



TSA Activities Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 4

April 2006

News & Notes

TSA Affairs:

TSA Vertical Training Workshop

Folks,

John Brooks has asked if I would coordinate a TSA vertical training workshop. Two years ago, we held a very successful vertical workshop at Government Canyon State Natural Area. However, Government Canyon was not available to us this year. I also contacted the climbing ranger at the Alamo Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America and they are willing to make their facility at Bear Creek near Kerrville in Kerr County available for training. The training will be open to cavers as well as scout leaders which is a great opportunity to cross train with the scout program. (This is a great way to find volunteers for your pet conservation projects.)

The training will be held over the weekend of April 28-30, 2006. We will begin an informal training program on Friday night around 7 pm. Formal training will be on Saturday and Sunday. Camping will be at the scout reservation in designated areas (away from other scout troops that may also be using the camp).

The Bear Creek Scout Ranch facilities are excellent. They are located near the town of Hunt in Kerr County, about 15 miles northwest of Kerrville. The scout reservation has two cliffs that we can use for the training including a number of bolted rig points along a 40 foot cliff and also a 120 foot cliff. I have also asked if we can use the environmental pavilion which will offer good access to the cliffs nearby as well as shelter from the sun. We can also camp for the three days at the reservation but they do ask that we follow their campground rules of no alcohol. I hope to also have access to the conference facilities at the scout ranch for evening presentations.

We will be following the training manual from the Vertical Section of the NSS. This training is recommended for both experienced and beginning vertical cavers. Course contents includes ropes, knots, rigging, rappelling, and ascending using knots as well as mechanical ascenders. We will have examples of various vertical systems for participants to try. This will be a comprehensive training program that will begin at 8 am on Saturday morning, run into the evening, and begin again on Sunday morning. We hope to complete the training after lunch on Sunday.

If you are interested in attending the training, it is open to all interested participants. We will cap the registration depending upon the number of instructors that are available. The estimated cost for this event is about \$20 and will include a training manual, access to the scout reservation, camping, and equipment. However, if you have your own vertical equipment including helmet, you are welcome to

bring it. Use of the equipment will be subject to inspection by one of the instructors. You must be 14 years or older to participate in the training without special approval.

If interested, you may respond directly to me by email. However, note that I have a spam filter so it may appear that the email was bounced. However, the email will go into a file which I will check every day or so and respond back with confirmation. If you do not get a response in a day or so, please email me again. Make sure that you use <Vertical Training Workshop> in the subject area. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or call.

Thanks,

Geary Schindel <gschindel@mindspring.com>
(210)-479-2151 (H), (210)-222-2204 (W)

2006 TSA Spring Convention

The 2006 Spring Convention will be held at the John Knox Ranch near Wimberley, Texas on May 19-21, 2006. Get your best cave photos and maps ready for the salons. There will be a Saturday evening banquet with a TCMA auction afterwards. If you have a talk you'd like to give, or want to sign up for volunteer duties, please contact Kara Dittmer <misskarabiner@yahoo.com>. Details will be posted in the *Texas Caver*, the TSA website, and on TexasCavers.com. Hope to see you there!

TSS Affairs

Texas Passes the 4000 Caves Milestone !

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Texas has achieved a milestone over the past week, the official TSS database shows that Texas now has more than 4000 caves. That's caves; not sinkholes, springs, shelters or rumors! If you check out: <http://www.utexas.edu/tmm/sponsored_sites/tss/longdeep/index.html> TSS Statistics you'll see that there are 4022 cave in Texas. The total number of TSS data records is 9247 which includes all the other springs and karst features we have data on.

Kevin Stafford is working on his PhD in New Mexico and made a formal data request for information on caves in the Gypsum Plain which the TSS provided. One of the requirements of a formal data request is that any information generated as a result of the request be returned to the TSS. Kevin made his first pass at returning data and provided a list of 176 new caves and features (some of which weren't in Texas). Jean Krejca (Creature) recently submitted new cave data using the TSS's online form at <http://www.utexas.edu/tmm/sponsored_sites/tss/tssdatareportform.htm> that also added to the count. So I guess it's congratulations Texas for the milestone. MANY THANKS to both Kevin and Jean for providing the information to reach this milestone.

As TSS electronic data manager, I would suggest that we've only scratched the surface on the number of caves in

Texas. While there are 4022 caves in Texas now, only about 2600 have location data. In this new GPS-caving world, taking GPS locations on every cave you visit and sending the information to the TSS would be a great help. All the new data we receive has locations but there are still a lot of old caves (I know, all caves are old - I'm referring to known for a long time) that are missing location data. There are a lot of records missing Length/Depth data that I'm sure have been surveyed but the data never supplied to the TSS. Receiving that data could seriously change the Long/Deep list on the TSS website.

It's a large state and there are many potential areas that cavers don't frequent. Even in frequently visited areas there are places where cavers haven't been. After having plotted out all the Kendall County cave locations on a map, I noticed there was a square area devoid of caves with caves all around it. Apparently cavers never gained access to the property represented by the blank square because there isn't a geologic reason for it being there.

Keep up the good work, Texas cavers. Keep sending in that information and let's show the folks in Missouri and Tennessee that we're right up there with them.

Butch Fralia

TSS Director and Electronic Data Manager.



Bill Steele auctioning off a photo salon entry at the 2005 TCMA Auction held at the TSA Convention at Fort McKavett. Photo by Carl Kunath.

TCMA Affairs

3rd Annual TCMA Auction

Attention Cavers! TCMA is putting together the 3rd annual TCMA Auction for this year's TSA Spring Convention at John Knox Ranch! Please consider donating items to the auction; get rid of that cave memorabilia growing in your garage, those extra sets of ascending gear that have never been used, or those wonderful one of a kind items which all

cavers want to bid on! Your items can be picked up or brought to convention; we'll do the rest. Sara Dubose <sissyweed@yahoo.com> is coordinating this year's auction. We will be sending receipts on the items we have already received, and will provide receipts to those who donate and want receipts at the convention.

Thanks in advance for your support of this worthy cause. With your help, we can get the Deep and Punkin Cave Preserve paid off and purchase more caves.

Allan Cobb

TCMA Fundraising Chairman

TCC Affairs

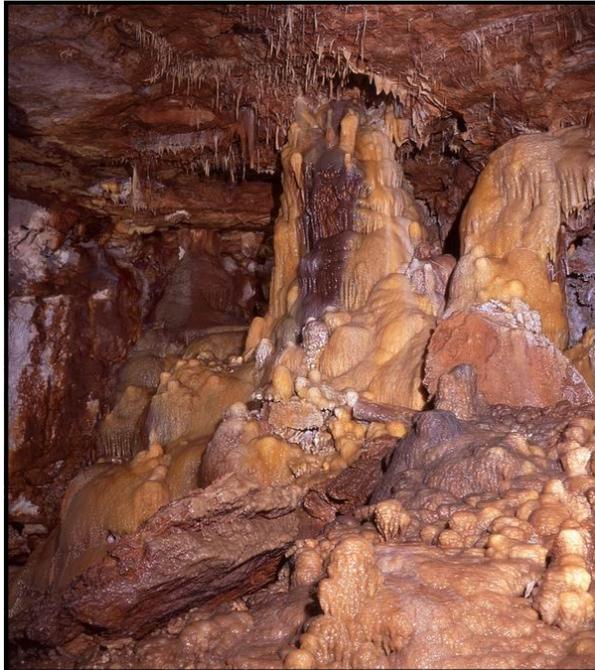
TCC Acquires Avery Ranch Cave

The Texas Cave Conservancy (TCC) announces its acquisition of Avery Ranch Cave, located near Round Rock, Texas. On March 6, 2006 the Avery Ranch Homeowner's Association transferred ownership of this small, one room cave to the TCC. The Conservancy will be developing this site as an educational show cave, available to cavers and members of the public at no charge. It will become a valuable tool in the TCC's cave-related public education efforts.

On May 2, 2001 contractors, excavating a one meter wide trench for a sewer line at Avery Ranch in Williamson County, cut into the side of a small, highly decorated cave. Caver Kimble White was summoned to check out the cave. He found a room 25-30 feet in diameter, up to 18 feet high and filled with formations. The following is Kimble's account of what occurred next: "It was hit during trenching of a sewer line on May 2, 2001. I was the first to enter and explore it that evening. Hub Bechtol, Brad Sappington, and Kristin White returned with me the next morning and helped map it. We took clean shoes into the cave with us and changed into them after making it past the muddy trench. We used a long piece of bamboo to place the end of the tape at various locations for our survey shots so as not to have to climb on the speleothems. To their credit the developer redesigned the sewer trench and the road it followed to avoid the cave. They gave up three lots on top to protect the cave and had the hatch installed on top to keep the speleothems from drying out. Others who entered the cave in that first week were Sylvia Pope and some others from COA, and Heather Beatty from TCEQ. Mike Warton came out later when I recommended him to the owners for installing the hatch. An interesting anecdote: while Sue Hovorka (Edwards Aquifer expert with the UT Bureau of Economic Geology) was rewriting the TCEQ guidelines for conducting Geologic Assessments in the recharge zone, we took her to a couple of our field sites to help her with some ground level input on the methods involved. We probably walked right over this cave in the process of inspecting several of the previously identified CEFs that are nearby...no sign of it at the surface whatsoever. It's also interesting to note that we are very lucky that the trench intersected the cave where it did. Had it done anything else but just nick the cave then it may not have been salvageable, not to mention the fact that the trencher could have taken a serious fall."

Since there was no observable cave life, Avery Ranch

Cave became a potential site for an educational show cave. While the TCC is currently purchasing three endangered species caves on the 4.25 acres at the TCC Headquarters site, this is the first cave to be owned outright by the conservation organization. Over the next three months, the TCC will install an observation deck inside the cave and make additional improvements. Your support with this effort and others is invited.



"Texas Grand Giant" in Avery Ranch Cave.

TCC Cave Day

Don't forget, Saturday, April 15, 2006, the TCC will host a public event, "CAVE DAY", in Cedar Park, Texas. Come on out and help. You will even get to see the latest TCC cave acquisition. For more information contact me.

Donna Mosesmann TCC Director (713)-777-7339
<dogmos1@hotmail.com>

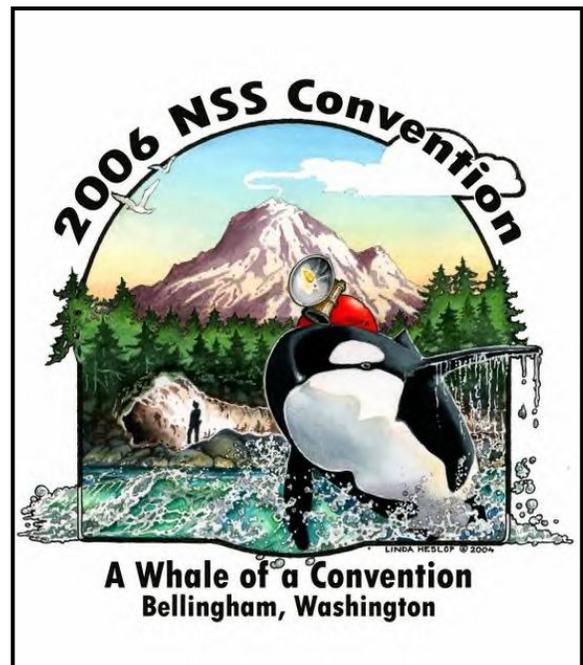
NSS Affairs

NSS Convention in Bellingham, WA

Come to the NSS 2006 Convention at Bellingham, Washington August 7-11, 2006. Bellingham is located about halfway between the two great Northwest cities of Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia on Bellingham Bay. The weather in Bellingham is superb in August, with typical temperatures in the upper 70s during the day, and clear, cool nights. Western Washington University is uniquely located above the city of Bellingham and has some of the best facilities (and views) for the NSS Convention you will ever find. From the time you arrive and sign in, you will find the Northwest atmosphere surrounding you with beautiful alpine vistas on all four points of the compass and lush vegetation only the northwest can provide. The Bellingham area will provide you with many non-caving attractions. There are many museums in the area you

might like to visit; Bellingham Railway Museum, The Radio Museum, Whatcom Museum, and Lynden Pioneer Museum all might be of interest. The Mt. Baker scenic Highway to the Mt. Baker ski area provides stunning views that are always a treat. Water sports abound in Western Washington (we get enough of it in the winter after all) with sea kayaking on Bellingham Bay or in the San Juan Islands or one of many whale-watching cruises.

But what about the caves? Well, we thought you would never ask. Even though the area is not as rich in caves as the southern US we do have caves that you will enjoy. In the local area, we have a several small limestone caves, talus caves, and snow caves (and we will even help you find them, or give you tours). The longest limestone cave in Washington State is a daytrip from Bellingham, accessible by hiking in the foothills of the Cascades. A bit over an hour drive from Bellingham, in lower British Columbia, is the Chilliwack caving area. The Chilliwack has high alpine karst caves as well as low valley caving. The area sports vertical as well as nice horizontal caving options, and the Chilliwack scenery is truly spectacular. The largest concentration of limestone caves in Washington State is about three hours from Bellingham and east of Seattle. These caves require a beautiful, but challenging hike. At the top, you will find numerous caves including Washington's deepest cave, Newton, at nearly 700 feet deep.



Southern Washington state, five or more hours drive from Bellingham, hosts a huge concentration of lava tube caves in the Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Adams areas. If you want the big caves, then Vancouver Island is your destination. A 1-hour drive and 2-hour ferry trip to Vancouver Island will bring you to some spectacular international caving. The Chilliwack, Vancouver Island, Victoria, and Vancouver, British Columbia Canada all require crossing the border. You must have your passport or other valid identification on

hand to cross the border.

At this year's convention you have a range of accommodation options from camping to motels and fantastic dormitories with fine dining in the cafeteria or one of many restaurants a short distance from the campus. If you are traveling far and want to travel light, you might consider one of the dorm rooms near the registration area. If you want to reserve a dorm floor for your grotto or a group of friends then let us know. For up to the minute convention information, check the convention web site at <http://www.nss2006.org>. For more Bellingham information, check the Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism web site at <http://bellingham.org>.

Looking forward to seeing you in August!

Michael McCormack and the NSS 2006 Convention Staff

Caving Cinema

Roger Brucker's Floyd Collins Story Headed for Big Screen

When he sneakily entered the cave in which an explorer had died in 1925, Roger W. Brucker felt the terror of a man trapped in a crevice for two weeks as rescuers frantically tried to pry him free. Brucker, a cave explorer from the Dayton suburb of Beavercreek, reconstructed the rescue attempt — which made national headlines — from Sand Cave, near Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky. The experiment provided crucial information for a 1979 book he co-wrote. These days, Paramount Pictures is planning to make a movie from the work; starring and directed by Billy Bob Thornton.

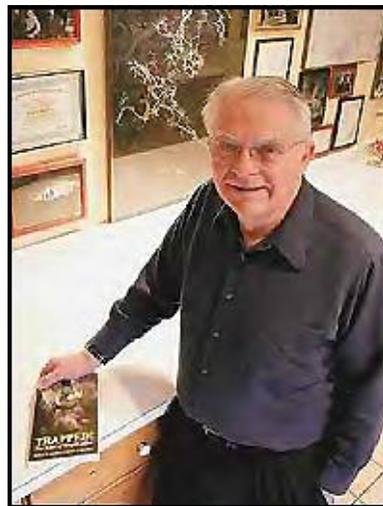
"It was a very scary place," Brucker said. "It was kind of an eerie feeling to be there. Floyd was alone. He must have had the utmost sense of panic." After his death, Sand Cave was sealed and gated to deter cavers and curiosity seekers. In 1977, though, Brucker felt compelled to see the cave for Trapped!: The Story of Floyd Collins, which he later wrote with Robert K. Murray. He and several fellow cavers tramped through the woods at night and slipped into the off-limits cave, opening the bolted gate and digging through the earthen seal. "We treated it as a clandestine operation," Brucker said.

He soon discovered why the cave had been sealed. "If you brushed against the ceiling, a rock the size of your fist would fall on your back." Brucker found wood supports, electrical wire, tools and other things that had been used in the Collins rescue attempt. And after six trips into the cave in two months, he learned its configuration. Murray said the Collins story played off people's fears of being trapped underground in the dark. Exploring alone, Collins became pinned under a rock ledge 60 feet from the surface and died before he could be rescued. "I have always thought that would make a good movie," said Brucker, 76. "I think if this is accurately presented, it's going to scare a lot of people because it certainly scared me and scared a lot of people who were involved in that rescue. "The conditions were so horrible."

Brucker has extensively explored Mammoth Cave and is responsible for finding new passageways and mapping them, making the cave miles longer than once thought. Its 365 miles make Mammoth the world's longest recorded cave.

Brucker has written four books on caves and co-founded the Cave Research Foundation, which is devoted to the research and protection of caves. On the walls of his rec room hang maps of caves and photos of cave explorers — himself included. Bookshelves next to the fireplace bulge with National Geographic magazines.

Caves have interested Brucker since he was a child, when he would pile up chairs and card tables, then cover them with blankets. When he was 8, Brucker's mother took him to Mammoth Cave, where he pestered the guide with questions about where dark alleys shooting off from the main passageway led. The guide told him they went nowhere. "I thought to myself, 'One day I'm going to find out,' " Brucker said. "That, I think, clinched it for me." After graduating from Oberlin College in northern Ohio with an art degree and spending time in the Air Force, Brucker became serious about caving. In 1954, he returned to Mammoth Cave, where he met a newspaper reporter who played a major role in the Collins rescue attempt by descending into the cave several times to take Collins food and try to dig him out. That's when Brucker began devoting himself to trying to find undiscovered passageways in the cave.



Roger Brucker

Through the years, Brucker has survived close calls when caving — including falling through a barrel-sized hole and into a chilly underground river. Brucker still explores caves and recently bicycled across the country after surviving cancer, three heart attacks and having a kidney removed. "The curiosity goes deep and wide," he said. "I want to know."

(Excerpted from: James Hannah. 2006.

<http://www.columbusdispatch.com/features-story.php?story=dispatch/2006/03/25/20060325-BI-00.html>)



Cave Biology

Endangered Devil's Hole Pupfish Population Declining

A lot is resting on the backs of some 84 tiny, shiny blue-brown fish swimming in a crack in the earth called Devil's Hole inside the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. As the population of these historically controversial and endangered desert pupfish continues to dwindle, federal, state and local scientists are scrambling to discover the reason and find a way to bring them back. A dramatic flooding and landslide incident, in which both naturally occurring silt and the displacement of scientific monitoring equipment combined to decimate between one-third and two-thirds of the Devil's Hole Pupfish population in September of 2004, left pupfish numbers at an all time low. So the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service, both jointly responsible for the small, mysterious warm water pool called Devil's Hole and the all-important fish that call it home, along with the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, convened a panel of scientists to come up with solutions.

"Originally, we hoped the population would replenish itself," explained National Park Service ranger Nancy Hadlock. The carefully monitored fish population has dipped and recovered before, but not this time. The last count, conducted by a pair of divers in the deep waters of the cavern last September, was estimated at 84. Devil's Hole is a small pool with a constant 92-degree temperature in the crevasse of a rocky hill. Today it is fenced off with chain link, barbed wire, and heavy locks. The 40-acre parcel of land it sits on belongs to Death Valley National Park and the 22,000 acres surrounding that comprise the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, created in 1984 to protect these fragile fish.

When population surveys of the pupfish first began in 1972, the count usually hovered somewhere in the area of 324 fish, with an all-time high count of 553, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife statistics. But in 1997, the population began to diminish steadily and scientists have been unable to discern the reason. "We really just don't know why," said Bob Williams, field supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office. But it is crucial that they continue their efforts to find out. Some dramatic incidents like the 2004 landslide and a sloshing of the water in the cavern resulting from seismic activity during a severe earthquake in Mexico have had obvious effects. But even under ideal conditions, the fish are not thriving, Williams said.

These tiny fish are no more than an inch long and live for less than a year. The Devil's Hole species (*Cyprinodon diabolis*) is one of several cyprinodons found in the Death Valley desert region and in the Mexican Caribbean. But what makes the Devil's Hole fish a priority is not just its tiny population, occurring naturally in no other part of the world but this small, rocky hole, but also its controversial history.

The Devil's Hole Pupfish, a species that may be as much as 60,000 years old, were declared an endangered species in 1967, one of the very first to receive that designation. By then the tiny fish had already served as conservation models when a presidential proclamation set aside Devil's Hole and annexed it to Death Valley National Monument as part of a

preservation effort on behalf of the fish in 1952. In 1972, when development around the Devil's Hole annex in the Ash Meadows area threatened water levels in the cavern, the federal government brought a lawsuit against the developer. Four years later the court ruled that the Devil's Hole Pupfish had prior water rights and that a minimum level must be preserved in the Hole in order to ensure their protection.

This decision would ultimately have a major impact on the surrounding areas and set a nationwide precedent for wildlife conservation efforts. Now, federal agencies entrusted with the care of endangered species in areas such as Death Valley National Park and the Ash Meadows Refuge have some recourse when water sources are threatened. The Devil's Hole decision has played a role in subsequent issues including the proposed Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository because of its connection to the aquifer that feeds regional water sources.



Devil's Hole Pupfish (*Cyprinodon diabolis*). Photo by Tom Baugh.

The Devil's Hole Pupfish is "a lighthouse species," said Death Valley National Park's Terry Baldino. "When it winks out, what happens to the species further down? Every species in the environment is affected, including us, because we live in this environment." Although scientists have been studying the Devil's Hole fish for more than 30 years, "we still have a lot of unanswered questions," Baldino said.

The cavern is at least 500 feet deep, though some say its ultimate depth cannot be measured. Two recreational divers disappeared there during the 1960s and no trace was ever found of them. The chain link fence surrounding the hole was erected soon after. Today, the fence protects water monitoring equipment as well as cameras watching for both natural predators and vandals, and is rigged with an alarm system.

But while the population of Devil's Hole declines, forward thinking scientists do have a few more pupfish up their sleeves. In 1972, a pupfish refugium was created near Hoover Dam and a small number of the fish were removed from Devil's Hole to this environment to create a backup population. Two more refugia were established inside Ash Meadows and each one has a population also hovering between 80 and 125 fish, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Bob Williams. However, one of the Ash Meadows refugia was infiltrated by another cyprinodon species, creating a hybrid fish, Williams said.

While the tiny fish swim in the clear blue waters, unaware of the massive efforts being undertaken on their behalf, the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Death Valley National Park Service and scientists

recruited from as far away as Mexico are putting their heads together and planning for the future.

(Excerpted from: Flinchum, Robin. 2006.

<<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2006/03/22/news/pupfish.html>>)

Cave Bibliographies Available

Friends, If I told you that an important American cave journal with 367 articles, 736 pages, and lots of cave biology, geology, and hydrology would be available again soon, would you be interested? Please read on.

You might look at my Biospeleology website soon; I have revamped some of the pages. <<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/tnhc/www/biospeleology/>>. A link on the home page takes you to a new page, with the following online bibliographies:

Bibliography of Cave Notes/Caves & Karst (1959-1973) [notesbib3.xls]. I made an annotated, MS Excel bibliography of Cave Notes, the journal later titled Caves and Karst. This important journal was published by Cave Research Associates in California from 1959-1973. The bibliography covers all 736 published pages and a variety of scientific subjects, offered here to renew interest in the journal. Many scientists and serious cavers would benefit from the 367 articles, reviews, abstracts, bibliographies and notes. The editorials contain valuable historical comments on cave conservation and management, especially in the western USA, but the journal was international. The journal will be available in bound sets, possibly by June 2006. If you would like to purchase a set, please contact Ozark Underground Laboratory (Tom Aley).

The new bound set will include an introduction by Bill Elliott. Bibliography of the National Cave & Karst Management Symposium, Proceedings (1975-2005) [nckmsbib5.xls] I created this annotated, MS Excel bibliography to renew interest in the published proceedings of these symposia, which were important in the development of scientific management of caves and karst. Represented are all 18 NCKMS conferences since 1975 plus six similar meetings, covering 886 papers and 3,803 pages. Scientists and serious cavers will benefit from studying this large body of work. The next NCKMS will be in St. Louis, Missouri, October 8-12, 2007.

Guide to New World Cave Biology (NWBB) [see TexBib link at <<http://www.txspeleologicalsurvey.org/>>] A bibliographic database with a custom search engine for Windows, NWBB is a preliminary version of the Bibliographic Guide to New World Cave Biology. It represents over 40 years of work by James R. Reddell, cave biologist at the Texas Memorial Museum, University of Texas at Austin. It contains approximately 20,000 citations with extensive author, taxonomic and geographic keywords. The search engine produces html text, which can be pasted into documents, edited and printed. And there are links to other bibliographies as well.

William R. Elliott, Ph.D.

Cave Biologist, Missouri Department of Conservation
Resource Science Division

<<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/tnhc/www/biospeleology/>>

Cave Archeology Cave Paintings in Thailand

Thailand has been a through-route for civilizations since Pleistocene (Ice Age) times. In recent years, several places, particularly in northeast Thailand, have become centers for archeological research. While much data has been unearthed in regard to use of tools, burial grounds, etc., of particular interest are the paintings found on cave walls and rock ledges. These paintings can be regarded as Thailand's first art. The colored paintings use dry colors, made by spraying and impressing. The rock art etching techniques include gouging, scraping and carving. Human figures were shown as silhouettes, signs and stick figures. Animals are drawn in silhouette and outline and include turtles, frogs and tortoises, cattle, deer, and fish. One of the best cave painting sites in Thailand is in Pha Taem National Park near Ubon Ratchathani. At the base of a cliff are paintings over 3,000 years old. Discovered in 1981, they show human hands and animals while others illustrate crops being planted with agricultural tools. At Phu Wiang National Park in Khon Kaen Province is Tham Pha Mue Daeng, also known as Red Palm Cave after the wall paintings of palm prints in red ochre. It is surmised that rock art originated from ancient trading people, who left cave paintings as a record of their existence and the route which they took across the country.

(Excerpted from:

<<http://www.huahintoday.net/index.php?action=show&type=news&id=808>>)



Thailand cave paintings.

Cave Conservation Historic Cooper's Cave to Open

South Glens Falls, N.Y. - Finding a place for visitors to park has delayed the grand opening of Cooper's Cave along the Hudson River, but village Trustee Bill Hayes said the historical site will be open in June 2006, no matter what. When the village started renovating the cave, made famous by James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel *Last of the Mohicans*, the trustees thought Niagara Mohawk would grant them an easement to allow parking at the end of River Street, Hayes said. A year ago, renovation began around Cooper's Cave, including new signs, a short walkway built from synthetic logs and a viewing platform from the top of the limestone island that forms the cave. In the book, Cooper's heroines, the Munro sisters, find shelter in the cave

for a night while on the run from murderous Hurons. Opening the historic site is another step toward drawing tourists to South Glens Falls. Hayes said the trustees are also reviewing bids from contractors who will turn a former sewer plant into a museum.

(Excerpted from:

<<http://timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=459940&category=REGIONOTHER&BCCode=&newsdate=3/12/2006>>.



Entrance to Cooper's Cave, New York. Photo by James Goolsby.

Tales of the Sinkhole:

Man Fleeing Police Dies in Texas Sinkhole

Dallas, March 22, 2006 — A man who fled on foot from a routine Dallas traffic stop ran right into a muddy sinkhole and died before rescuers could extricate him. Dallas County sheriff's Sgt. Don Peritz said it appears Shawn LeFlore, 33, thought he was a wanted man when he ran after being pulled over. Deputies stopped LeFlore at about 1:15 AM Tuesday because of an expired registration tag on the borrowed 2001 Chevrolet pickup he was driving. The 5-foot-4, 135 pound man bolted, and an hour later was found stranded in the muck at the bottom of the sinkhole. Deputies requested medical assistance and tried lifting him out, "but the more they pulled, the more they started to sink," and the victim stopped breathing at about 3:27 AM. Preliminary reports from the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office indicate no blunt trauma to LeFlore and that exhaustion and weather conditions - mid-40-degree temperatures - may have been contributing factors to his death. LeFlore had a criminal record for aggravated assault, misdemeanor theft, felony theft and felony drug charges.

(Excerpted from: <<http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/view.php?StoryID=20060322-042933-8886r>>)

Sinkholes Prove Deadly For US Army

Grafenwöhr, Germany — A study commissioned by the U.S. Army after a 2002 fatal training accident shows nearly 1,000 potentially dangerous spots inside the Army's premier training area in Europe. The \$115,000 hydrogeological report, by Nuremberg-based engineers Wolf Blumenthal Ingenieurburo, was ordered after the death of Spc. Jonathan Stehle, 24. He drowned November 8, 2002, when his M1A1 Abrams tank fell into an unmarked water-filled hole at the training area. An initial geological study released last year

showed that Grafenwöhr is riddled with sinkholes, some of which are expanding, even causing trees to tilt as the ground gives out beneath them. "Absolute safety cannot be guaranteed anywhere on open terrain, in particular if this has a karst subsurface," German engineers wrote in the initial report. Karst structures evolve over millions of years as ground water eats through limestone, forming underground water reservoirs and even entire cave networks. As the water cuts deeper into the limestone, the earth's surface gets weaker and sinkholes may appear.

The second phase of the report, released last month, identifies about 1,000 "significant features" including depressions, wetlands, sinkholes, sinkhole fields, abandoned mines, old military bunkers and cellars from abandoned villages. The features were identified using aerial photographs, historical photographs dating to the 1970s, mining data, geological and hydrological surveys, interviews with range staff and local forestry officials and site visits, the report states. The report comes out just months before the arrival of the 2nd Cavalry (Stryker) Regiment. The brigade is expected to maneuver its 19-ton wheeled vehicles around the training area later this year. The armored personnel carriers will maneuver on the same areas used by the far heavier tanks, according to Col. Robert Shoemaker, chief of range control at Grafenwöhr. M1A1 tanks weigh up to 70 tons.

The engineers prepared a database that lists the dangerous areas on a computerized "potential hazard" map that can be used as a tool for range operations staff to secure the areas that could cause accidents. The report recommends that the Army keep vehicles away from danger zones, monitor wetlands and add information about further incidents, such as miring of tanks, to the database. It also recommends units take environmental aspects such as rain, soil moisture and surface runoff into account when training at Grafenwöhr.

(Excerpted from: Seth Robson. 2006. Stars and Stripes <<http://www.estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=36033>>)

Three Day Rescue for New Zealand Cow

Wellington, New Zealand, March 2006 — A cow which fell down a steep shaft in the Waitomo Caves was rescued after a six-hour operation involving a harness, a lot of grunt and a dedicated rescue team. Wellington Caving Group member Bob Wellington, of Paraparaumu, said a chance call from a farm manager on Sunday led to the three day-long rescue of a cow – including preparation time, planning and the actual rescue itself. Mr. Wellington was completing a cave rescue exercise at Piopio, near Waitomo, when a phone call from his wife alerted him to a nearby farm manager who had heard a cow bellowing from the bottom of a 30 meter cave. Alive but thin it was not known how long the cow had been there but Mr. Wellington said when he visited the cave it was clear she was "pretty banded-up". Mr. Gray discussed with Mr. Wellington whether the Friesian black- and-white cow – about three years old – would be able to be rescued or whether it would have to be put down. "We're talking 400 kilos plus of cow, so it was a fairly big mass to move in that situation."

Mr. Wellington returned home that evening and on Monday he contacted fellow cave group member and farmer Mark Phillips, of Moonshine Valley, near Upper Hutt, and discussed whether a rescue of the cow was possible. Both men decided it was worth a try and headed back to the farm on Monday evening where Mr. Gray and another farm worker, Ron Younger, prepared to help with the rescue. Mr. Phillips' farm knowledge was invaluable as he had supplied a cradle which he had used on his farm for hoisting cows – however it was untested for such a situation – and his stock knowledge also kept the cow calm, he said. At 8 AM on Tuesday the group drove back to the cave – located about 6 kilometers from the farm. Mr. Gray had visited the cow in the interim to check on her but the decision had been made not to feed her because of the problems it may have caused, although the cow had access to a nearby stream for water.

A first attempt ended badly with the cow landing heavily in a muddy area up to her belly, he said. A second attempt to haul her to the surface proved to be successful but took over two hours to complete, including breaks for both the rescuers and to ease the cow's trauma. When she finally reached the surface she was restrained for a few moments while the equipment was removed and was grazing grass within minutes. The cow seemed to have escaped the fall with only a few grazes.

The tale was so "moo-tastic" Mr. Wellington said he was considering turning the story into a child's book after another remarkable cow story was successfully published.

(Excerpted from:

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3597329a4560,00.html>)

No Respect for Corvettes

Hickory, N.C. — The property where a sinkhole swallowed up a Corvette has been sold for \$1 to a developer who may put a car wash on the site. First Gaston Bank said Tuesday that it sold the site of the former Buffalo's Southwest Cafe on U.S. 70 to Steve Mason Enterprises Inc. "We want to take the cloud off the property," said Steve Mason. "It's a good location with lots of possibilities." In August 2002, a sinkhole formed in the restaurant's parking lot, swallowing up a Chevrolet Corvette. A second sinkhole subsequently formed, eventually merging with the first to form one large hole. Another sinkhole opened in July 2005 after heavy rains from Tropical Storm Cindy. Gravel was used to fill the sinkhole until a permanent fix could be found. Three pumps were installed in case of heavy rain. Mason said it could cost about \$250,000 to repair drainage problems that caused the sinkholes during heavy rains. He hopes to refurbish the building that housed the cafe but may put a car wash on the site if that proves too costly.

(Excerpted from:

<http://www.wral.com/news/8176430/detail.html> and

http://www.hickoryrecord.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=HDR/MGArticle/HDR_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1137834866406)



International News

Russian Aerobats Fly It Safe in China

Russian Air Force daredevils have decided not to fly through a spectacular open mountain cave in China, saying it was too dangerous and could damage aircraft and the environment. Hunan province officials have praised the Russian Air Force decision not to fly through the Mount Tianmen Hole as a "wise decision." Local media had reported that the Russian fighter aircraft would perform an aerial stunt by flying through the Tianmen Hole, a 132 meter high, 57 meter wide, and 60 meter deep natural arch. Ecological and environmental protection reports concluded that the low-flying heavy aircraft could create powerful air currents that might damage both the aircraft and the cave.

(Excerpted from:

http://www.shanghaidaily.com/art/2006/03/20/252180/Russian_aerobats_fly_it_safe.htm)

Grotto Events

Bexar Grotto: The grotto is planning a trip to the Guads over Memorial Day.

Cowtown Grotto: The grotto is scheduling several restoration projects at Carlsbad Caverns NP during early 2006.

GHG: Trip to Deep and Punkin Cave Preserve over Easter.

PBSS: PBSS club trip to visit the Deep and Punkin Cave Preserve on June 17th.

Classified Ads

I recently spoke with the folks at Caverns of Sonora and they are really hurting for employees, so if any of you know anyone who would like to work at the most beautiful show cave in the country, give them a call and get the details. (325)-387-3105.

Mike Burrell

Caving Calendar

April 8-9, 2006 : Colorado Bend State Park Project. Survey, ridgewalking, and digging activities. Beginners and experienced cavers welcome. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512)-443-4241, <trhli@sprynet.com> or Dale Barnard <Barnarddale@yahoo.com>.

April 8, 2006 : TCC Avery Ranch Work Day (Austin). Join the Texas Cave Conservancy in a day of cleanup at Avery Ranch Cave, their newest acquisition. Meet at the TCC Headquarters, located at 1800 West Park, Cedar Park, at 8:00-9:00 AM Saturday morning. They will be moving small rocks, laying wood mulch trails, and general cleanup. Bring caving gear so you can assist in checking out some of the new caves following the work. Beer and pizza will be available following work and caving. Camping is available at the TCC Headquarters. Please call ahead to tell them you're coming (512)-249-2283.

April 8-12, 2006 : 1st Central American Speleology Congress (Catacamas, Honduras). Invitation is still open for cavers from all around the world that want to participate in this first Congress. Technical presentations on the caves and karst of Central America with planned field trips to area caves. **Contact:** Gustavo Quesada <www.anthros.org> or check website at <<http://www.talgua2006.blogspot.com>>.

April 12, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Work Session (Austin). Held at the TSS office in Austin from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Come help with the organization of Texas cave information. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org> or Ron Ralph <ronralph@austin.rr.com>.

April 15, 2006 : Austin Nature Day (Austin, TX). Get Down, Underground! Join the Texas Cave Management Association and the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District for a trip into southwest Austin's Whirlpool Cave. This two hour easy caving trip gives you a first hand look at one of the many karst features that helps make our aquifer one of the most bountiful and sensitive in the state. Great for kids and adults. Reservations are required. For reservations and details, **Contact:** Jennee Galland (512)-282-8441, <<http://www.austinnatureday.org>>.

April 15, 2006 : TCC Cave Day (Austin). Come out and see the TCC's newest acquisition, Avery Ranch Cave. For details, see the TCC website <http://new.texas caves.org/tcc_activities.htm>. **Contact:** Donna Mosesmann (713)-777-7339 <dogmos1@hotmail.com>.

April 22, 2006 : Government Canyon Karst Project (San Antonio). Saturday only. Ongoing project to discover, explore, and survey the many caves within the park. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830)-885-5631, <mlmiller@gvvc.com>.

April 22, 2006 : Earth Day Activities at Cave-Without-A-Name. Details to be announced.

April 28-30, 2006 : TSA Vertical Training Workshop (Kerrville). For details, see announcement elsewhere in this newsletter. **Contact:** Geary Schindel (210)-479-2151 (H), (210)-222-2204 (W), <g schindel@mindspring.com>.

April 29-30, 2006 : High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM). On-going work amidst spectacular scenery in the beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts:** Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote <highguads@yahoo.com>.

May 19-21, 2006 : TSA Spring Convention (Knox Ranch). The 2006 TSA Convention will be held at the beautiful John Knox Ranch near Wimberley, Texas. Details to be announced. **Contact:** Kara Dittmer

<misskarabiner@yahoo.com>.

May 22, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Knox Ranch). To be held Sunday morning at the TSA Convention, John Knox Ranch, Wimberley, Texas. **Contacts:** George Veni (210)-558-4403, <gveni@satx.rr.com> or Jerry Atkinson (281)-360-2244, <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

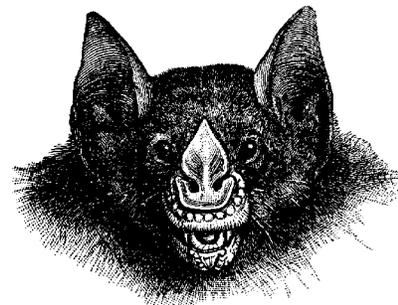
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July 3-8, 2006 : XII International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology (Tepoztlán, Mexico). Sponsored by the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves, SMES (Sociedad Mexicana de Exploraciones Subterráneas), and Grupo Espeleológico ZOTZ. Two days of formal presentations and three days of field trips including a trip to the longest lava tube in America (Iglesia Cave at ~6 km). For details, see : <www.saudicaves.com>.

August 7-11, 2006 : NSS Convention (Bellingham, Washington). The 2006 NSS Convention will be hosted at beautiful Western Washington University. The university is located between the Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains, just outside of downtown Bellingham. Situated between Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, the spectacular surroundings of this region will make a stunning backdrop for the convention. For more information, visit the website at <www.nss2006.org>. **Contact:** Michael McCormack (Chairman) <michmcco@exchange.microsoft.com>.

August 18-20, 2006 : EspeleoCoahuila 2006 (Saltillo, Mexico). Details to be announced.



From the Editor of the TSA Activities Newsletter

The *TSA Activities Newsletter* is an adjunct publication to the *Texas Caver*, the official publication of the Texas Speleological Association. The ANL's purpose is to provide a timely forum for Texas caving news, events, and announcements that cannot be shared with the general caving community through the *Texas Caver*. The *Texas Caver* is a bi-monthly publication at best, and has a history of dependable tardiness. The intent of the ANL is to fill these communication gaps, but not to replace the *Texas Caver*. The TSA encourages cavers to continue to support the *Texas Caver* by sending in trip reports, articles, and photographs to the *Texas Caver* editor(s) that are not suitable for publication in the ANL.

It is the intent of the editor to post the ANL monthly to the TSA website. Due to the prohibitive cost of printing and mailing a monthly hardcopy publication, the ANL will be distributed to all cavers in a digital pdf format which can be downloaded free-of-charge from the TSA website at <http://www.cavetexas.org/>.

As in all endeavors of this sort, a large part of its future success will be based on whether people contribute material. Please send all grotto announcements, calendar events, general caving news and information items that you would like to have included in the ANL to: Jerry Atkinson <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

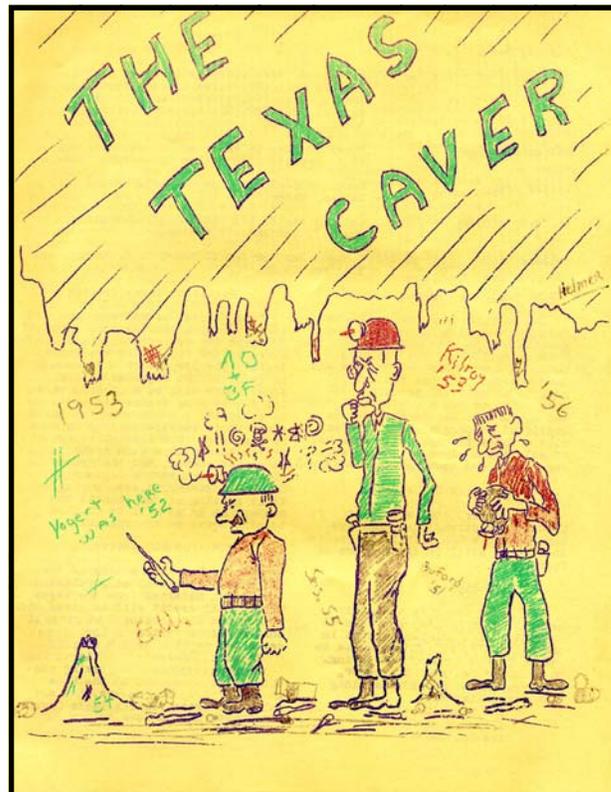
Editor : Jerry Atkinson
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Cover from the April 1956 issue of the *Texas Caver*.