



A remarkable view from the cave entrance.

Into the Abyss

by Steve Eginoire

Hidden within the Colorado's Flattop Wilderness is Groaning Cave. Composed of 100-million-year-old limestone, these remarkable caverns make up the largest underground system in the state, containing nearly 12 miles of subterranean passages. A winter hibernaculum for area bats and home to a large abundance of extraordinary cave formations, access to Groaning is restricted, and a steel armored gate protects the delicate balance of the fragile ecosystem within. Here's a glimpse into one Colorado's least known treasures.



Terrain characteristic of the Flattop Mountains. Many other caves and caverns can be found throughout these rolling sub-alpine meadows.



Colorful formations composed of calcium carbonate are commonplace throughout Groaning Cave.



Huge areas of pure-white gypsum make up some of Groaning's most storied areas.



Delicate as they are beautiful, a sparkling gypsum "rose."



Underground oddness.



A large stalactite such as the one shown above can take millenia to form.