

Westcave Story Key Terms:

Lower Elementary (1st – 3rd grade):

Cactus	Fern	Snake
Flower	Poison Ivy	Preserve
Bird	Stalactite	Park
Fossil	Stalagmite	Littering
Live Oak Tree	Bald Cypress	
Flint Rock	Fish	

Cactus: A dry area or desert adapted plant with fleshy stems and a waxy coating that prevents water loss. Most have spines.

Flower: A showy part of a plant usually with colorful petals that attracts animals like butterflies to pollinate it, producing seeds.

Bird: A warm-blooded (typically) flying animal that lays eggs and has a spine, a beak, feathers, and wings.

Fossil: Remains or impression of a prehistoric organism preserved in a petrified form.

Live Oak Tree: One of the most common trees on Westcave's savanna that has small green leaves. OR _____ / Ashe Juniper Savanna is the first habitat you walked through at Westcave Preserve. It is home to lots of these types of trees with semi-evergreen leaves.

Flint Rock: Indigenous people used this rock to make fire and arrowheads.

Fern: A non-flowering plant found in the canyon that requires moisture.

Poison Ivy: A plant you should avoid that has three leaves and can give you a red, itchy rash.

Stalagmites: A type of cave formation that grows on the floor.

Stalactites: A type of cave formation that grows on the ceiling.

Bald Cypress: The tallest tree in the canyon, it is deciduous, meaning it loses its needle-like leaves every fall.

Fish: A vertebrate (an organism with a spine) that swims in the water. They breathe using special organs called gills.

Snake: A reptile that slithers around on the ground using its long, limbless, slender body.

Preserve: An area of land managed to protect its flora, fauna, and landscape.

Park: A recreational area of land for people to explore and get outside.

Littering: Leaving behind trash anywhere on purpose, instead of throwing it away or recycling it.

Higher Elementary (4th – 5th grade):

Bald Cypress	Invasive Species	Snake
Ball Moss	Lichen	Spider Web
Bird	Limestone	Stalagmites
Cactus	Native Species	Stalactites
Decomposition	Nest	Travertine
Erosion	Pedernales River	Animal Track
Fish	Poison Ivy	Preserve
Flint	Riparian Woodland	Park
Flower	Ashe Juniper / Live Oak	Littering
Fossil	Savannah	
Galls	Scat	

Bald Cypress: The tallest tree in the canyon, it is deciduous, meaning it loses its needle-like leaves every fall.

Ball Moss: A native epiphyte, a plant that lives in air, surviving by resting on tree branches and absorbing water and nutrients from the atmosphere.

Bird: A warm-blooded (typically) flying animal that lays eggs and has a spine, a beak, feathers, and wings.

Cactus: A dry area/desert adapted plant with fleshy stems and a waxy coating that prevents water loss. Most have spines.

Decomposition: The breaking down of plants, animals, and other organic substances into small pieces of organic matter.

Erosion: The process of removing material (soil, rocks, sediments) from one location and moving it to another location, which can be done by natural process like water, wind, ice, or gravity.

Fish: A vertebrate (organisms with a spine) that swims in the water. They breathe using special organs called gills.

Fern: A non-flowering plant found in the canyon that requires a moist environment.

Flint Rock: Indigenous people used this sedimentary rock to spark fire and make arrowheads.

Flower: A showy part of a plant that attracts animals to pollinate it, producing seeds.

Fossil: Any evidence of past life preserved in a petrified form.

Galls: A large round growth found on trees that serves as a home to the larva of a tiny wasp. This wasp stung the tree to insert its larva.

Invasive Species: A living organism that is not native to an ecosystem, causing harm to the environment and its inhabitants.

Lichen: A composite organism of algae/cyanobacteria and fungi living in a symbiotic relationship that can be found growing on our trees.

Limestone: A hard sedimentary rock that is porous in Central Texas, made up of calcium carbonate.

Native Species: A living organism that naturally originated and lives in a particular area and ecosystem in self-sustaining populations without human intervention.

Nest: A structure to raise young, typically made by birds to raise their chicks.

Pedernales River: The river visible from the overlook that has been shaped over the last 250,000 years by the power of water and flooding.

Poison Ivy: A plant you should avoid with three leaves that can give you a rash.

Ashe Juniper / Live Oak Savannah: The first habitat we walked through at Westcave Preserve that was a grassland with two main types of trees.

Riparian Woodland: The second type of habitat inside the canyon with a higher diversity of plants, cooler temperatures, and higher moisture.

Scat: The scientific name for animal poop.

Snake: A reptile that slithers around on the ground using its long, slender body.

Stalagmites: A type of cave formation made up of calcium carbonate that grows on the floor.

Stalactites, A type of cave formation made up of calcium carbonate that grows on the ceiling.

Travertine: A type of limestone deposited by mineral springs that has other organisms, like plants, growing on the surface.

Animal Track: An imprint left behind on the ground after an animal has walked across it.

Preserve: An area of land managed to protect its flora, fauna, natural resources, and landscape.

Park: A recreational area of land for people to explore and get outside to experience nature.

Littering: Leaving behind trash anywhere on purpose, instead of throwing it away or recycling it.