeb and head south on 78 to Blanchardville (Highway 78 will also become County Highway F). After passing through downtown Blanchardville on 78/F, turn right on County Highway F at the T-intersection where County F and Highway 78 split - there will be a road sign directing you toward the park (don't turn right at your first opportunity to take county F on the north side of Blanchardville prior to the downtown area). Continue following F for about 8 miles to Lake Road. Turn left (east) onto Lake Road (look for the large unlit park sign). The park office is about 1 mile east of County F on Lake Road on the right side. **GPS coordinates to the park:** (Latitude) 42.76944, -89.97083 (Longitude) 42°46'10"N, 89°58'15"W.



Schedule at a glance:

- **Friday Main Arrival/Setup:** Feel free to arrive any time after 3:00 pm on Friday to set up your campsite for the weekend and take in the great amenities of Yellowstone Lake State Park and the surrounding area.
- **Friday Registration:** Registration starts at 7:00 in evening in the Yellowstone Lake State Park at the group campsite.
- **Friday Lunch & Dinner:** Cavers are on their own for Friday meals.
- **Saturday Breakfast:** Cavers are on their own for breakfast. Great breakfast selections can be had at nearby Blanchardville WI. Most restaurants in town open at 7:00 am.
- **WSS Welcome and Activity Briefing:** Quick orientation and **information meeting at 9:30 is mandatory** for all day-trip participants. Maps for local attractions will be available and signup sheets for caving.
- **Saturday Caving:** Hodag trip activities start at 10:00. Everyone should be back from their daily trips no later than 4:30 to get ready for the Saturday evening activities.
- **Saturday Lunch:** Cavers are on their own for lunch on Saturday.
- **Saturday Tour of Cave of the Mounds:** 5:30 - 6:30. Interested persons register for tour at the Gift Shop.
Fee: \$10 cash. Credit card users will be charged full tour rates of \$18.95.
- **Saturday Meal:** The Saturday supper will be all you can eat brats, hotdogs, hamburgers, potato salad, coleslaw, chips, and beverages. Serving time is from 6:30 - 7:30 in the renovated Brigham Barn on the Cave of the Mounds grounds.
- **Saturday WSS Auction:** The WSS auction fund raiser will start around 8:00 in the Brigham Barn, after the Saturday meal. Door prizes will also be given out during the auction.
- **Sunday Breakfast:** Cavers are on their own for breakfast. Great breakfast selections can be had at nearby Blanchardville. Most restaurants in town open at 7:00 am.
- **Sunday WSS Board/General Meeting:** A combined WSS General and Board Meeting will be held from 9:00 - 10:00 Sunday morning at the group campsite. All are welcome to attend.
- **Sunday Caving:** There will be limited trips offered on Sunday. Caving activities start at 10:00 and should have everyone back to Yellowstone Lake State Park no later than 2:30. All campsites need to be vacated by 3:00, ending the WSS 54th annual Hodag Hunt Festival activities.