

# Announcing the 55th Annual WSS Hodag Hunt Festival August 9-11, 2019

We are happy to announce the 55th 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 near Maquoketa Caves State Park in Iowa. We will be based at Riverview Ridge Campground, in Cascade, Iowa, about 25 minutes northwest of the State Park.

Maquoketa Caves State Park is located 7 miles northwest of the Iowa city of Maquoketa. The park is in the driftless area of Iowa. This region escaped being glaciated in the last ice age, while regions to the east and west of the park were not spared. The park has been subjected to hundreds of thousands of years of natural non-glacial erosion. Maquoketa Caves is probably Iowa's most unique state park. Its caves, limestone formations and rugged bluffs provide visitors a chance to "step back" into geological time thousands of years into the past. Keeping with the tradition of trying something new, this is the first time a WSS Hodag Hunt Festival has ever been held at Maquoketa Cave State Park.

Maquoketa Cave State Park covers 370 acres nestled among hardwood trees and high bluffs. The park contains more caves than any other state park in Iowa. A beautiful trail system links the caves, formations, and overlooks while providing an exciting hiking experience. The Park features approximately thirteen public caves to visit and a combined 6 miles of hiking trails. Most of the caves may be entered by persons of average physical ability, but some are more advanced and will require lights and full caving gear. Caves vary from the 1,100' Dancehall Cave with walkways and lighting system to Dugout Cave an advanced caving opportunity. The remaining caves are all different sizes and shapes. Some can be explored by walking while others can best be seen by crawling. A great experience awaits everyone at this unique state park!

The Maquoketa Cave State Park was chosen as this year's 2019 Hodag Hunt Festival destination, because of last year's site visit during the 2018 Hodag Hunt Festival that was at Yellowstone Lake State Park in Wisconsin. Many WSS Board members and Hodag attendees made the hour and a half trip from Yellowstone Lake State Park to Maquoketa Cave State Park, after hearing nothing but praise for the park from many WSS members who have visited the park in the past and had suggested that it would make a great Hodag Hunt Festival location. The WSS Board members and other cavers on the 2018 Hodag trip were blown away on what they saw and fell in love with the park. The only drawback from that trip was the lack of time to see everything and explore all the caves and other unique offerings in the park. With an enthusiastic vote of approval, the following morning after the site visit trip and during WSS September monthly meeting, the WSS Board approved the 2019 Hodag Hunt Festival location to be at Maquoketa Cave State Park. Note, no park sticker or fee is required in any Iowa State Parks, so entry and visitation to Maquoketa Caves State Park is free. More information can be found about Maquoketa Cave State Park at their official website (<https://www.iowadnr.gov/Places-to-Go/State-Parks/Iowa-State-Parks/ParkDetails/parkid/610127>).

**Hodag Fun:** 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. 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.

**Caving Requirements:** Please note we do have two very important **equipment requirements** for everyone who is going into any 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.wisconsinincaves.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) Maquoketa Caves State Park now **requires a permit to enter any of the park's caves**. The permit is free and requires anyone who wants to visit the caves to attend very brief White Nose Syndrome (WNS) Awareness Program. You will be asked to disinfect your shoes and not wear gear or clothes that have been in contaminated areas. After the short presentation you will be given a green wrist band that is the proof you went through the presentation. The green wrist band is the permit to enter the caves.

**Group Camping Site:** The WSS has reserved 5 adjoining full-service water/electric sites at Riverview Ridge Campground just a short 25-minute drive and easy driving directions from Maquoketa Caves State Park. The sites are near full-service bathrooms and a picnic shelter. Riverview Ridge is a full hook-up service campground equipped with RV and tent sites. It is ranked in the top five of the "Best Campgrounds in Iowa". It is located along the cliffs and lush riverbanks on the North Fork of the Maquoketa River, just a mile or so from the cozy town of Cascade, Iowa. They offer tube & kayak rentals with pick up and have 10 miles of combined hiking/walking trails through an additional 80 acres of campground terrain. Other amenities include clean bathrooms and showers, free use of board games from the clubhouse next to the picnic shelter, scheduled weekend movie nights on the big screen in the picnic shelter, a horseshoe pit area, sand volleyball court, nice new children's playground area, picnic tables and pits at each campsite, beach areas along the river for shallow water fun, fishing, full firewood service with delivery to your site, and pets are allowed on a leash. For more information on the campground visit their web site at (<https://riverviewridgecampgrounds.com>). Note, Hodag registration will be at the campground and our meal and auction will be a five-minute drive to the nearby town of Cascade.



**Individual Campsites:** There is an abundance of individual campsites available in at Riverview Ridge. 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. Reservations for individual sites can still be obtained by contacting the campground through their website.

**Firewood:** Bringing you own firewood is **not allowed** at Riverview Ridge Campground. They sell firewood at the campground office for a nominal fee and will deliver the firewood right to camping site.

**Meals:** You will be on your own for all meals on Friday and Sunday, and also breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Cascade has a number of options in the Bar/Restaurant area. Dagwoods, The Narrow Gauge, and the Corner Tap are all conveniently located in downtown Cascade while the Bent Rim is located 1 large block South of 1st Ave on the East side of town. Pizza/Italian meal options can be found at Happy Joe's, a sit-down/carry-out/delivery restaurant attached to the Cascade Bowling Center on the East end of town. There is Godfather's Pizza/Italian that is a part of McDermott Oil and Casey's Pizza Carry-Out located at Casey's Convenience Store. Cascade has some great and healthy options in the fast food/deli area. They have a Subway located downtown and a new deli located within Brother's Market for a healthier sandwich alternative. We are happy to announce this year we are once again going to have a buffet dinner before our WSS Hodag auction on Saturday evening. The dinner this year will be in the large lower level banquet room at Kalmes' Club 528 in Cascade, just a 5-minute ride from Riverview Ridge Campground. The meal includes beef and chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, coleslaw, roll and butter, coffee, and milk. A full-service bar upstairs is also available for alternative beverages. The WSS auction will follow in the same room.

**Registration and Orientation Meeting: 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. While driving through Dubuque either going to the Hodag or returning home, you can check out two landmark attractions: The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium is in Dubuque and the show cave of Crystal Lake Cave is just a few miles outside of Dubuque. For baseball fans and movie buffs there is a short ride to the movie set of the 1989 movie Field of Dreams in Dyersville, Iowa. For TV "American Pickers" fans see the resale shop Antique Archeology store at LeClaire, Iowa. For a cool off in the hot weather, take in 2- to 4-hour tube or kayak trip down the North Fork of the Maquoketa River starting right at the Riverview Ridge Campground and catch a wagon ride thru the scenic bluffs right back to the campground.

**Cost:** Pre-Registration is \$10 per person. On-site registration is \$11 per person. There is no registration charge for children 15 and under. Camping fees are \$8 per person per night. The buffet dinner will be \$11:50 per person, including tax and tip. Children 4-10 are \$4.75. See separate registration form for more specific cost breakdowns.

**Driving Directions:** To get to the Riverview Ridge Campground in Cascade Iowa from Dubuque, take a 25-mile ride on U.S. Highway 151 South all the way to the Cascade Iowa's first exit onto Industrial Park Road and drive into town. Take a right on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue all the way through town and over the only bridge across the North Fork of the Maquoketa River. Go two blocks and turn left on Buchanan Street. Take Buchanan Street for six blocks and take a left on Riverview Road. Stay on Riverview Road following blue campground signs on the paved road all the way to the campground.



#### **Schedule at a glance:**

- **Friday Main Arrival/Setup:** Feel free to arrive any time after 1:00 pm on Friday to set up your campsite for the weekend and take in the great amenities of River View Ridge Campground and the surrounding area.
- **Friday Registration:** Registration starts at 7:00 in evening in the River View Ridge Campground at our campsite.
- **Friday Lunch & Dinner:** Cavers are on their own for Friday meals.
- **Saturday Registration/Breakfast:** Registration continues. Cavers are on their own for breakfast. Great breakfast selections can be had at nearby Cascade, Iowa. 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 5:00 to get ready for the Saturday evening activities.
- **Saturday Lunch:** Cavers are on their own for lunch on Saturday.
- **Saturday Meal:** The Saturday supper will be a **6:00 pm** buffet dinner at Kalmes' Club 528 in Cascade, just 5 minutes from the campground.
- **Saturday WSS Auction:** The WSS auction fund raiser will start around 7:00 in the dining hall at Kalmes' Club 528, 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 Cascade. 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 caving trips offered on Sunday. All campsites need to be vacated by 12:00 noon, ending the WSS 56th annual Hodag Hunt Festival activities.