



# TSA Activities Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 5

May 2006

## News & Notes

### TSA Affairs:

#### 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 <www.cavetexas.org>, and on TexasCavers.com. For directions, see map on page 9 of this newsletter. Hope to see you there!

#### Call For Map Salon Chair

Please volunteer to chair a salon at the upcoming TSA Spring Convention to be held Friday May 19 - Sunday, May 21 at the John Knox Ranch in Fischer, Texas. We are seeking individuals to serve as chair of the map salon and to staff the registration table. Many other small tasks remain that will require YOUR help. Please contact me or any of the other TSA officers if you would like to volunteer and don't hesitate to pass this on to your fellow Texas cavers.

Regards, Andy Gluesenkamp  
<andy@gluesenkamp.com>

#### TSA Vertical Training Workshop Cancelled

Unfortunately, the vertical training workshop scheduled for April 2006 had to be cancelled due to a scheduling conflict at the Bear Creek Boy Scout Ranch. The workshop will be rescheduled as soon as a new venue can be found.

#### New Look for TSA Website

The TSA website has a fresh new look thanks to Butch Fralia and Pete Lindsley. The site has been completely converted to a new template and uses cascading style sheets for across-the-board font types and size changes. Check it out at <<http://www.cavetexas.org/>>

### TSS Affairs

#### Spring TSS Board Meeting

The TSS will hold its spring board meeting Sunday morning, May 21st, 2006, at the TSA Convention, John Knox Ranch. All cavers interested in Texas caves and cave data are welcome. For more information, contact Jerry Atkinson (281)-360-2244, <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

### TCMA Affairs

#### 3rd Annual TCMA Auction

It's not too late to consider donating cave-related items to the TCMA auction which will be held at the upcoming TSA

Convention. 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

### NSS Affairs

#### Your Stay at the 2006 NSS Convention

OK, you should now know when and where Convention is, how about where you're going to stay?

**Dorm Rooms:** WWU and the NSS 2006 Convention are pleased to offer dormitories at an exceptional rate of \$127 per person for a single room and \$113 per person for a double room for a five night stay beginning on Sunday or Monday (all rooms have single beds; double rooms have separate beds or bunk bed configurations). Extra nights are available for \$26 per person per night for single rooms and \$23 per person per night for double rooms. WWU is offering a linen package for an additional \$25 including pillow, pillowcase, light blanket, sheets, one bath towel, one hand towel, and one washcloth. Earliest check in is on Friday, 8/4/06 and latest check out is on Monday, 8/14/06. We have most of the rooms in buildings 10, 11, and 12 of the Fairhaven complex on the WWU campus and you can check out the floor plans at <<http://www.housing.wwu.edu/Facilities/acadweb/fairhaven.php>>. Room type and availability are limited, so make your reservation soon!!

Don't forget that these are dorm rooms and a great place for all of us cavers to hole up together. They are also ideal in their location to the sessions, howdy party, banquet, and other Convention activities. Rooms do not have phones and hotel amenities cannot be provided. Bathrooms are shared; a minimum of two rooms per bathroom to a maximum of five rooms per bathroom. Laundry rooms are available. Some rooms are part of suites, but rooms are rented by the room, not the suite. We will do our best to accommodate special requests, but unfortunately we cannot guarantee specific room assignments.

**Camping:** Your least expensive option is camping at Sehome high school near the WWU campus for \$15 per person for the entire Convention week. Sehome has given us permission to use a couple of their open soccer fields, in addition to bathrooms and showers. This is tent camping

only and vehicles must remain in the paved parking area at all times. We will have wagons available to help you set up camp. Due to the amount of rain the fields receive during the year, vehicles will cause irreparable damage to the fields, and we want Sehome to be able to continue to use them for their intended purpose. RVs and the like will be allowed in the parking lot, but no hook ups will be provided. This camping area is in a convenient location, no more than a ½ mile walk to sessions.

If you're looking for a Washington State campground, check out Larrabee State Park at <http://www.parks.wa.gov/parkpage.asp?selectedpark=Larrabee&pageno=1>, but make your reservations early as Washington State Parks tend to fill up well in advance of peak season.

Note: All prices above for dormitories and camping are quoted for early registration. Registration after 6/15/06 incurs additional charges, so check our web site at <http://www.nss2006.com> for current pricing.

On your walk to sessions, you can find Sehome Hill Arboretum and a great climbing/rappelling rock between WWU and Sehome High School. We hope to have this rigged sometime during Convention for your vertical fun.

**Hotels/Motels:** The official Convention hotels are:

**Days Inn Bellingham**  
215 North Samish Way  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
(800)-734-0888; (360)-734-8830  
\$99-\$139/night

**Bellingham Travel Lodge**  
101 N. Samish Way  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
(360)-733-8280

\$60-\$95/night; weekends are priced higher

Make sure to check exact rates with the individual hotels for the week of Convention and let them know you're with the NSS 2006 Convention. We are informed there are several other events occurring in Bellingham the weekends before and after Convention, so please make your reservations early or you may find yourself without a room to sleep in!!

Michael McCormack  
NSS 2006 Convention Chairman.

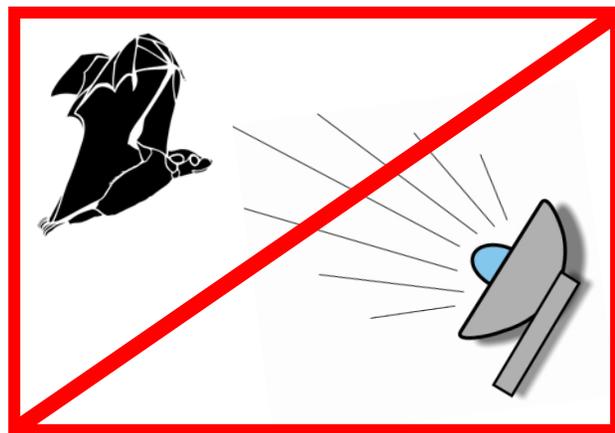
### Cave Biology

#### Cameras Banned From Bat Flights at Carlsbad Caverns

**Carlsbad Caverns National Park, N.M.** - Photographers who flew in the face of a no-flash rule have prompted a total ban on picture-taking as Carlsbad Caverns' famous bats emerge each evening. Several studies have documented that light especially white light such as that from flash photography disturbs the bats. The park in southeastern New Mexico is home to an estimated 400,000 Mexican free-tail bats, as well as 15 other species of bats. In one of the park's main draws, an enormous cloud of bats emerges from a cave in a breathtaking stream each night at dusk to go hunting for insects. Park officials said they want to avoid disturbing

them as much as possible, and one way to do that is to eliminate photography, including video cameras, at the evening flights. "As a technologically challenged person, I can't figure out how to turn off the flash on my own camera," park Superintendent John Benjamin said Monday. "The only way to prevent flash photography entirely is to eliminate cameras altogether."

The park said in a news release that a study of Mexican free-tail bats in Texas found that camera flashes and video-recorder lights caused animals emerging from a cave to veer away, and that a bank of television lights at the entrance stopped them from coming out at all. Other lights disoriented the bats, and some crashed into vegetation. Scientists filming the bat flight at Carlsbad Caverns in the 1970s illuminated the entrance with movie lights for five seconds at a time, and each time, the bats stopped emerging. It's difficult to get high-quality photos of a bat flight under any circumstances, and the risks to the bats aren't worth the results most visitors get, the news release said.



#### Bats, Infectious Diseases, and Human Society

Last fall, a team of scientists tied bats to the deadly SARS outbreaks. Bats in China, they said, are likely where the virus hides between human outbreaks. Then, in December, another group of researchers suggested that bats in Africa serve as a reservoir for the vicious virus for Ebola hemorrhagic fever, which causes its human victims to bleed to death. Bats have also been definitively tied to two other recently discovered viruses that are lethal to humans: Nipah and Hendra.

But as researchers have worked to uncover the mysterious links between bats and these emerging viruses, they say they have stumbled upon an even wiler culprit working behind the scenes: humans. It now seems that these outbreaks, and likely many others, were set off when people encroached on rain forests, expanded wild animal markets, or made other changes that removed the natural barriers that keep diseases at bay.

"This is not a wildlife problem, it is a human problem," said Jonathan Epstein, an American researcher who spoke by phone from Bangladesh, where he has been investigating the causes of Nipah outbreaks.

The insights that are coming from these outbreaks are feeding an emerging discipline that seeks to redefine the

very meaning of health. Epstein and other proponents of this thinking, which they have dubbed "conservation medicine," argue that it is impossible to divorce human health from that of the environment. Emerging viruses like the one that causes SARS are symptoms of the drastic, large-scale changes humans are making in the life of the planet.

At a time of intense concern about avian flu, it is hardly controversial to argue that human health is linked to animal health. But the field challenges traditional academic divisions, especially the cultural divide between doctors and veterinarians. Epstein is a senior research scientist at the New York-based Consortium for Conservation Medicine at Wildlife Trust, which organizes projects that cross the old disciplinary boundaries. The consortium includes the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the United States Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center. There are other centers of activity, such as the Harvard Medical School Center for Health and the Global Environment, as well as more ad hoc teams of researchers working on projects that bring together biologists, public health specialists, doctors, and others. The focus of this work is varied, from the health impact of climate change to a program organized by Tufts to use volunteers around New England to monitor the health of seabirds -- a kind of biological early-warning system on our coast.

As researchers do their detective work around the world, they are finding connections between human society and disease. Global warming could push mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and encephalitis into more northern countries. One new bat-borne disease, the Nipah virus, was tied to the expansion of pig farming in Malaysia. Outbreaks of avian flu have been tied to farms, and the disease's spread has been helped by farmers reluctant to come forward with sick birds. The researchers hope that by studying these connections, they will discover the means to prevent future epidemics.

After the 2003 outbreaks of SARS, which attacks the respiratory system, scientists initially identified an animal known as a civet as the disease's reservoir, the place where the virus sustains itself between outbreaks in humans. But further testing found that civets were not widely infected. In a paper published online by the journal *Science* last September, a team that included Epstein and scientists from China and Australia named a new suspect: cave-dwelling horseshoe bats. These bats, they reported, carry a family of viruses very similar to the one that causes SARS.

It is likely, the study found, that one of these "SARS-like" viruses evolved into the SARS virus at an exotic animal marketplace, where it infected civets, which, in turn, infected humans, according to Michael Farzan, a Harvard Medical School assistant professor who was not involved in the research.

But why did this happen when it did? One intriguing possibility is that it is linked to China's economic boom, according to Peter Daszak, a co-author of the SARS paper who is executive director of the Consortium for Conservation Medicine. With the newfound wealth there, he

said, animal markets have grown as more people can afford fresh animal meat. As the markets grow, so grow the chances that a virus will jump from one species to the next.

In December, a different group of researchers linked fruit bats to the dreaded Ebola virus. Outbreaks of the disease in humans have been associated with dramatic outbreaks among chimpanzees and gorillas. The team, working in Gabon and the Republic of Congo, captured various animals near the bodies of chimpanzees and gorillas. They then looked for signs of Ebola virus. From this, the team found three different species of bats with antibodies to the virus, according to a paper in the journal *Nature*. Bats are now the leading suspect as the Ebola virus reservoir, but the case against them remains controversial, according to Jens Kuhn, an Ebola specialist at Harvard Medical School. It is thought that changes in human activity are behind the Ebola outbreaks -- such as new mining operations deep in forests and the eating of primate meat -- Kuhn said, but nobody knows the true origin.

The ties between bats and disease have raised fears in the conservation community that the winged creatures, long maligned and misunderstood, will become the targets of calls for elimination. This would be a mistake, researchers said, because bats play important environmental roles, such as eating pests -- and killing off bats would be very difficult in any case. There are about 1,000 species of bats, making up a fifth of all mammal species.

One study, published in December in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, found that bats are involved in fewer of the world's emerging viruses than other groups of animals. But with their role becoming clear in several particularly nasty viruses, scientists have been pushing to better understand bats and their role in carrying disease. At Boston University, Thomas H. Kunz, a professor of biology and longtime bat specialist, is involved in an ambitious study in the United States of bats and the virus that causes rabies. This study, he said, should shed new light on rabies, but it could also yield clues into the interactions between bats, viruses, and the environment.

For example, he said, his team wants to measure the dynamics of the virus during the year. It may turn out that the ebbs and flows of the virus can be tied to factors like migration, when the animals are under more stress. If the team finds patterns, then researchers could look for similar patterns in the bats that carry other viruses, like Nipah. Kunz and his collaborators are also working on experiments on the immune systems of bats. There could be reasons why bats carry particular viruses, and there also may be reasons why some bats are able to fend off viruses that kill humans. All of this could help in the fight against disease, he said -- once someone figures out the answers.

The key, he and other researchers said, will be to understand the bat as a part of a larger web of life that also includes humans. And before we blame the bat, or any other animal, for our diseases, we need to look closely at ourselves.

(Excerpted from: Cook, Gareth. 2006. <[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/health\\_science/articles/2006/04/24/the\\_real\\_bat\\_man\\_story](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/health_science/articles/2006/04/24/the_real_bat_man_story)>).

### Biospeleology Website Changes

Please note that the Biospeleology website has moved to [http://www.utexas.edu/tmm/sponsored\\_sites/biospeleology](http://www.utexas.edu/tmm/sponsored_sites/biospeleology). The new website has been updated with new photos of cave biologists doing field work, new bibliographies, and new links. Photographers: I would really like to post your best cave life photos, with credits. Biologists: please send me your news, abstracts, and papers.

Thanks! Bill Elliott <[Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov)>

### Public Can Help Update Endangered Species List

It's time to count those Houston toads, golden-cheeked warblers, leopard darters, Ozark big-eared bats, Pecos bluntnose shiners, and 20 other government-protected species trying to survive in the Southwest. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced recently it is opening a 90-day public comment period on whether it has properly classified those species, which now fall under either the endangered or threatened classification.

The Endangered Species Act requires the service to review listed species every five years. This review covers 18 animal and seven plant species in all or parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma and Texas. The jaguar and the Apache trout, the state fish of Arizona, are the best known of the 25. Other animal species to be reviewed include the Government Canyon Bat Cave spider, the Cokendolpher Cave harvestman, Helotes mold beetle, the desert pupfish, the Sonora tiger salamander, three varieties of meshweavers (spiders) and two varieties of ground beetles.

Plant species in the review are the Cochise pincushion cactus, Peebles Navajo cactus, Siler pincushion cactus, slender rush-pea, black lace cactus, Todsens' pennyroyal, and the Sacramento prickly poppy.

The service looks for any new scientific information, conservation measures or threats, such as a trade in the species on the black market, that could affect the classification. If a change is warranted, the service would do that in a separate classification procedure. Removal from the Endangered Species List is "seldom an outcome" of the review, said service spokeswoman Elizabeth Slown. Critics of the law complain that species are rarely removed from the list. There are 1,300 plant or animal species listed as endangered or threatened in the United States.

(Excerpted from: Brosnan, James W. 2006.

<[http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/nw\\_national/article/0,2564,ALBQ\\_19860\\_4643318,00.html](http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/nw_national/article/0,2564,ALBQ_19860_4643318,00.html)>).



Texas Blind Salamander (*Typhlomolge rathbuni*). Photo by Joe N. Fries.

### Cave Archeology

#### Cave Paintings Show Aspects of Sex Beyond the Reproductive

**Madrid, Spain** — Cave men had sex on their mind and they put it on their walls in etched and painted images that portray an aspect of carnal pleasure beyond the merely reproductive, according to two Spanish experts on the subject. Eroticism is not an interest exclusive to modern humans, and the first Homo sapiens to arrive in Europe 40,000 years ago already exhibited complex sexual behavior that they illustrated in a few cave paintings, creating humanity's first Kama Sutra. Two professors at the Universidad del Pais Vasco in northern Spain, Marcos Garcia Diez and Javier Angulo, are among the few archaeologists who are studying these artistic renderings of erotic behavior among early humans.

The archaeologists said the etchings and paintings show that during the Upper Paleolithic Period (starting about 40,000 years ago) sex ceased being a purely biological function linked to reproduction and became another cultural element. Garcia Diez, co-author with Angulo of the book *Sexo en piedra* (Sex in Stone), said this early separation between the sensual and the merely reproductive was due to the fact that "the sexual appetite conditions humans as a species" and does so in such a big way that it led us to express it in art since pre-historic times. He said this was behind the numerous female figurines produced in pre-historic times as fertility symbols, with rotund shapes and generous figures.

Early humans used the figurines to "make clear the role of women as givers of life," as well as producing male figures with erect phalluses as visible representations of virility, Garcia Diez said. Abstract drawings of human sexual organs depicted with points and lines were produced by pre-historic artists who wanted to document their sexual activity. Early humans also produced highly realistic drawings of sexual activity on the walls of a few caves from Siberia to the Iberian Peninsula. Angulo noted that even though images of a sexual nature were quite scarce, several good examples could be found in central Spain's Los Casares cave, where a coital scene was drawn, and in the grottos of Chufin and El Castillo, in the north, which each have etchings with phallic forms.

At other sites, especially in France and Portugal, images of copulation, hugs, kisses, oral sex, a supposed instance of bestialism and even masturbation have been found, all with a deeply symbolic and erotic character that "talk to us of the way these people understood their own sensuality." Angulo said other images of threesomes have not been confirmed in an explicit fashion, but during the dig in Enlène, France, they found a 13,000-year-old etched plaque showing two people in a coital position and a third looking at them "in a way that looks like voyeurism." Oral sex was also illustrated in this pre-historic Kama Sutra, but only a few artworks of this type have been found, perhaps the best example being an etching in La Marche, France. Masturbation was shown in an etched image in Foz Coa, Portugal, of some lines coming out of the head of a man, illustrating the moment of orgasm, according to the researchers.

Garcia Diez said the existence of homosexuality "can be neither confirmed nor denied" because "the poorly defined appearance of some of the characters" participating in some of the scenes "leaves open that possibility."

(Excerpted from: <http://www.dominicantoday.com/app/article.aspx?id=12982>).



Early human interaction with animals, Cave of Lascaux, France.

### **Human Remains Caused Stir in 1788**

**Staunton, Virginia** — On a warm spring day in 1788, three Staunton boys did what most boys do at some point in their lives — risked life and limb for the sake of adventure. Only this time, the youths got more than they bargained for. Michael Grove, John Robinson, and Robert Jacob climbed the steep, rocky face of what was then known as Abney's Hill (Sears Hill, today) and crawled through an opening in the earth. Lighting candles and perhaps a torch or two, the boys picked their way down a precipitous slope until they stood in the great room of a yawning cavern.

Most Stauntonians knew where the cave was — near the top of Abney's Hill, which was located at the terminus of South New Street. Although glowing accounts had been told of the cave's interior, few people bothered to visit it because of the rugged descent. The prevailing opinion of the day, according to one local writer, that there was "nothing there worth going to see." Grove, Robinson and Jacob were to disprove that notion. Not long after the boys entered the cave, their lights fell upon a bag that bore the name of Dr. Alexander Humphreys of Staunton. Inside the bag, which had been sewn shut, were the remains of a human body.

The body had obviously been there quite some time, because it was in an advanced state of putrefaction.

It's not hard to imagine the reaction of the boys, who no doubt fled the cave as fast as their young bodies would take them. Rushing back down the face of Abney's Hill, they reported their find to the authorities, who then made the trek into the grotto and recovered the human remains. Foul play, of course, was suspected, and Dr. Humphreys was a chief suspect. On May 19, 1788, coroner Joseph Bell held an inquest that relied upon the deductive reasoning of a jury of 17 Staunton men. Although the body was "much consumed," the jury found that it was the corpse of a white man named

William R. Watson, "an inhabitant of Staunton." Watson, said the jury, had lived in Staunton the previous November and had been murdered.

The coroner obviously felt that these backwoods sleuths were off-base, because on June 9 he called them back to consider the matter a little further. At this second inquest, witnesses testified that some medical students of Dr. Humphreys took the body of a dissected black man, sewed it up in a bag and put it in the cave.

But one of the members of the jury, Michael Garber, seemed to hold a grudge against Dr. Humphreys. He spearheaded the publication of both proceedings in the Winchester Advertiser, and circulated hints that the good doctor had somehow had a hand in the murder of the man in the cave. On Aug. 8, 1788, Humphreys sued Garber for defamation. Garber was arrested and jailed, but was released after paying a fee of 15 shillings. Humphreys decided not to pursue the case, and it was discontinued on Aug. 20. But now Garber's blood was up. In September of 1790, he sued Humphreys for sending him to jail without legal cause of action. A year later, however, a jury found in favor of Humphreys and the legal wrangling stopped.

Not so the rumor of an unsolved murder in Staunton. The story spread near and far that a man had been murdered in the Washington Tavern on South New Street (site of today's parking garage) and that his body had been thrown into the Abney's Hill cave. Splotches on the floor of one of the rooms, including the impression of a naked human foot, were supposed to have been made by the blood of the victim. These impressions reportedly remained visible until the colonial-era tavern was torn down in 1847 to make way for the Virginia Hotel. Visitors to the tavern often stipulated that they not be housed in "the haunted chamber."

No one ever agreed as to who the alleged murdered man was, but conventional wisdom was that it was a dissolute young Englishman named William R. Watson who was last seen in the Washington Tavern — the same man named by the coroner's jury. As time went on, however, and as more bones were found in the same cave, Staunton residents were more apt to believe that they had been thrown in by medical students, of which publisher Joseph Waddell wrote that "there were always some in town in the first 40 years of the (19th) century."

(Excerpted from: Culbertson, Charles. 2006.

<http://www.newsleader.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060415/NEWS01/604150304/1002>).

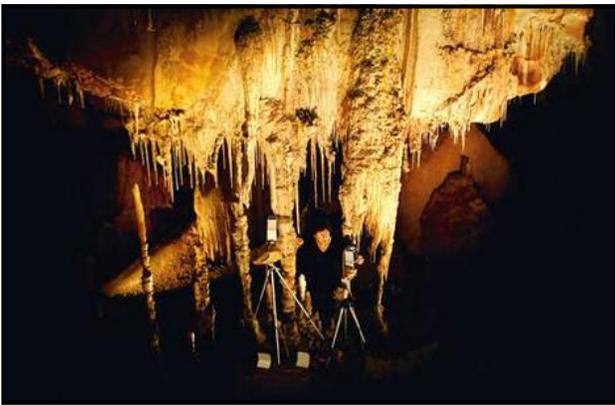
### **Paleoclimatology**

#### **Cave Sheds Light on Australian Weather Cycles**

**Sydney, Australia** — For millenniums there has been a drip in Kooringa Cave. Understanding its secrets is vital to the management of Sydney's water supply. Whenever it rains on the surface, water percolates through 12 meters of bedrock into the cavern, which is part of the Wombeyan karst system in the Southern Highlands. After heavy rain the drips fall more frequently: as fast as one every 17 seconds from one exquisite stalactite called K1. During the driest days of 2004, Dr Janece McDonald, a researcher in the School of

Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, and her supervisor, Dr Russell Drysdale, had to wait for five minutes between drops. The catchment is again parched as dam levels continue to hover around historic lows. "It's now down to one drop every seven minutes," Dr McDonald says.

When the water lands on the cave floor, dissolved chemicals are left behind and stalagmites begin to grow upwards at a rate measured in millimeters per century. One of the slowest growing stalagmites put on a mere 25 millimeters of growth over 1000 years. Some stalagmites at Wombeyan are likely to be millions of years old. Because every drop of water entering Kooringa carries a chemical signature, recording a journey from the sky and through the earth, Dr McDonald and her colleagues have discovered the stalagmites hold clues to thousands of years of droughts and floods.



Kooringa Cave, Australia

Long before modern weather observations began in Sydney, Wombeyan's stalagmites were steadily logging the cycles of droughts and floods in the catchment area. Such information is crucial to planners making decisions about water restrictions. The chemical record in stalagmites is so sensitive the scientists are even able to plot the presence of what is called the bomb peak - the presence of excess carbon 14 created by the global atmospheric nuclear tests of the 1950s and '60s.

Because there is not much more than a century of good rainfall data for Sydney's catchment areas, no-one yet understands the impact of bigger cycles. The beauty of Wombeyan caves is that they are in the geographic heart of the catchment. The science program manager for climate variability and extreme events at the Sydney Catchment Authority, Professor Henk Heijnis, says it is crucial to get a longer perspective on Sydney's weather. "At the moment we work with instrumental records which go back to 1905. The second half of the 20th century was drier than the first. But you can't do an awful lot of modeling with two lots of a cycle. With this study we may be able to get a view over 1000 years or more."

Adding to the importance of the research is the likelihood that climate change is already beginning to have an impact on the amount of water falling in Sydney's catchment. The new work may confirm the arrival of climate change,

revealing any big unusual shifts that may be under way.

(Excerpted from: Woodford, James. 2006.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/caves-shed-light-on-darkest-secrets-of-our-weather-cycle/2006/04/14/1144521508888.html>).

### **Tales of the Sinkhole:**

#### **Proposed Wal-Mart May Affect Florida Springs Aquifer**

**High Springs, Florida** — The proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter in Alachua changed the tone of an annual public meeting Tuesday of an area group that discusses the health of local springs and the aquifer beneath. Instead of just a few people who normally attend such meetings, more than 70 showed up Tuesday at the High Springs Civic Center for the meeting held by the Santa Fe Springs Working Group. While the open house was aimed at educating the public on last year's dye tests and local underwater cave systems, underlying issues revolving around Wal-Mart's proposed site were brought up. That site is located on 36 acres behind the McDonald's at the intersection of U.S. 441 and Interstate 75. The site is home to a sinkhole that feeds into Mill Creek Sink, which, in turn, feeds into Hornsby Spring, Darby Springs and the Santa Fe River. Some residents voiced concern about the potential of Wal-Mart parking lot runoff entering their drinking water. Others were concerned about the lack of laws protecting water. And a few expressed their bewilderment at others opposing such a powerhouse as Wal-Mart. "They have so much money and so much power and we're so little," one woman said. "You might as well pack it up."

There were a few, however, who felt Wal-Mart may be a step in the right direction, pointing out that the area in question already has a number of gas stations near it, as well as U.S. 441 running over it. Many at meeting agreed that Wal-Mart would have the resources to invest in extra protections, such as a buffer for the sinkhole on the property; a buffer to keep runoff away. The open house's speakers did little to quash the debate. Karst Environmental Services' Pete Butt, commissioned by the city to perform dye tests on local springs, showed the audience how he executed the tests and what results he got.

After doing extensive background research, Butt and his team began injecting dye into Mill Creek Sink and Lee Sink on July 26, 2005. While he was concerned the tests would produce minor results, Butt expressed to the crowd he got immediate signs at Lee Sink that the dye was going somewhere. "Within two hours, you couldn't tell we put dye in," he said. "That's how fast it went down into the system." Twelve days after the initial injection, Butt said, they began seeing returns of the dye in Hornsby Spring. On the 15th day, the dye was in both Darby Springs and Hornsby Spring, which empty into the Santa Fe River.

The dye tests are a rallying point for those who oppose the Wal-Mart Supercenter construction. Their fear is that runoff from the Wal-Mart's gas station and auto repair center, as well as onsite chemicals — such as fertilizers housed in the parking lot — will run directly into the sinkhole and will infiltrate the aquifer. Butt said that he took his last sample 154 days after the dye injection and still found his original

dye in the sampled water. "We still had dye coming out in December," he said. Runoff in the underwater cave systems is also a concern for divers, said Cindy Butler. Butler, the second and last speaker of the night, was asked to speak at the open house about her extensive knowledge of the area's cave systems. As an experienced diver, Butler said, it would be heartbreaking to lose the natural beauty and history present in the caves. Throughout her presentation, Butler flashed pictures of local caves across the wall. "We do really care about the caves we dive in," she said.

According to a Florida survey, there are more than 1,000 caves in Florida. Butler said a lot of these caves are destroyed every year to construction. Construction, Butler said, often causes sinkholes and underlying cave systems to be damaged or collapsed. She said locally, Wal-Mart will either collapse the sinkhole and build on top or build to the side of it with the caves beneath still at risk. With the amount of water that flows below the site and with Mill Creek's propensity to flood once a year, Butler said, she is most concerned about what will happen if the sinkhole is collapsed or damaged. "My real legitimate fear is this: If you collapse this cave, where is all the water going to go?" she said. "We're going to lose that natural conduit for all that water."

But Butler said she doesn't think they will be able to stop Wal-Mart. "Unless there is a large uprising of concerned citizens, then this is a done deal," she said. "Realistically, we don't think we're going to win this one." Because of this, Butler is taking other measures. Currently, she and others are busy video recording the cave systems underneath the proposed site so there will be evidence of what the caves looked like before construction. Fay Baird, coordinator of the Santa Fe Springs Working Group, said the open house was planned before news and concerns of the Wal-Mart Supercenter surfaced. However, the news certainly made their open house more interesting, she said. "It brought many more people," she said. "Sometimes, it takes a threat for people to get interested." Baird hopes the open house will get people thinking about the issue. "Hopefully, it will change the outcome of things," she said. The Suwannee River Water Management District will be accepting letters about its consideration of whether to award Wal-Mart a natural resources permit.

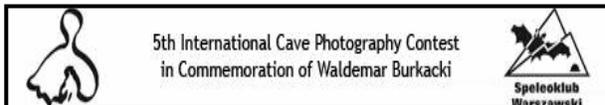
(Excerpted from: Wiley, Jenny. 2006.

<<http://www.highspringherald.com/articles/2006/03/23/news/news10.txt>>

### **Cave Photography**

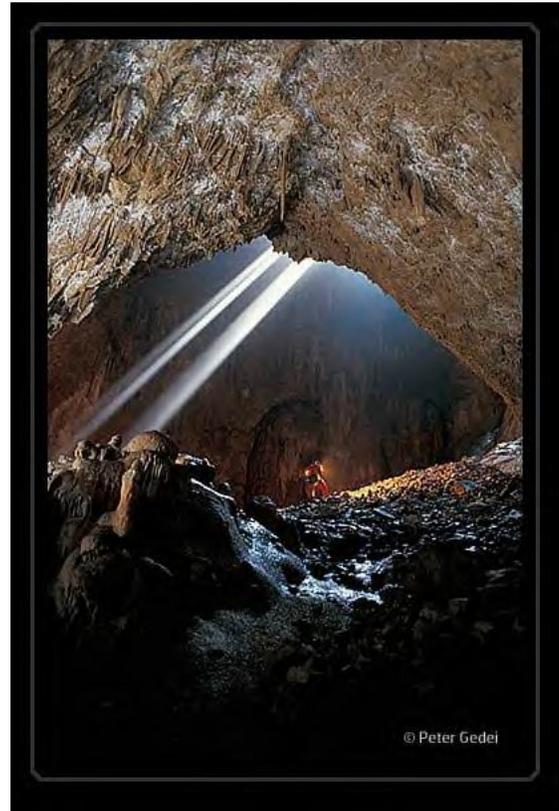
#### **5<sup>th</sup> International Cave Photography Contest**

The Speleoklub Warszawski from Warsaw, Poland is currently organizing the 5th International Cave Photography Contest and is soliciting submittals. Deadline for submissions is September 29, 2006. For more information, see: <<http://konkurs.speleo.waw.pl/>>



### **Excellent Cave Photo Website**

Renowned European cave photographer Peter Gedei has redesigned his website and added new photographs. Check it out at: <<http://www.ljudmila.org/jkz/caves>>.



Mušja jama, Matavun, Slovenia. Photo by Peter Gedei.

### **International News**

#### **Resident in Court Battle With State Over DMZ Cave**

A Seoul court Tuesday ordered the government to cut open an underground cave in Yonchon, Kyonggi Province, to confirm whether it was a natural landscape or a spy tunnel dug up by the North Korean military. The Ministry of National Defense, which claims the cave is a natural creation, plans to appeal the decision. The arguments over the cave, located near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of the inter-Korean border, started in 2003 when a resident, identified as Lee, filed a complaint against the government after it rejected his claim for cash rewards for discovering the cave.

Lee insisted that the cave was constructed by North Korea for warfare purposes, such as some other tunnels found in neighboring areas in past years. Lee investigated the Yonchon site in 2000 and informed authorities of the cave's existence. The ministry however held the cave was not an artificial creation but a result of natural erosion of soil over an extensive period.

In Tuesday's ruling, the Seoul Central District Court said the government should be held responsible for confirming whether the Yonchon cave is artificial or not. It ordered the state to cut open the cave so its structure could be revealed

visibly. "The government should provide appropriate funds and construction methods to make incisions into the ground and visibly prove whether the cave was made artificially or not," said judge Kwak Sang-hyun. "It is estimated that it would take about 150 million won (\$157,000) to make incisions into the grounds above the cave. The site is within a military security area where civilian access is limited. It is virtually impossible to ask Lee to conduct the ground incision process. Military equipment and personnel need to be deployed to cut into the ground and expose the structure of the cave," the court said.

The ministry balked at the court's decision and said it would appeal. Ministry officials claimed that there could be no further debate regarding the cave's origin. "There is no reason for the military to disguise a tunnel dug by North Korea, as natural landscape. Considering the area's geological structure and the cave's distance from the DMZ, there is no reason to believe that the cave was dug by North Koreans," said a ministry spokesman. "We believe that the matter was effectively settled when an outside inspection team researched the area and concluded that the cave was natural landscape, a process that was conducted before the eyes of journalists and the man who found the cave," he said.

The Yonchon cave first caught the attention of the public in March, 2000, when a television station reported it as a tunnel dug by the North Korean military to "invade the South," basing the story on Lee's claims. After an on-site inspection, the ministry concluded the cave as natural landscape, pointing out that it was located more than 10 kilometers below the Southern Limit Line, which is two kilometers south of the inter-Korean border.

Since the mid-1970s, a total of four underground tunnels were discovered under the DMZ, dug by the North Korean military for warfare purposes. Each tunnel, the longest extending 3.5 kilometers, is large enough to allow the passing of a division in a single hour. The fourth tunnel, 2 kilometers long and about 150 meters below surface, was discovered in 1990.

(Excerpted from: Kim Tong-hyung, 2006, <<http://times.hankooki.com/lpage/nation/200604/kt200604119492010510.htm>>)

### **Japan's Longest Cave Found to be 24+ Km**

Japan's longest limestone cave, Akkado Cave in the Iwate Prefecture, northeastern Japan, has been found to measure at least 24 kilometers, double the length previously thought, according to a cave explorers' group says. The Association for Cave Exploration, a nonprofit organization based in Chiba near Tokyo, said it will present a plan of the cave at a session of the Japan Association of Groundwater Hydrology on May 20, 2006 at the University of Tokyo. The group said it will continue its exploration of the cave, whose total length is believed to be even longer.

The maze-like Akkado Cave includes an underground lake which spreads 2 km on the north-south axis, and 500 meters on the east-west axis, and is at least 140 meters deep, the explorers said. The group, which confirmed the Akkado Cave's total length was at least 12.7 km in 1997, has

continued their exploration work and confirmed a length of 23.7 km earlier this year.

The group has conducted a total of 28 trips to the cave between 1992 and March of this year. A total of 8,451 explorers participated in the work during the period. The Akkado Cave is located in the town of Iwaizumi, some 600 kilometers north of Tokyo. The town is also known for Ryusendo Cave, one of Japan's most famous limestone caves. Iwaizumi uses water from Ryusendo Cave as a source of drinking water. Japan's second-longest cave is the Oyama Suikyodo Cave with a total length of 10 km. It is located on Okinoerabu Island, just north of Okinawa.

(Excerpted from: <<http://www.tmcnet.com/usubmit/-total-length-japans-longest-cave-found-be-24-2006/05/03/1635951.htm>>).

## **Techniques and Gear**

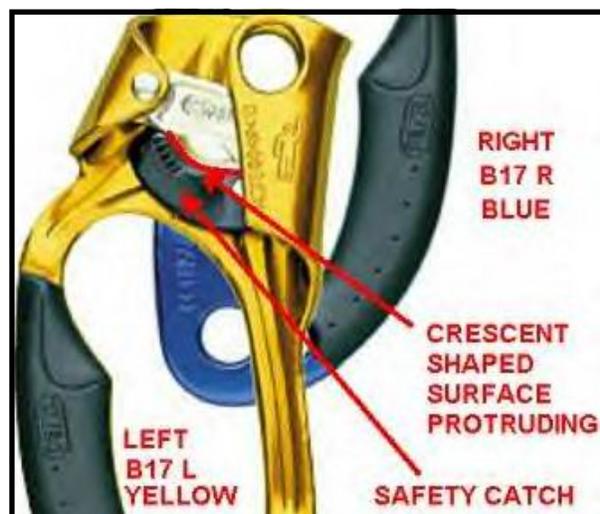
### **2+ Years of Failed Petzl Ascender Design**

Bonnie Crystal of the San Francisco Bay Chapter of NSS sent the following note around to the Bay Area members. Considering the possible implications of an ascender failure on rope, I thought it might be of interest to the membership.

The Editor.

Failure of the Petzl Ascension plastic latch lever has been reported previously. I reported a Petzl ascender gear failure incident to Petzl in April 2004, in which a Petzl Ascension ascender precariously disconnected itself from the rope while the climber was climbing.

The incident occurred at the Vertical Practice session of the San Francisco Bay Chapter of NSS (SFBC). I wrote directly to Petzl headquarters in France with a complete report, drawings, and details of the problem. I included a request that Petzl notify users immediately about the potential for rope disconnection, and another request that Petzl respond directly on the question of what they intended to do about the design flaw.



I indicated that I would delay public publication of the incident to give Petzl engineers and management time to deal with the problem at the various levels of their organization. I only received replies from Petzl USA, which

alleged it to be an 'improper use' problem, rejection of potential safety problems, and rejection of it as a life-threatening problem.

I have never received information from Petzl indicating that they intended to fix the design flaw in production models of Ascension ascenders. I never received any indication from Petzl that they would warn the users of the problem.

Here it is 2 years later, with the Petzl Ascension design flaw issue having no positive response or resolution. So I have now made the web page public, which describes the Petzl gear failure incident. For more information, photos, and reports, please see the web page: <<http://www.expeditioncave.com/srt/petzl/failure/>>.

**Description of Ascender Failure Mode:** The design of the nylon (plastic) cam "safety catch" has a curved crescent surface protruding for the thumb to manipulate it. This is described in Petzl promotional literature as a new improvement, which is "ergonomic". It is the protruding edge of this curved surface that forms an arc wedge with just the elongated smoothness and continuous angular position needed to induce lateral displacement of the safety catch when it is moved upward against a rough rock surface. That movement unlocks or disengages the safety while at the same time pulling the cam down and away from the rope capture enclosure. Once the rope is no longer captured, the ascender falls loosely off and away from the rope thereby disconnecting.

Bonnie Crystal

### Caving Philosophy

#### What If...

Suppose you could save five lives by taking one - what would be the correct thing to do? Such ethical dilemmas provide classic "experiments" for philosophers. Here the author presents such a quandary and asks readers to vote on what they think is right.

Like scientists, philosophers use experiments to test their theories. Unlike scientists, their experiments do not require sophisticated laboratories, white-robed technicians or even rodents. They occur in the mind, and start with 'What if...'. These "thought experiments" help philosophers clarify their understanding of certain concepts and intuitions. In the field of ethics, thought experimenters typically present a dilemma, examine the most popular "intuitive" response and then show the implications for real-world issues.

But such experiments are rarely tested on large numbers of people. So to reach a larger group, here are four typical experiments. Readers are invited to vote on how they think they would act in each case.

Here is a well-known example:

"An enormous rock falls and blocks the exit of a sea cave you and five other tourists have been exploring. Fortunately, you spot a hole elsewhere and decide to let "Big Jack" out first. But Big Jack, a man of generous proportions, gets stuck in the hole. He cannot be moved and there is no

other way out.

The high tide is rising and, unless you get out soon, everyone but Big Jack (whose head is sticking out of the cave) will inevitably drown. Searching through your backpack, you find a stick of dynamite. It will not move the rock, but will certainly blast Big Jack out of the hole. Big Jack, anticipating your thoughts, pleads for his life. He does not want to die, but neither do you and your four companions. Should you blast Big Jack out?"

If the roles were reversed, what would you advise your trapped companions to do?



Thought experiments, although abstract, possibly implausible, and open to different interpretations, can have important repercussions on the way we think and act as individuals. They raise thorny questions about morality in medicine, war, politics, and indeed in everyday life. Is there a difference between killing someone and letting them die? Are consequences all that matter, or are there some things we should never do, whatever the outcome? By pointing out inconsistencies in our thinking, or simply encouraging us to reflect on issues we usually ignore, they can sharpen our intellect and enrich our moral lives. They also make for great conversation topics at the dinner table or at the pub. But be warned: you may lose friends as a result.

(Modified from: Sokol, Daniel. 2006.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4954856.stm>>).

### Caving Cinema

#### Next Randy Travis Concert Will Include a Strong Echo

**Carlsbad, N.M.** — Country singer Randy Travis plans to sing next month in the caves of Carlsbad Caverns National Park. The music star will perform for the filming of a Christmas DVD on May 18, 2006. Travis will sing in the main cave at Carlsbad Caverns and filmmakers hope to capture scenes where he will be singing unaccompanied near the Rock of Ages, said Guy Lutman, director of the Walter Gerrells Performing Arts & Exhibition Centre here. It was not clear whether the Carlsbad Caverns appearance would be open to the public. Travis also gave a public concert in December at the local civic center, which will be part of the project. Director Charlie O'Dowd said the working title of the DVD is *Randy Travis: Christmas on the Pecos*. The DVD is expected to be out in time for Christmas and will be marketed as a television special to major networks.

(Excerpted from: Saxon, Reed. 2006. <<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ent/celebrities/3832072.html>>).

#### The Descent

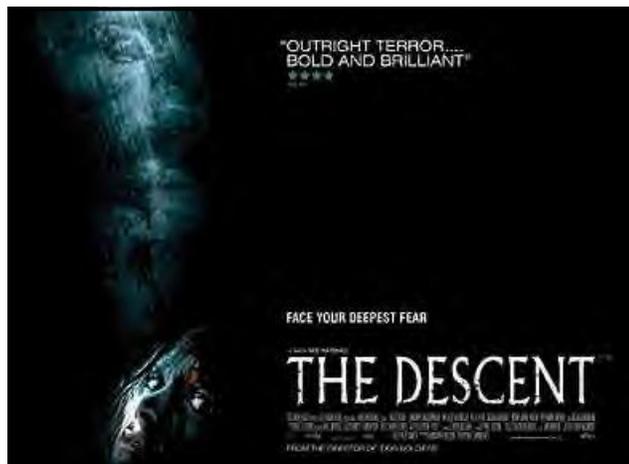
Here's a caving movie that didn't receive a lot of attention in the caving world, but since it's now been released to DVD, here's a recent review:

*The Descent* is Neil Marshall's anticipated follow-up to his 2002 hit *Dog Soldiers*. Directed by Marshall from his own script, it tells the story of an all-female caving expedition that goes horribly wrong, and stars Shauna Macdonald, Natalie Mendoza, Alex Reid, Saskia Mulder, Nora-Jane Noone and Myanna Buring. Set in a cave system deep in the Appalachian Mountains, Marshall describes his film as 'Deliverance goes underground'.

One year after a tragic accident, six girlfriends meet in a remote part of the Appalachians for their annual caving trip. Deep below the surface of the earth, disaster strikes when a rock falls and blocks their route back to the surface. The girls soon learn that Juno, the thrill-seeking leader of the expedition, has brought them to an unexplored cave and that as a result no one knows where they are to come rescue them. The group splinters and each pushes on, praying for another exit. But there is something else lurking under the earth – a race of monstrous humanoid creatures that are adapted perfectly to life in the dark. As the friends realize they are now prey, they are forced to unleash their most primal instincts in an all-out war against an unspeakable horror – one that attacks without warning, again and again and again.

As the others battle for their lives, Sarah (Macdonald), still recovering from a mental collapse brought on by the recent deaths of her family, is fighting for her sanity. When old secrets are revealed, the friends turn on one another, causing the group to implode. Betrayed and desperate, Sarah realizes that to make it back to the surface, she must become as savage as the creatures themselves.

See the trailer at [http://www.moviesonline.ca/movienews\\_8488.html](http://www.moviesonline.ca/movienews_8488.html).



## Caving Calendar

**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](mailto:misskarabiner@yahoo.com)>.

**May 21, 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](mailto:gveni@satx.rr.com)> or Jerry Atkinson (281)-360-2244, <[jerryatkin@aol.com](mailto:jerryatkin@aol.com)>.

**May 27-28, 2006 : Government Canyon Karst Project (San Antonio).** Ongoing project to discover, explore, and survey the many caves within the park. This will be the last trip until September or October. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830)-885-5631, <[mlmiller@gvtc.com](mailto:mlmiller@gvtc.com)>.

**May 27-28, 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](mailto:highguads@yahoo.com)>.

**May 27-29, 2006 : Southwest Region Memorial Day Regional (Jemez Mountains, NM).** Includes talks, a SWR business meeting, and local caving trips. **Contact:** Kenny Stabinsky <[nmbatty@zianet.com](mailto:nmbatty@zianet.com)>.

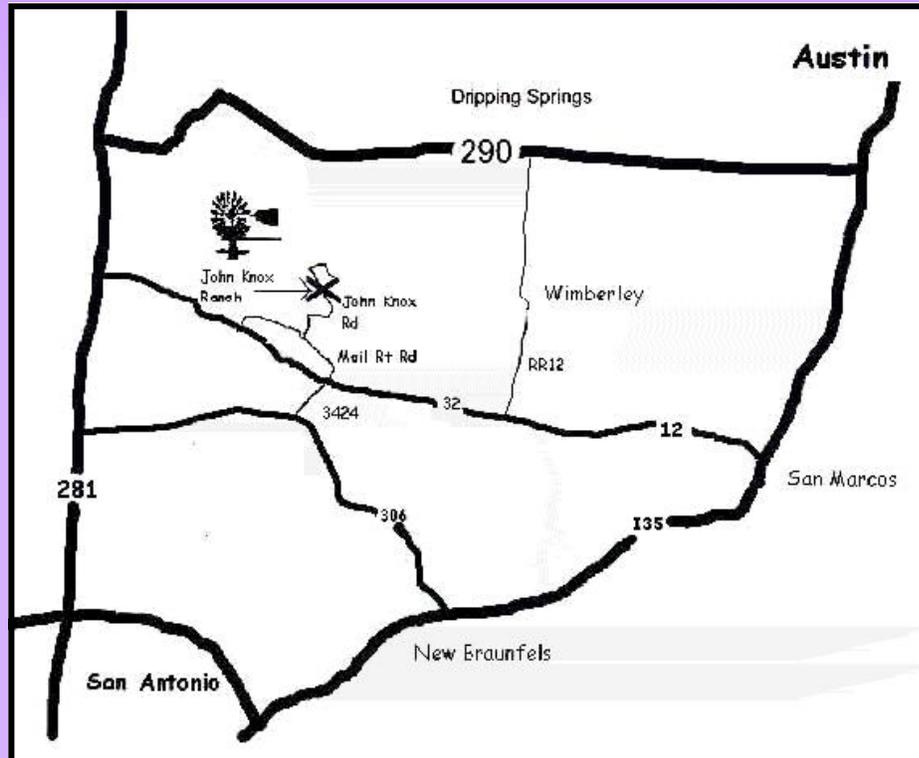
**July 3-8, 2006 : XII International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology (Tepoztlán, Mexico).** Sponsored by the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves, SMES (Sociedad Mexicana de Exploraciones Subterráneas), and Grupo Espeleológico ZOTZ. Two days of formal presentations and three days of field trips including a trip to the longest lava tube in America (Iglesia Cave at ~6 km). For details, see : <[www.saudicaves.com](http://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](http://www.nss2006.org)>. **Contact:** Michael McCormack (Chairman) <[michmcco@exchange.microsoft.com](mailto:michmcco@exchange.microsoft.com)>.

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

# 2006 TSA Convention !

## John Knox Ranch near Wimberley, Texas



### Directions to John Knox Ranch :

**From 281**—Exit east on 306. Follow 306 for approximately 12 miles. Take a left onto 3424 and follow this road for 1.5 miles. This road ends at Ranch Road 32. Cross over RR32 onto Mail Route Rd. Do not turn left or right onto 32. Follow Mail Route Rd. for 1.5 miles. Turn right onto John Knox Rd. Travel 1.5 miles to the gate of John Knox Ranch. Signs will be posted directing you to the TSA Convention registration areas.

**From I-35**—Take exit 205 in San Marcos. Go west on RR12. Follow the signs to Wimberley. Ten miles outside of town RR12 turns right (North) to Wimberley. Keep going straight towards Blanco on RR32. After about eight miles, turn right on Mail Route Rd. Follow Mail Route Rd. for 1.5 miles. Turn right onto John Knox Rd. Travel 1.5 miles to the gate of John Knox Ranch. Signs will be posted directing you to the TSA Convention registration.

### A few more details:

- Please camp in areas designated for TSA camping.
- We are sharing the ranch with a wedding on Saturday afternoon. Lets be good neighbors!
- The public consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on the ranch; please respect their rules. And if you decide to enjoy your favorite beverage, please drink responsibly.
- Swimming in the Blue Hole without a lifeguard being present is prohibited. The TSA is soliciting qualified volunteers to serve as lifeguards.
- Swimming in the Blanco River is permissible, but is discouraged by the Ranch.
- Entrance into any caves on the ranch is not allowed without permission. Please check with registration for details.

Individual Registration: **\$25.00** or Family registration: **\$45.00** + \$8 for each 5-18 year olds for the meal

### 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](mailto:jerryatkin@aol.com)>.

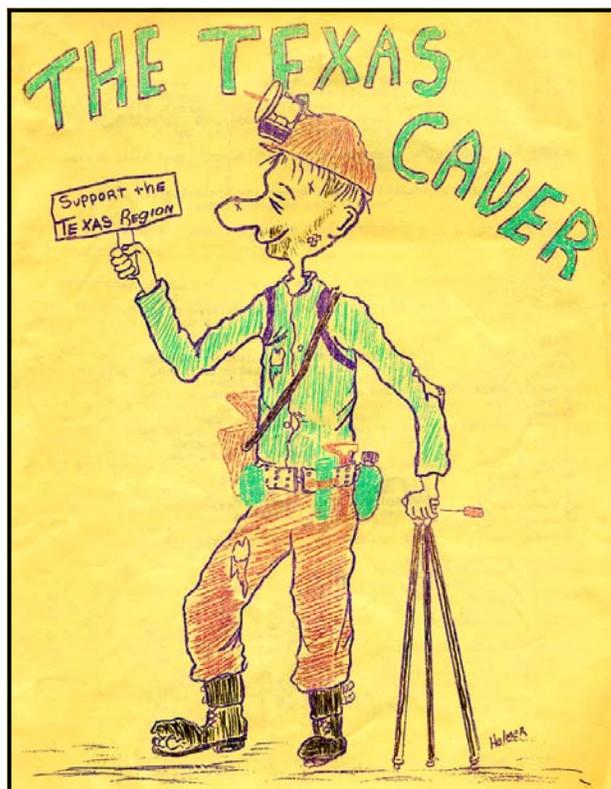
Editor : Jerry Atkinson  
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Cover from the May 1956 issue of the *Texas Caver*.