

## Indiana's Region of Karst Topography

Some rocks—limestone and dolomite, in particular—are soluble in water. When weakly acidic rainwater seeps into joints and fractures of underlying carbonate rocks, these fractures gradually enlarge to form caves and other solution features. The south-central region of Indiana is noted for these characteristic landforms, known as a “karst” topography.

Sinkholes are perhaps the most widespread karst feature. These funnel-shaped sinks may be broad, dish-shaped depressions or may have steep sides where surface materials have collapsed into under-lying caverns. As many as 1,022

sinkholes were counted in one square mile in southern Indiana, each draining into a subterranean stream. Only a few of the largest streams can maintain their flow across the sinkhole plain and cave-riddled uplands. In the karst region, so-called “disappearing streams” enter swallow-holes, leaving blind valleys and dry streambeds and emerging as springs miles away.

Solution-widened joints, usually filled with soil, are called “grikes” and can be seen in most road cuts and quarry walls. Upward projecting, usually very irregular surfaces of limestone in southern Indiana’s karst area are called “lapies.”

