



# **Kartchner Caverns: How Two Cavers Discovered and Saved One of the Wonders of the Natural World**

*Neil Miller*

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It was all routine even if hundreds of pounds of earth were pressing down on their heads, even though the ceiling might potentially collapse at any moment, even if they were surrounded by a sea of darkness and had no idea what lay in front of them. Award-winning author Neil Miller soon tells us that what lay in front of amateur spelunkers Randy Tufts and Gary Tenen was anything but routine. These young men had crawled into a virgin cave, a landscape untouched and unseen for hundreds of thousands of years. In cave terminology, this underground oasis was “living”—water still seeped down the limestone walls, depositing minerals that slowly built up into stunningly beautiful formations. In a time when countless caves had been destroyed by vandals and looters who had defaced the walls and had broken formations, this pristine discovery was every caver’s dream. While duplicating that moment might seem difficult, this fascinating account of the fight to preserve Kartchner Caverns lends us the same sense of awe and urgency. In an arresting tale spanning the twenty-five-year period in which Tufts and Tenen struggled to protect their find, Miller skillfully weaves together personal interviews, biographical information, political maneuvering, and geological facts. Presented in full color with dazzling photographs showcasing the natural wonder of the caverns, this is an invitation to take in the mysterious, stunning beauty of a cave as if discovering it for the first time. The triumph of the conservationists and the opening of Kartchner Caverns as a state park are known to anyone who has visited the caves as a tourist. But this narrative offers a chance to go beyond the guidebooks with its revealing look at this unspoiled natural wonder and the science of cave conservation. With as much depth and colorful detail as the caverns themselves, this page-turning account will captivate anyone interested in caves and the preservation of natural wonders.

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