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National Park Service News Release

Release Date: April 17, 2012 For Immediate Release

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Jewel Cave and Wind Cave Celebrate National Park Week

JEWEL CAVE NATIONAL MONUMENT / WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, SD – Free tours and special activities are scheduled at Jewel Cave National Monument and Wind Cave National Park to celebrate this year's National Park Week. From Saturday, April 21, through Sunday, April 29, Discovery and Scenic Tours at Jewel Cave and Garden of Eden Tours at Wind Cave will be free. In addition to these below ground programs, both park units will be offering special surface activities.

"Free Discovery and Scenic Tours at Jewel Cave offer visitors the opportunity to learn about the exploration of the second-longest cave in the world," said Bradley Block, Jewel Cave's Chief of Interpretation. "Each Discovery Tour provides a 20-25 minute experience inside the cave where visitors will see cave formations such as calcite crystals and nailhead spar. The Scenic Tour is one hour and 20 minutes and takes visitors on a one-half mile journey in the cave. The longer tour does include 723 steps, but the underground scenery along this route is beautiful for the adventurous visitor."

Throughout National Park Week, Discovery Tours are offered daily at 11:35 a.m., 1:35 p.m., and 3:35 p.m. and are limited to 20 people. Scenic Tours take place at 10:00 a.m., 12:40 p.m., and 2:40 p.m. and host up to 30 participants. Both tours offer tickets on a first come first serve basis; no reservations are taken during National Park Week.

Wind Cave will be offering free Garden of Eden Tours lasting one hour at 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. from Saturday, April 21, to Friday, April 27. On Saturday and Sunday, April 28 and 29, Natural Entrance Tours will be offered at 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4:30 p.m. Both of these tours are moderately strenuous. Visitors will experience one of the most complex caves in the world and view the rare cave formation called boxwork.

Special surface activities at Jewel Cave include a guided nature hike on the ever-popular Roof Trail at 1 and 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 28. This quarter-mile trail loops through a ponderosa pine forest with vistas overlooking open meadows, rocky outcroppings, and wildland fire scars. Hikers are advised to dress for the weather. Both hikes begin at the visitor center.

Wind Cave rangers will present a special bird hike on Sunday, April 29, beginning at the visitor center at 9 a.m. This 90-minute walk will focus on exploring the early spring birds of the park.

Bookstores at both locations, managed by the Black Hills Parks and Forest Association, will be offering a 10 percent discount on any national park themed items. Several new items have been stocked in preparation for the upcoming summer season.

Cave temperatures at both caves are around 50 °F. A light coat or sweater and sturdy walking shoes are recommended. All tours and activities begin at the respective visitor centers, and cave tour tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis. These tours can be extremely popular, resulting in long wait times and possible "sold out" tours.

For more information related to National Park Week, or for normal tour times and reservations, call 605-673-8300 for Jewel Cave or 605-745-4600 for Wind Cave.



Photo Caption: Visitors such as Mary and John Bertucci from Louisiana will be able to tour Wind and Jewel Caves for free during National Park Week.

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