

The TEXAS CAVER - 3rd Quarter 2010

The TEXAS CAVER

July — September - Vol. 56, Number 3

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The TSA is an internal organization of the National Speleological Society and represents the greater caving community in Texas. The organization holds business meetings 3 times a year, organizes an annual convention for Texas cavers, and sponsors caving projects and events throughout the state.

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The TEXAS CAVER

Written by Texas Cavers FOR Texas Cavers

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Lemons Ranch, Bad Air, and Discovery and Exploration of the Lost Pit

Submitted by Mark Gee
Photos by Andy Zenker



Left to right: Matt Rasler, Mark Gee, Matt Zaldivar, Andy Zenker, George-Paul Richmann, Rafal Kedzierski, This is right before we went into Lemons Ranch.

We were finally able to survey the south end, the bad air end, of Lemons Ranch Cave. Several months back Rafal Kedzierski had an idea to pump good air into the cave so we could get to the far end, the south end, of Lemons and the end of the pit that has only been seen, but never surveyed. We discussed what would work best to get good air two hundred feet down a low passage and settled on some six inch exhaust duct that spiraled like a slinky. We ordered a 12 volt fan to force air down the duct. With some fabrication it could be ready!

Rafal ordered the duct and had it shipped to my home about two weeks before our November 14, 2009 trip. Then a week before the trip, the fan arrived. I fabricated some six inch round couplings so the sections of duct could be spliced together. I riveted the fan to a 4"x 6" concentric reducer and tried the fan out just two days before our trip. The fan worked great. The fan was for ventilation of fuel compartments on boats. The fan ran off a 12V car battery. It puts out 230 cubic feet of air per minute. It can run for more that eight hours with no loss of speed or power. I now knew that it would be long enough for a trip into Lemons.

Rafal wanted to survey some of the major caves in the park that didn't have maps, or were incomplete. He mentioned Lost Petzl, Gorman Creek Crevice, and Lemons Ranch Cave. Jim Kennedy was resurveying the Lost Petzl system. I started to resurvey parts of Gorman Creek Crevice and Lemons Ranch with the help of several other cavers. Gorman never has had a finished map and I have found several other passages that were never included on the maps that have been produced of the cave. That will probably take another five years to finish. Lemons Ranch never has had a map showing anything in the south end of the cave, what has become known as the bad air end of the cave. High CO-2 levels remain year round in this end of the cave. The air is a little better in the winter months.

On January 12, 2008, a group of seven, Edwin Lehr, RD Milhollin, Lex Cox, Tammy Cox, Bill Tucker, Alexa Ewen, and Gregory Dusham visited Lemons. They all climbed down the 15 foot entrance drop, then Alexa and Tammy checked for bad air and found that a lighter would not lit where the North and South passages met. RD and Gregory, in spite of the bad air, crawled off to the south towards the pit. The air got worse and they turned back before reaching the pit.

Then on February 9, 2008 Rafal, Kurt and Justin Menking



Mark showing off the ventilation setup of the car battery powering a 12V fan hooked up to the dryer tubing.

and I got the resurvey started. The original survey was done by Charlie Loving, C Jennings, Ed Alexander, and J Davis in November of 1965. It was time for a new survey. The map is outdated and does not show all the passage in the cave. I wanted to draft a much more complete map.

The first shot at the entrance was 14.9 feet with a inclination of 76 degrees. We moved on through the cave to the south end towards the pit and shot 13 stations. Our total for horizontal cave surveyed was 237.4 feet. Most all was hands and knees and belly crawling. The air was bad that day but we persevered. None of us knew, at that time, that the pit we were in search of, to include in the survey and map, was just 31 feet to the right of our last station shot that day.

Our next survey was on March 8, 2008. Eleven people showed up at the Colorado Bend State Park / TSA Survey Project. That Saturday morning our goals were to survey and get a surface location above the Chapel Room at the North end of the cave. Keith Heuss had brought his cave radio. Mike & Connie Bales and Keith stayed on the surface. Rafal Kedzierski, Kathleen O'Conner, and Mark Sanders took the cave radio to the North end of the cave to the Chapel Room. They had a predetermined length of time to work the radio. Keith had demonstrated how to operate the radio and in about fifteen minutes, the team was able to set the cave radio and turn it on. It was checked to see if it was operating correctly and then they began biological collections. Mark Sanders found a pseudo scorpion – first in the park – and collected it.

Ronnie Harrison, Ed Spaulding, and I went back to pick up the survey at station S12, in the south end of the cave. We had to bail again because of the high CO2 levels and instead, started our survey at station S6 towards the North end of the cave. We shot 19 stations. The first sixty three feet is surveyed on your belly, then hands and knees to walking borehole. We surveyed 375 feet of horizontal cave. This is the prettiest part of the cave. Several flowstone mounds, stalactites, columns, popcorn, soda straws, and small helectites are found along the passage way. The passage has a small stream that is dry except during periods of heavy rains which cause the dry stream to flow down to the Chapel Room into a small drain beneath a large mound of flowstone. This is a possible dig sight but we remain reluctant to dig and damage this flowstone. We will leave this to future generations of cavers. Our last shot was on the wall just before the Chapel Room.

The next survey was April 12, 2008. Again we were beat back by the Hodag and its high CO2 levels in the South end of the cave.

At the North end, Rafal, Ed Spaulding, and Scott Boyd picked up the survey at station N16. They shot seven stations and finished the survey up through the Chapel Room up into the Triple Y Room. This part of the cave is all very low with a lot of small formations you must crawl through. Great care was exercised to protect this part of the cave. Their total survey that day was 108.1 feet of passage, finishing the survey at the north end of the cave. The Triple Y room was all new survey. The South end was becoming a problem, with its high



Matt Zaldivar pushing the end of the pit. There is a dark space above him that required a chimney in bad air to get to it. It didn't go anywhere.

CO2.

On February 15, 2009 Andy Zenker made it into the South end of the cave, when others turned around because of the bad air. The air quality didn't match their comfort level. Andy said he had no problem with the air, must be part Hodag. Andy found two small rooms beyond station S12. Too bad he was the only caver that was able to get that far into the cave. Andy opted to return to the entrance rather than venture to far alone. He stated that the air quality would not have stopped a survey crew. It stopped several others. Maybe Andy has gills to better absorb the low oxygen level. Ya Hodag! I'll have to check my Hodag anatomy book.

Success finally came on November 14, 2009. We finally got into the cave and continued the survey beyond station S12. With the help of Will Harris, Bonnie Longley, Jessica Stevenson, and myself we laid out 178 feet of 6" flexible duct down into the cave to the South end, almost reaching to station S12. I went back up to the surface and plugged in the fan. Then climbed back down into the cave and crawled back to the others asking them if the air was blowing very strong. They said it was and the air was already getting better to breath. The four of us were all breathing very comfortably and spent three hours surveying and exploring this South end of the cave. The air got better and better because we were blowing in cooler air than what was in the cave.

We added eight stations which totaled 82.4 feet. We found two rooms; the first was about eight feet round, five foot ceiling and was decorated with some formations on the ceiling and walls. The next room was the larger of the two. It measured fifteen feet wide by twenty feet long. The ceiling varied from seven feet to two feet. Two passages left the room. One ended after eleven feet in a dirt filled plug with possible continuing passage. The other was the continuation of the cave which ended as the mud fill meet the ceiling. The cave probably does continue but a dig in a low one foot tall passage with bad air would be tough, but there is room to deposit the fill.

Back at station F12 was another passage heading west. I was told from at earlier survey that it went thirty five feet and ended in a pinch. Well it had to be surveyed. Jessica, lead tape, crawled up into the passage pulling the tape. The floor of the passage eased upward. Will followed her with the instruments. After the shot, Jessica and Will both climbed up into the passage and found, The Lost Pit. So named because of the difficulty to find and survey this section of the cave. The pit measured only 18 feet deep and does not look to be climbable. Standing on the edge of the pit, the movement of the air could be felt. The cool air we were blowing in was settling down into the pit and forcing out the bad air from below. On the edge of the pit was seen a rope mark in the mud showing the previous visit of one of our crew, Will Harris. He was one of two people who had been to the bottom of the pit. He said that the air had been very bad and he had a tough time climbing out. He had been in the cave several years earlier, even before I was ever involved in the project. As I set there I thought about getting to the bottom of the Lost Pit to continue the survey. I asked myself," Why not get more duct and drop it into the pit."

With another 75 feet of duct we can blow good air into the



Tubing hanging into the pit.



200+ feet of dryer tubing in the entrance room as we were removing it.

pit and then explore and survey virgin cave. This is the goal of this survey project now. After speaking with Rafal, he said he would order more of the duct so we could gain access to the bottom of the pit. Virgin passage now awaits us at the bottom of the Lost Pit. The survey of the cave now totals 785.32 feet.

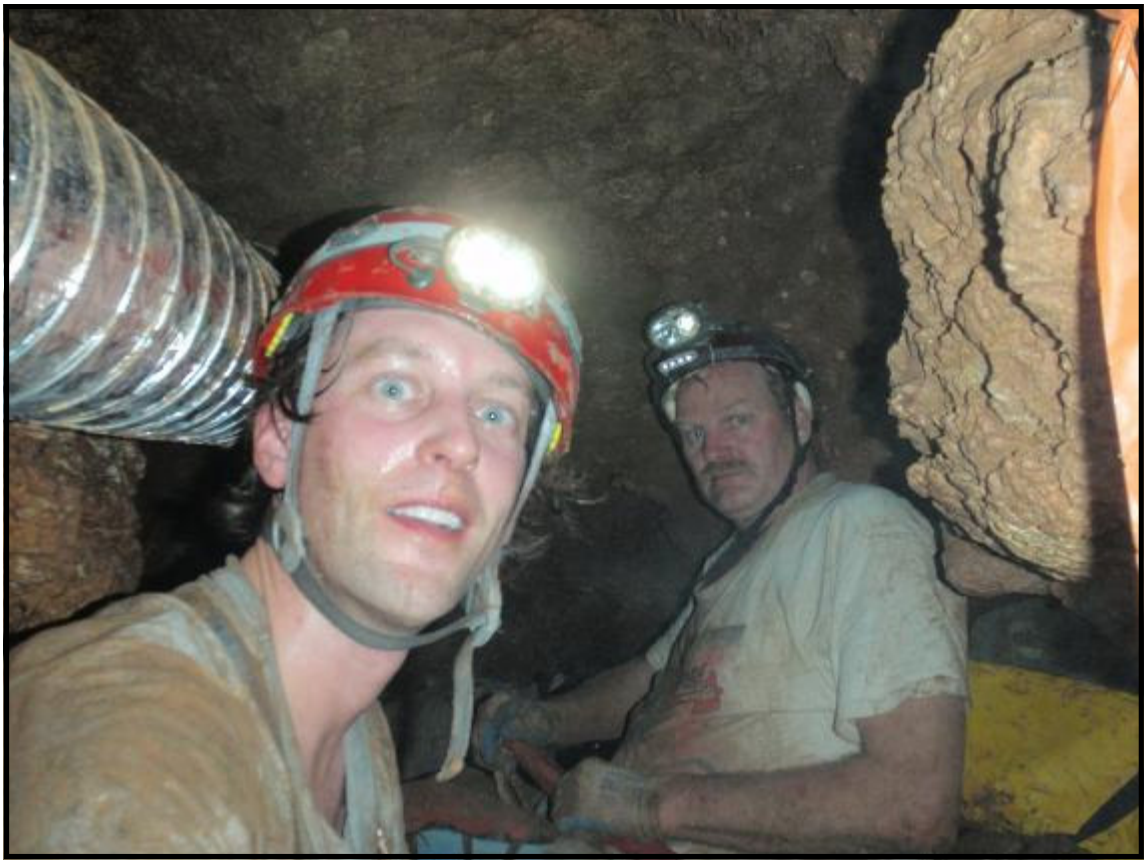
We did it! The final chapter has been written for Lemons Ranch. A new year has arrived. On January 9, 2010 we went back to Lemons with an additional fifty feet of 6" exhaust duct. At 10:30 that morning, George Paul Richman, Matt Zaldivar, Andy Zenker, Matt Rasler, Rafal Kedzierski, and yours truly, left for Lemons. In two cars we headed down the park road to the parking area and at the trail head we parked. We got all the gear ready and with our hands full, we headed off to the cave. I got the car battery to power the small exhaust fan. Others had the rope for the pit, another 50 feet of exhaust duct, vertical gear, survey gear, and other assorted items.

At the entrance to the pit, a careful look was made for rattlesnakes on the surface and down in the entrance. The prior trip I had almost stepped on a rattlesnake. Another foot and it would have got me on the ankle. It was picked up with a stick and carried a safe distance away from the entrance. The only good snake is one at a safe distance and you know he's there.

We first did an overland survey to Sick Cat Cave because we believed that it may drop into Lemons. We were looking for a permanent way to improve the air in Lemons by digging into it from Sick Cat. Sick Cat has a 5 foot by 18 inch entrance and it is about 35 feet deep, as yet unsurveyed because it is still an active dig. A couple of us were going to chimney down into Sick Cat and at a predetermined time were to strike the rock walls with hand held rocks and try to establish a connection. The two Z's, Andy and Matt were up for the job. Both being the skinniest. The rest walked back to Lemons.

With the entrance safe, I climbed down to retrieve the duct that we had left on the floor of the cave on the previous trip. I threaded the duct up through a small crevice at the entrance and climbed back out to attach it to the exhaust fan. The fan was put down on the ground and a few small rocks were placed around it to hold it in place. I powered up the fan and we all headed down into the cave with our gear. It had dropped to 7 degrees that night so the air we were blowing into the cave was very cold and was quickly sinking down into the far reaches and displacing the warmer bad air, pushing it up and out. We climbed and crawled back down into the cave and at the predetermined time stopped and for several minutes listened for the banging of rock and several of us heard a faint striking of rocks. We stuck the wall with a rock and they heard are efforts also. Later on after plotting Sick Cats location, it was found to be 85 feet away and not likely to tie in with Lemons. It could connect through a dirt filled bedding plan.

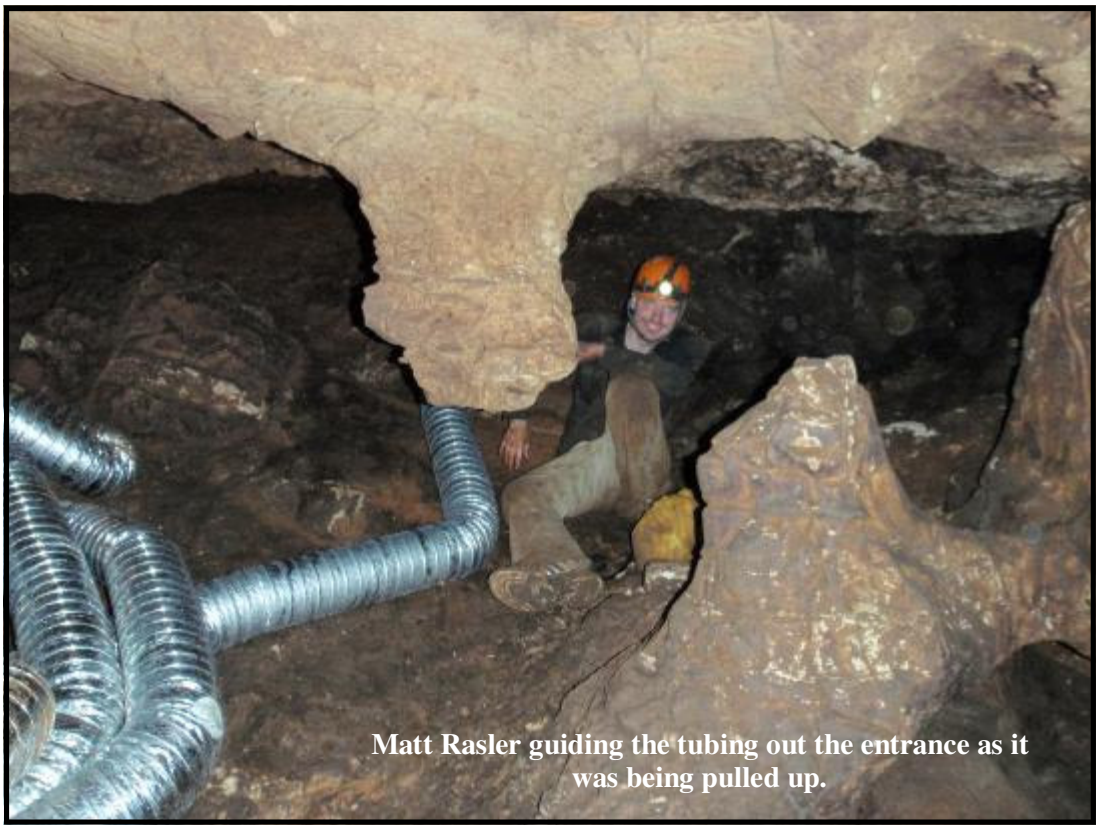
With the exhaust duct run and a little digging to allow room for the duct, five of us found ourselves sitting in a small room looking down Bad Air Pit. George Paul did a masterful job rigging the rope around a natural anchor. Two rope pads



Andy Zenker and Mark Gee right after ascending back out of the pit. The pit is directly behind Mark.

were placed around and under the rope to protect it. I was the only one that was able to stand, while bent over and began to put my harness on. I noticed my harness had gotten smaller, or had I got bigger. It barely fit but it did the job. I was given the honor of being the first to drop the near virgin pit. The fan had been blowing air down the pit about 15 minutes. At the lip of the pit was a 15" wide slot to climb through and then descend into a narrow pit that opened to seven feet wide once down about ten feet. I got on rope and headed down but proceeded slowly because I wanted to make sure the air quality had improved enough before I hit the bottom of the drop. The drop was several feet deeper than we had expected. The pit opened up and was slopping off to the East at an 80 degree angle. The pit I was seeing opened up to a 5 ft by 35 ft wide crevice. I stopped about 25 ft from the floor to test the air. The air was a little stale. The drop was undercut and taped out at 44.5 feet. I proceeded slowly until I reached the floor. The duct was doing its job. Even at the bottom of the pit I could feel the cool air blowing into my face. The air was very breathable.

On the pit bottom now, I looked over my surroundings. The pit ran from North to South about 40 ft with a small passage heading both ways. I expected to find a lot of cave. I moved away from the fall area and yelled, "Off rope!". I got down on my belly to look into the small passage at the South end and found a one foot wide by 18 inch passage. George Paul was now on his way down. I could see the passage made a sharp turn to the right as it appeared to get a lot tighter. Then I went to the North end to discover a lower passage one foot wide by 15 inches tall that went to the North about 12 feet and then turned left out of sight. This later proved to be tighter then the South. You see, my 260 pounds doesn't do small passages very well. I knew that I might not see much more cave but I had skinny people on this crew and I knew they could go where I could not. You that know me, know that I'm not crawling into that little stuff. My claustrophobic mind won't let me. George Paul was bent down looking to the South, Andy and Matt reached the floor. Matt got off rope and went to the South end and crawled into the, not so tight passage for him. George and I began the survey at the bottom



Matt Rasler guiding the tubing out the entrance as it was being pulled up.



Picture after we finished - nice and dirty.

of the drop. After our first station was shot, Matt took the tape into the small South passage and a second station was set down at the tight turn the passage made. George crawled in behind Matt. Another couple of shots of 17 feet finished the survey to the South. The cave ended in a small elevated room with the ceiling opening back into the pit we had repelled down. A small pit in the floor of this room ended only a few feet down and was too tight for exploration. George and Matt both came back out to check to the North.

Andy, Matt, and George went into the north passage to scout out ahead. Rafal and I began the survey to the North from below the rope. The first station was shot to the low North passage. Rafal called into the passage for someone to take the tape for the next shot. The three were having so much fun scooping a little booty, they were reluctant to come back. I believe it was Matt that stuck his head out and grabbed the dumb end of the tape. He and Andy had found the end of the cave down three more short drops where the passage stair stepped down to a too-tight drain at the floor. Matt, Andy, and Rafal took the survey to the bitter end. The passage was too tight for my but. Down the passage a, too tight vertical drop, filtered Rafal from the last small room with a 30 ft ceiling. As they surveyed I got back on rope so the others would have a short wait to climb out. George followed me up. One hundred feet had been surveyed at the bottom of the pit. Another 155 feet had been added to the survey. Total surveyed length of the cave was now 949 feet.

After everyone ascended the pit, the gear was packed up and rope coiled. Matt Rasler, who didn't have vertical gear had been exploring other parts of the cave, left first as we planned to stager our positions along the rout out so we could pull the duct out in one long piece. With someone up outside at the entrance and the rest of us positioned at the tight corners, the duct was pulled out and it was removed very easily. We all climbed out into a cold sunset at about 5:45. We cut the sections of duct apart and collapsed them back into a box. We made the short hike back too our vehicles and found our way back to camp, where a warm fire and spirits awaited us. I'm not going back to Lemons but the hard work and perseverance by many allowed us to finish the survey of Lemons Ranch Cave. My thanks go to those cavers and the staff at Colorado Bend State Park. Without the cooperation of many, the exploration and survey could not have been completed. Thank You All!

A special thanks to Mark Alman, Dave Gers, and Phil Sanders.

You guy's know why.

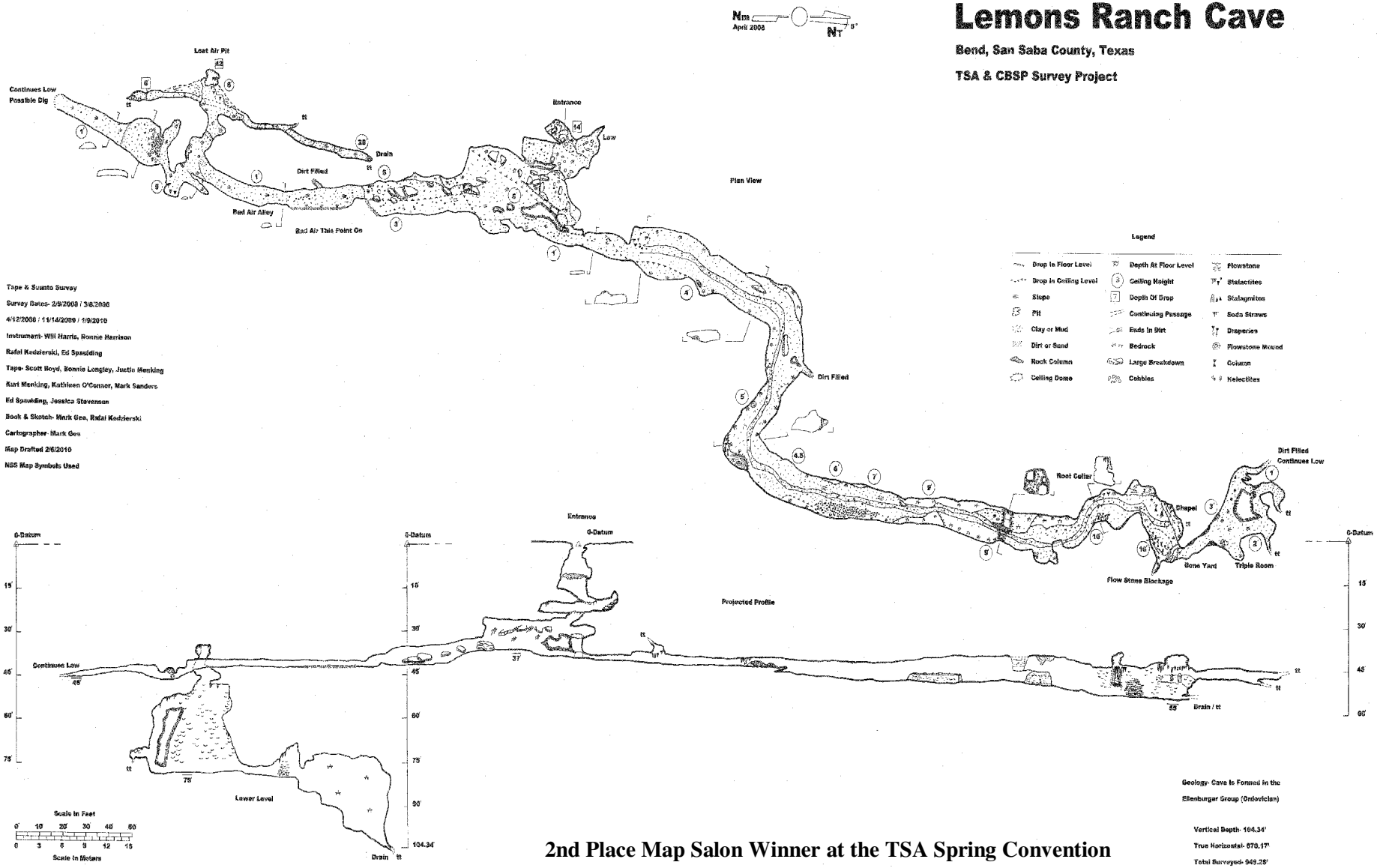
By Mark Gee NSS #49625

Happy Caving!

Lemons Ranch Cave

Bend, San Saba County, Texas

TSA & CBSP Survey Project



2nd Place Map Salon Winner at the TSA Spring Convention

Geology- Cave Is Formed in the Ellenburger Group (Ordovician)

Vertical Depth- 104.34'

True Horizontal- 670.17'

Total Surveyed- 949.28'



Muzquiz!

February 2010 trip report.
Submitted by Ron Rutherford.

Participants: Paul Bryant, Sofia Casini, Michael Pugliese, Philip Rykwalder, Peter Sprouse, Ellie Thoene, Matt and Saj Zappitello

Wednesday afternoon, Matt and Saj Zappitello, Philip Rykwalder, and Sofia Casini show up in Wimberley at my house around 4pm to load up my truck and head out. There was some speculation from the group that the gear would not fit, but this was not my 1st truck packing rodeo. It fit. We hit the road, stopping just North of San Antonio for a burger and to let the traffic die down. Matt got 3 or 4 of the Jr Bacon Cheeseburgers, all in all a better quantity of food for the buck than my burger and fry meal. Food in our bellies and caving on or minds we headed down I-35 to our turn-off for Eagle Pass. With some pit stops and a full gas tank we cross the border. No immigration office at the crossing, it is like 60 more miles down the road! A stop at the Aduada around 10pm for truck papers and tourist permits and we head for Muzquiz to meet the rest of the crew at Hotel Rodriquez. The hotel parking lot was full around 11pm, but the owner moved his vehicle for us to park. We headed up to our room and joined the others in the group that had already arrived for a few beers and laughs.

Thursday. It was a cold night, no heat in the room, so a bit chilly in the morning. Brush teeth with sink water, think about it, but what the heck. A few hot showers and we are downstairs in the parking lot conferencing with the group on breakfast. We drive downtown and park near the square. The taco place the group chooses was very full, so several of us walk to the square looking for another stand and a bank to change some dollars for pesos. Taco stand located and enjoyed. Peter and his carload were there also. Bank opens across the street. Money and food, check. We head to the edge of town for beer and to top off the tanks and gas cans. Six trucks head up into the mountains. Its about 3 hours and a lot of gates to reach the camp location. We set up camp and have enough time for a recon up the mesa, ~ 2km, to look at potential caves for the next day, and drop some rope off at a few caves and rope stashes. It is a nice hike up the arroyo to the mesa, the trail had been cleared on the previous trip, why does my knee always hurt the 1st day (oh yeah, maybe the 30+ lbs I put on since Thanksgiving)? Philip and I follow Matt to the cave they were working on the last trip, Pozo Que No Es, passing sev-

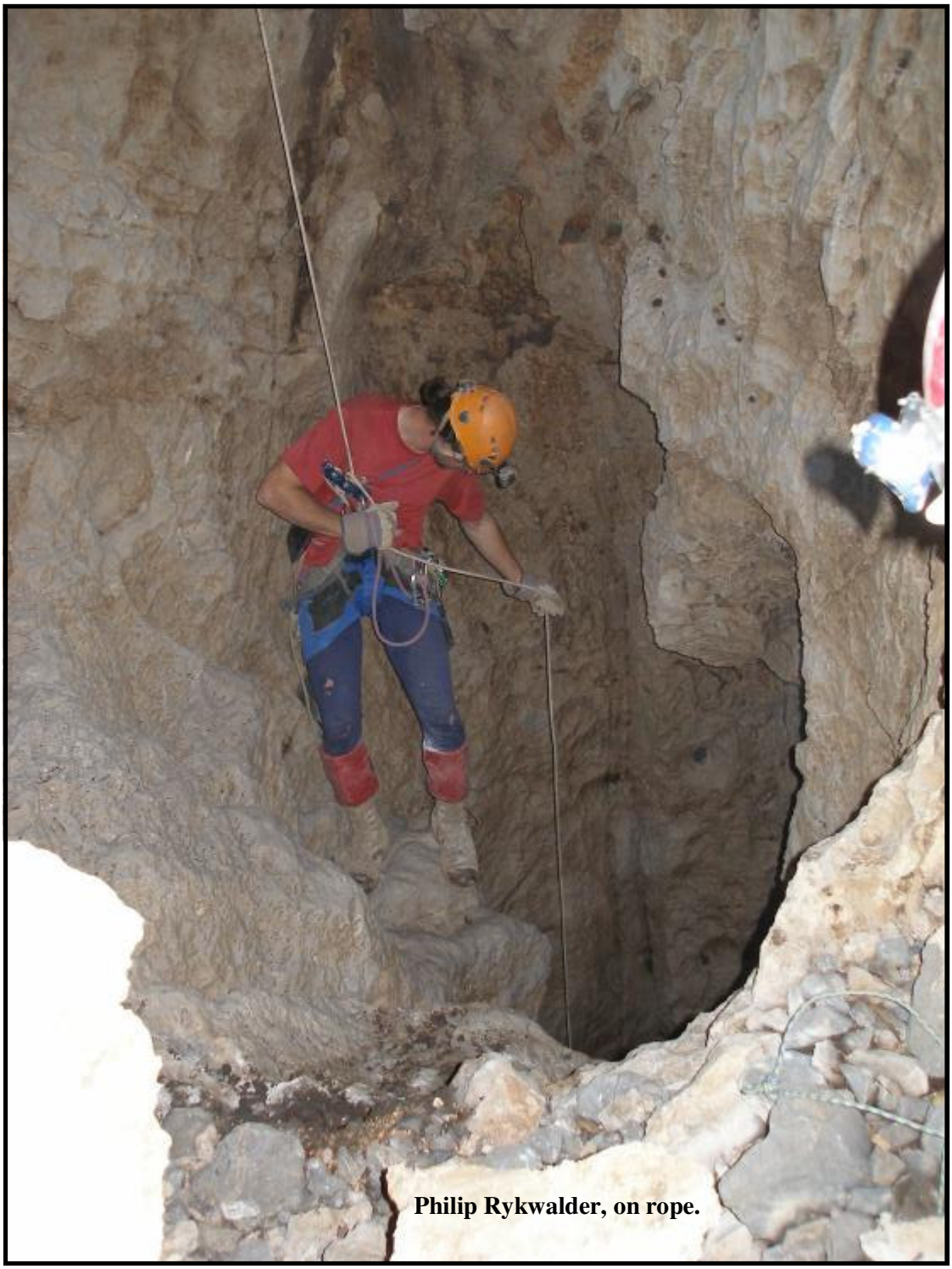


Michael Pugliese, Philip Rykwalder, and the author, Ron Rutherford.

eral pits and entrances on the way. It looked like there was a cave every 50m! Pozo Que No Es was already around -200m and was still going. It was still rigged from the last trip. Maybe THIS is the cave for the next day!? On our way back to camp we stopped by SR27 (unexplored) about 150 or so meters away from Pozo Que No Es. A little smaller entrance, but a nice rock drop of several seconds then clackity-clack-clack-clack-boom. But what intrigued Philip and I the most was the warm air billowing out of the cave. We decided there that this would be our goal for the next day! That meant hauling more rope up the mesa, oh well. GPS location set and we headed back down the arroyo, only to wander around the flat thicket around camp looking for the right cow trail (there are a lot of crisscrossing trails). Camp located, beers and supper consumed, off to bed with visions of caves dancing in our fitful dreams.

Friday. Up around 7am to frost. It was actually quite a cold night in the tent for me, not much sleep, will have to work on that. We eat and start gathering gear and personnel for the day. Several groups are going to different locations/caves, we are headed out by 9am. Back up the arroyo, why is it harder than yesterday? Its cold leaving camp so we wear extra layers, it warms up quickly. Once again we follow Matt and Saj and crew as they are heading the same direction. Our group consists of myself, Philip, and Michael Pugliese. We pick-up some rope at the edge of the mesa that we had stashed the day before. We arrive at the entrance to SR27. Philip is the bolt-setter/cave-scooper, but I'm glad. He did a great job the whole way. Michael followed with camera in tow, taking pics, I brought up the rear. The drops were nice, 3-4m wide passage, with each pitch around 30-40m to facilitate movement by the group and easier on-rope surveying. We drop down to a ledge that would hold us all around -100m which actually ends up being the top of an 80m long shield formation. There are small rimstone pools on the ledge with aquatic isopods. Philip continues down. Several more pitches leads us to a split in the vertical passage, we follow the one that appears to be the most obvious, straight down. Well, we hit dirt/rock floor at an estimated -200m, we are pumped and yet bummed that it ended. There are still other parts to explore. We start surveying our way out. I climb and cuss about my extra weight and run instruments, (suunto tandem and hilti dist laser), while Philip sketches and Michael de-rigs up to the split. We exit the cave around 7pm and head back to camp, pumped but tired. We eat and drink and notice that Matt/Saj's team are not back yet. They show up around 11:30pm with cave still going! The challenge has been set, can SR27 beat Pozo Que No Es? Time will tell.

Saturday. Another restless/cold night, frost in the



Philip Rykwalder, on rope.

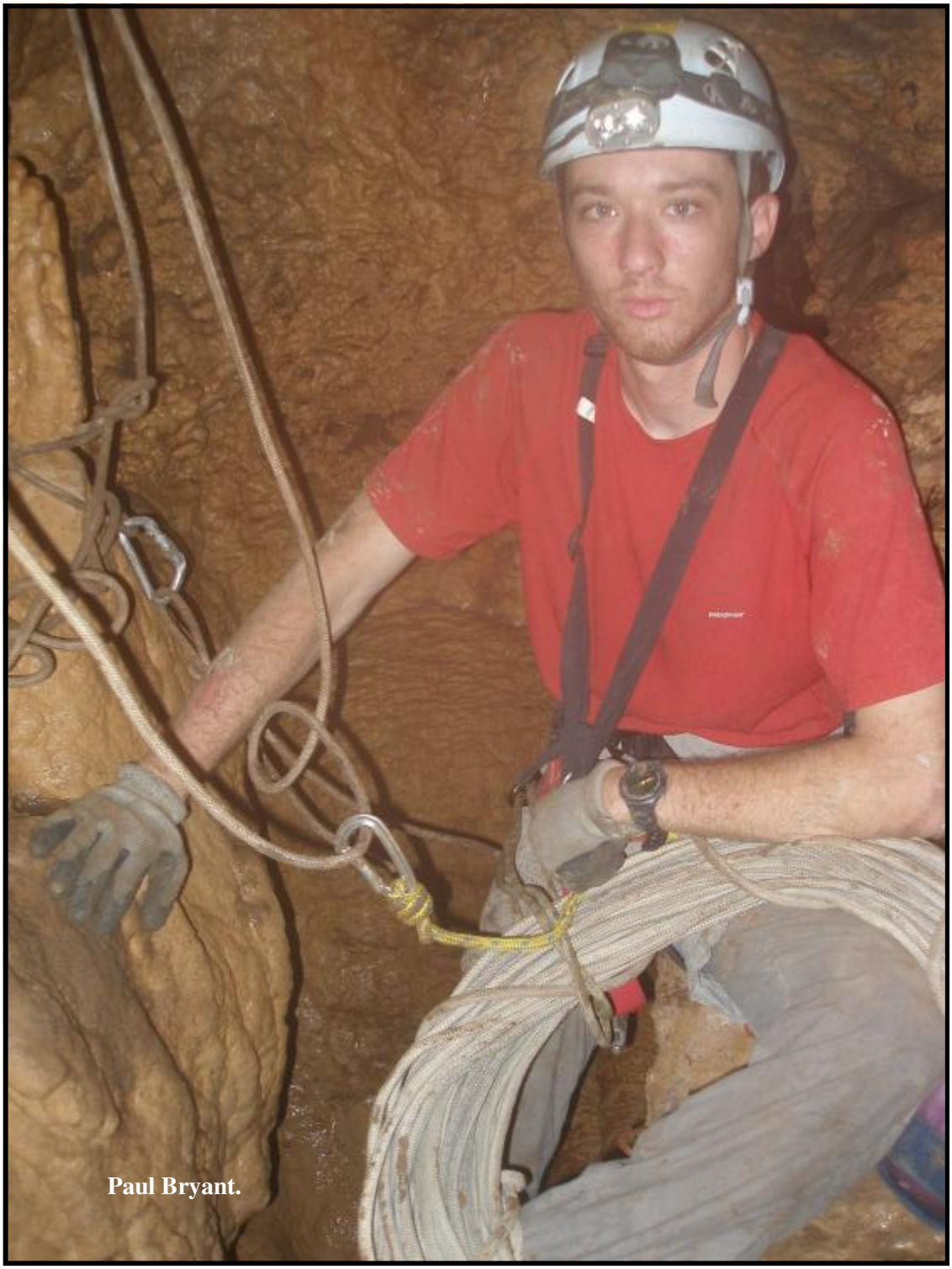
morning. Damn, I am sore. After some Vitamin I (ibuprofen), I try not to let my hamstrings cramp as I get dressed in my still wet from sweat/freezing pants from yesterday. Did I mention that I am sore? We eat and scrounge up more rope and re-charged drill batteries and head-up the arroyo. Ellie Watson joins us today. The hike up is hard for me, did gravity increase overnight? There is some sort of pollen on the mesa that is making my sinuses go crazy. We get to the cave, I'm already tired. I bring up the rear again. Michael is in full video mode, yammering on about some sort of great CCD in the camera he is using (great video by the way Michael!). We go down to where the cave has a bifurcation. By the time I get there, they are on the bottom of another room about 20+ meters below me. They move some rocks and dirt and determine that it links up with the passage below from yesterday. No other obvious leads. While they are digging around I climb up about a 3 meter free-climb to look at a dome off to the side. I get to an edge and look down to a room with several holes in the sides/floor and holler to the others that there is more stuff over here. I climb back down and we survey the passage that Philip, Michael, and Ellie were in. We climb up to our newly found passage and rig down to the rocky floor. We found the WIND! It is blowing out of a 1.5m wide lead. We toss rocks that clack and bang. Next to us is a window in the rock with passage going down, but no air. I vote to follow the air, but Philip chooses the window that goes down. The floor is slopping and covered in loose rocks. Philip clears the ledges but sends tons of rocks down. The edge is dirt and goes down with them. He clears until the floor seems stable, unless touched. Philip rigs along the ceiling until passage heads down. It takes a while as he clears below and sets bolts. He finds an alcove to hide in while we go down. We proceed like this. Hide in alcove/pray you don't get hit by the rocks still raining down. Let person above you take alcove hiding place, while you continue down to a canyon area that not many rocks seem to make it all the way down. And wait for the next person. Kind of scary. I notice that Philip has scratched in the soft rock in the alcove (Have you kissed your rigger today?) I wasn't sure if he had brushed, so I passed, but I was very impressed at the bolt and rope placement in tough vertical passage. Philip and I waited in the canyon on a small one person (with 2 people on it) ledge at the top of what sounded like a big drop. We only had a couple more ropes/bolts/hangers with us! Philip bolted down and set his last 3 bolts/hangers/rope hanging in space with booming vertical passage going below him. We think we are down around -240m. He climbed back up to the bottom of the canyon and we surveyed our way up to our previous last survey station. It was a tough climb out. Why did I eat so much over the holidays? Why is



Ellie Thoene

my pack so heavy? Why is gravity increasing as I climb the rope? Could the laws of nature have changed while we were underground? We exit the cave around 9:30pm in the dark with a howling wind on the mesa. We stumble across the karst, I can't seem to keep us on the path back to the arroyo. We wander a bit, but find our way down. We decide on a name for SR27, "Pozo del Tridente" = "Well of the Trident", as the straight shaft down trifurcates near the bottom like a pitchfork. Back at camp, exhausted, we eat and drink, but still no Matt/Saj team. Go to bed wandering what Pozo Que No Es must be doing. Hear the Pozo Que No Es team come back into camp around 2:30am. From the chatter by the campfire it sounded like they got down to -289m. Another cold, cramping, fitful night with little sleep. Can we beat that depth? It sounded like we could from the rocks we dropped.

Sunday. I just thought I was sore the previous day. I have raw spots where my gear has removed the skin. My hands have blisters from my ascender. My legs/ back are in cramp/spasms. And I won't even mention how bad my crotch area hurts from my seat harness. But, thoughts of beating the 289m of Pozo Que No Es get my adrenaline flowing. I pull on my wet/frozen pants. Some food, more rope, hangers, bolts, and batteries and away we go. Today our group consists of myself, Philip, Michael and Paul Bryant. Up the arroyo, onto the mesa, follow the GPS to cave (wander around a bit because I always get off course and pass it). Michael forgets some photo gear or cave gear (I'm not sure which) and heads back to camp. The Pozo Que No Es team is done, so we send Paul over to pull up the 80m rope at the entrance. Down we go. Even rappelling down hurts today. We play the hide in the alcove game and Philip heads down from the bottom of the canyon. I follow a bit later. We finally get down to a large breakdown choke, but there is an opening. Philip already has it rigged. We hear Paul above us and holler for him to grab the rope we stashed at one of the resting alcoves. He is past it and has to climb back up to it. He meets us below the choke, Michael is not with him. The cave narrows. There is a tight, snaggy, canyon area and then it gets a bit muddy, but still continues down. We get to an area that is very different from the cave above. Here is wet flowstone all around us. We speculate that we may be below the water table or at least the wet season level. There is a vertical squeeze and down and we continue. 40+ meters down and a couple of pitches, we hit the bottom. A flowstone floor with a small pool in the middle with aquatic isopods. The room is big enough for 4 or 5 people. At the bottom, we think we are over 300m deep! We ended up with a 50m and 80m rope still with us. I head up with the ropes in tow and start running instruments. Philip starts sketching and Paul de-rigs behind us. It is a long climb up. It is already after 7pm. We stop at the canyon below the rock fall area to pull up and coil the ropes from below. I head out, trying to be very careful not to send rocks down. I think I only sent one small pebble down. At least, that's what they said be-

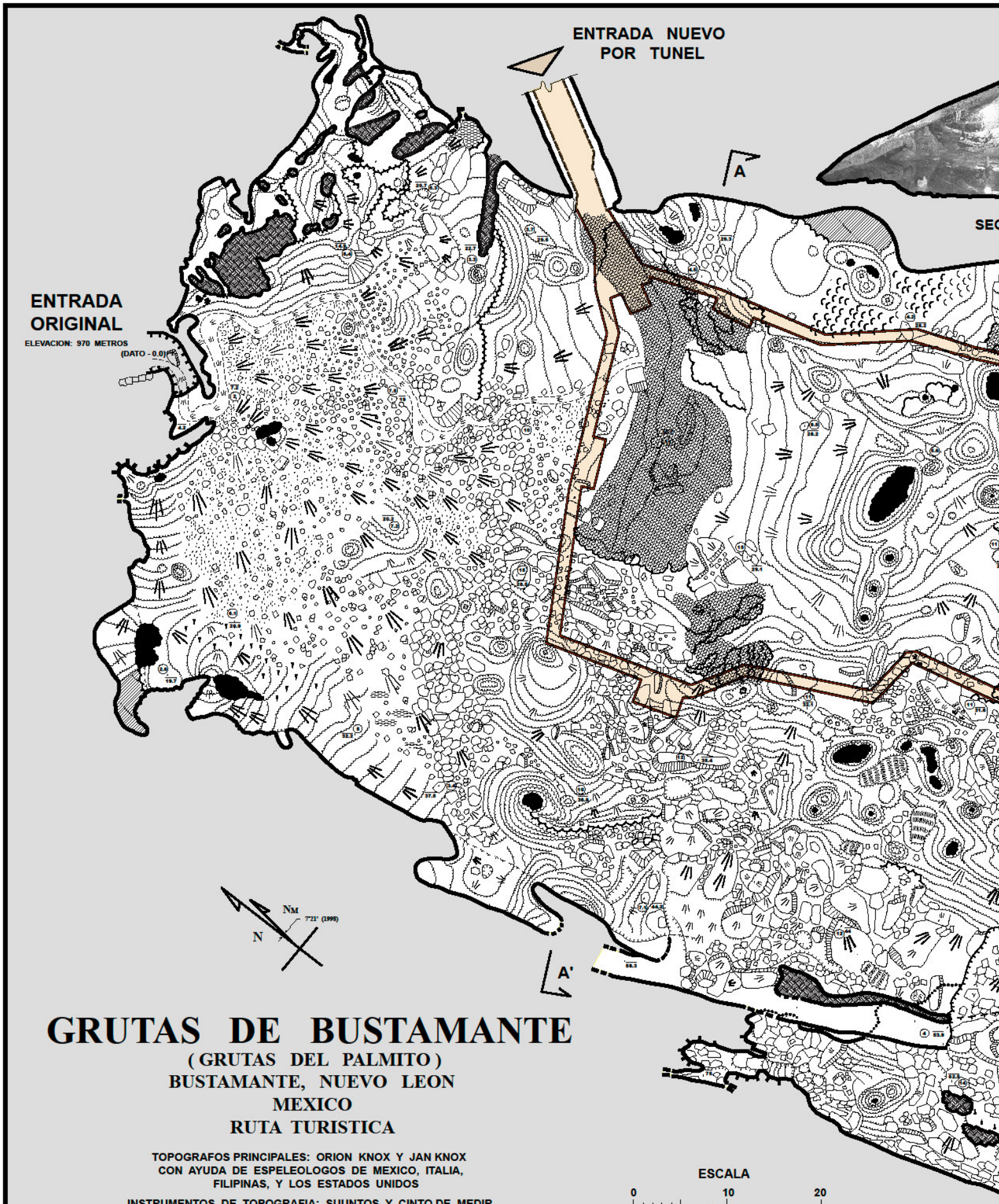


Paul Bryant.

low. I stop and admire the air flow from the lead we did not go down yet, it is still as strong as the day before, and climb up to catch my breath and drink some water and curse alone in the dark about how out-of-shape I am. Philip makes it up and I beg them to carry my 2 ropes out the rest of the way for me, as I am exhausted. Those young and in-shape guys accept (and I thank God for a small answered prayer). I head out as they finish de-rigging from below and safely stashing some of the ropes so they will be ready for the next trip to push the blowing lead. My pack feels like I'm pulling up a small truck below me, and my belly fells like someone strapped lead weights to my body. I make it out of the cave and put on a jacket as it is after 11pm and it is cold again. I find some water in the pack I left on the surface and try to rehydrate. Philip and Paul make it out and we gather up all the gear that we left at the entrance the other days. Damn our packs are full/heavy as we exhaustedly stumble across the mesa, down the arroyo, and back to camp (I lost the trail again with the GPS and tried to take the shortest route and we ended up along a steep slope crashing through the brush to find the top of the arroyo). Damn, those young guys hauled ass back to camp. I could barely keep up. Exhausted but elated we ate and had a beer. I noticed that after we had rested a bit that Philip was walking with the same painful gait I was. It has been a hard few days. Off to bed.

Monday. My body just laughed at the ibuprofen I had taken when I went to bed, and new levels of pain issued from muscles and joints, but Peter Sprouse's tin recorder playing Revelry got us up and moving to break camp. We packed up and were on the road by 10am, headed back to Muzquiz. We stopped and had lunch and gave Peter our survey notes and pictures. We all headed for the Texas border about 20 min apart, but we all ended up in line on the bridge pretty much together. Not a long wait, maybe 45 min. On the US side they held us all, vehicles open, dogs sniffing, border patrol poking around under the hoods. After a bit, it is decided that we have too much mud on our trucks to come back into Texas. So they send us all back into Mexico to get our vehicles washed! Well after a couple of hours getting the vehicles cleaned, those guys do a great job for not much money, and back to the bridge we go. I little longer wait this time. In all, about a 3.5 hour delay. On the way back we get a text from Peter saying that our cave was 339m deep so far!!!! We had won the Pozo Que No Es vs. Pozo del Tridente rivalry, and we still have blowing leads to follow!. We make it back to Wimberly around 11pm. We unload the truck and Matt, Saj, Sofia, and Philip load up their cars and head back to Austin.

Can't wait for the next trip!



GRUTAS DE BUSTAMANTE

(GRUTAS DEL PALMITO)
BUSTAMANTE, NUEVO LEON
MEXICO
RUTA TURISTICA

TOPOGRAFOS PRINCIPALES: ORION KNOX Y JAN KNOX
CON AYUDA DE ESPELEOLOGOS DE MEXICO, ITALIA,
FILIPINAS, Y LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

INSTRUMENTOS DE TOPOGRAFIA: SUUNTOS Y CINTO DE MEDIR
DATOS DE TOPOGRFIA PROCESADO EN "WALLS"

TOPOGRAFIA: MAYO 1994 - FEBRERO 1997

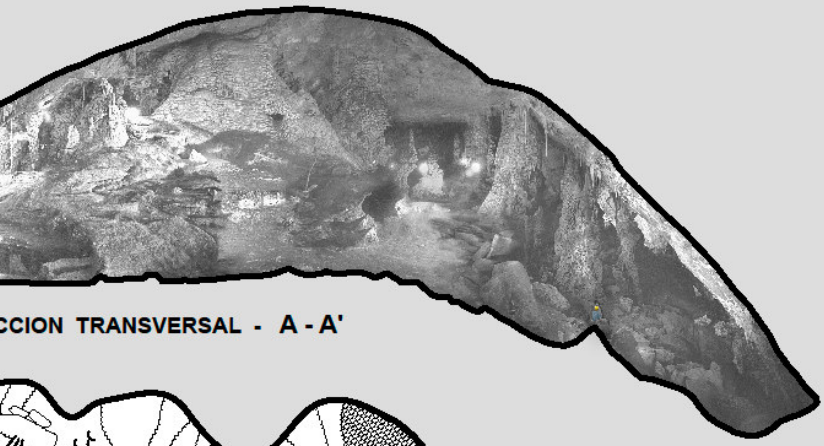
CARTOGRAFO: © ORION KNOX
ABRIL, 1998 - DICEMBRE, 2009

ESCALA

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METROS

0 50 100
PIES

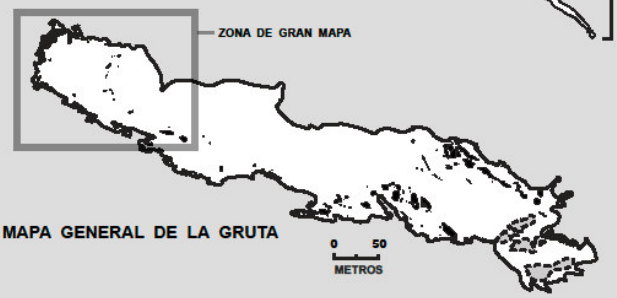
LATITUD/LONGITUD : 26.5001/-100.5273



CCION TRANSVERSAL - A - A'



SECCION LONGITUDINAL



MAPA GENERAL DE LA GRUTA

0 50
METROS

SYMBOLOGIA:

PARED EXTERIOR	COLUMNAS DE CALCITA	COLUMNA CAIDA
PARED INFERIOR	ESTALAGMITAS GRANDES	RODADO
COLUMNAS DE PIEDRA	DEPOSITO DE CALCITA	PIEDRAS GRANDES
CAIDA	GOURS	PIERDAS CHICAS
POZO	ESTALACTITAS	TIERRA SULTA
TECHO DEBAJO	ESTALAGMITAS PEQUENAS	BARRO O LODO
DECLIVE	CHARCO	ALTURA DEL TECHO (M)
RASTRO PRIMITIVO	CHARCO INTERMITENTE	PROFUNDIDAD DEBAJO DE LA ENTRADA ORIGINAL (M)
VEREDA NUEVO		

Ranchers, Rattlers and Recharge

Caving on the Phillips Ranch in Crockett County, West Texas

Submitted by Sofia Casini.
Photos by Geoff Hoese and Peter Sprouse

Participants: Don Arburn, Peter Sprouse, Ryan Reid, Geoff Hoese, Sofia Casini, Jacqui LaRue Thomas

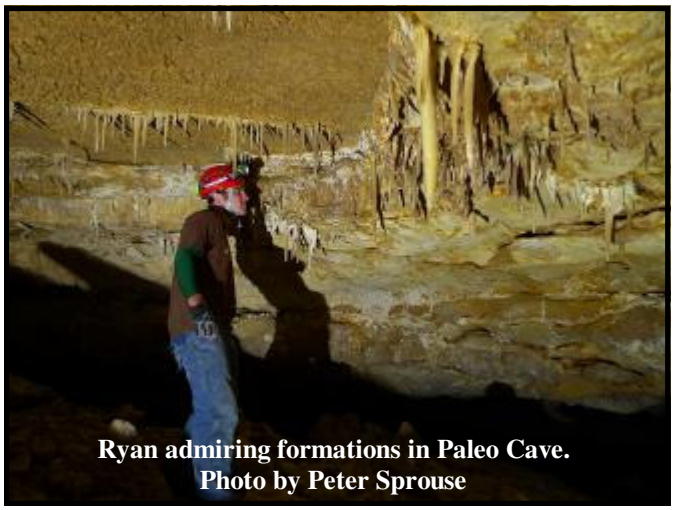
A Texas gas and sheep rancher, Toby Carlton, contacted Peter Sprouse about coming to check out a cave unearthed on his land in November 2009 when the gas company ripped open the earth with a bulldozer. His family was enjoying tooling around in it, and was looking for the expert take on what had been discovered and what should be done about it. The caving crew set out on their mission with a few good leads – the main cave on site and another called Phillips Cave, which Peter found a reference to in the TSS files prior to the trip. The weekend was promising.

The caving crew arrived to a warm reception Saturday morning, March 6th 2010. The ranching family – 81 year old Toby Carlton, his wife Coco, their children and grandchildren - all excitedly welcomed the cavers. They shared their finds so far from earlier exploring – reporting "wooly mammoth teeth and a massive thigh bone" – and some important information about Phillips Cave, explored 50 years ago by Coco and now home to a mass of slithering rattlesnakes.

Paleo Cave: Led to the recently unearthed cave, the team set about surveying (Peter sketching, Ryan setting stations, and Sofia reading instruments. The cave was found when a bulldozer excavating caliche for the gas well pads scraped the bedding plane open which formed the top of the cave. The newly formed entrance led into a larger chamber, with promising leads shooting off in a few directions - most leads stopped up shortly and one was too small to pass. Notable was a small skylight in a dome, about 1 inch in diameter and width, showing the thinness of the cave ceiling. Another similar hole was found outside of the cave between two of the trucks, leading to speculation that another chamber may exist – and that it would be desirable to find another parking place. Also notable were four paleo sink entrances, now plugged, which had left large debris cones, ranging from 20 centimeters to 2 or 3 meters. These were filled with many old bones. A tooth of unknown origin, which was later identified as a horse tooth, was about 2 inches long and curved. Left in the cave for the family and future explorers, pictures were taken to be analyzed by paleontologists. Sadly, the family was informed their "wooly mammoth teeth and bones" were simply cave formations. "Paleo Cave" was home to fossils and numerous small formations, such as popcorn, gypsum crests, stalagmites, stalactites, and fried eggs. It was also home to small critters like crickets, roaches and centipedes, and, of course, to many, many bones. Relatively untouched for some folks using beer cans Hansel and Gretel style to get out of the cave, Paleo Cave is promising in its wealth of data for paleontologists. The cave opening took a lot of runoff water after it was opened up in 2009, demonstrated by goat manure in the back passage place high on the cave wall and the significant erosion on the cave floor between debris cones in this short of a time span. The team speculates that the water may either fill the cave in the future or widen narrow passages, leading to other chambers.



Entrance to Paleo Cave in quarry floor.
Photo by Peter Sprouse



Ryan admiring formations in Paleo Cave.
Photo by Peter Sprouse



Phillips Cave (entrance above) **:** Next, the ranchers took the team to Phillips Cave. As promised, this mossy green entrance (1 meter wide) lead straight down (6.1 meters) to a



Sofia lights up the main passage in Paleo Cave. Photo by Peter Sprouse.

floor bed populated by three (at least) enormous and beautiful rattlesnakes. Coiled comfortably in the direct light, these snakes bore detailed black, gray, and brown diamond shaped markings. When stretched out they appeared close to 6 feet each! Explored by the grandmother Coco (now in her late 70s) when she was a teenager, the cave opens into a much larger cavern with unexplored leads. This cave was initially opened up circa 1950 when reportedly donkeys were used to move the large stones covering the entrance. The caving crew aborted the idea of entering the cave.

Rattling Yo-Yo Cave: The ranchers then mentioned another cave found by their adult daughter many years ago, whose location nobody could remember clearly. Rough directions where provided, and the caving crew spent hours ridge walking amongst cactus in search of this cave. The peaceful afternoon was marred only slightly by the non-stop noise of the gas compressor stations. The final cave, named "Rattling Yo-Yo" was discovered by Sofia Casini. Fitting in description though not exact location, it's unclear whether this was the same one found by the rancher's daughter. Rocks were thrown searching for rattlers before Sofia lowered herself straight down from the small triangular shaped entrance (.5 meters). The cave (1.7 meters vertical) opened into a single chamber, with



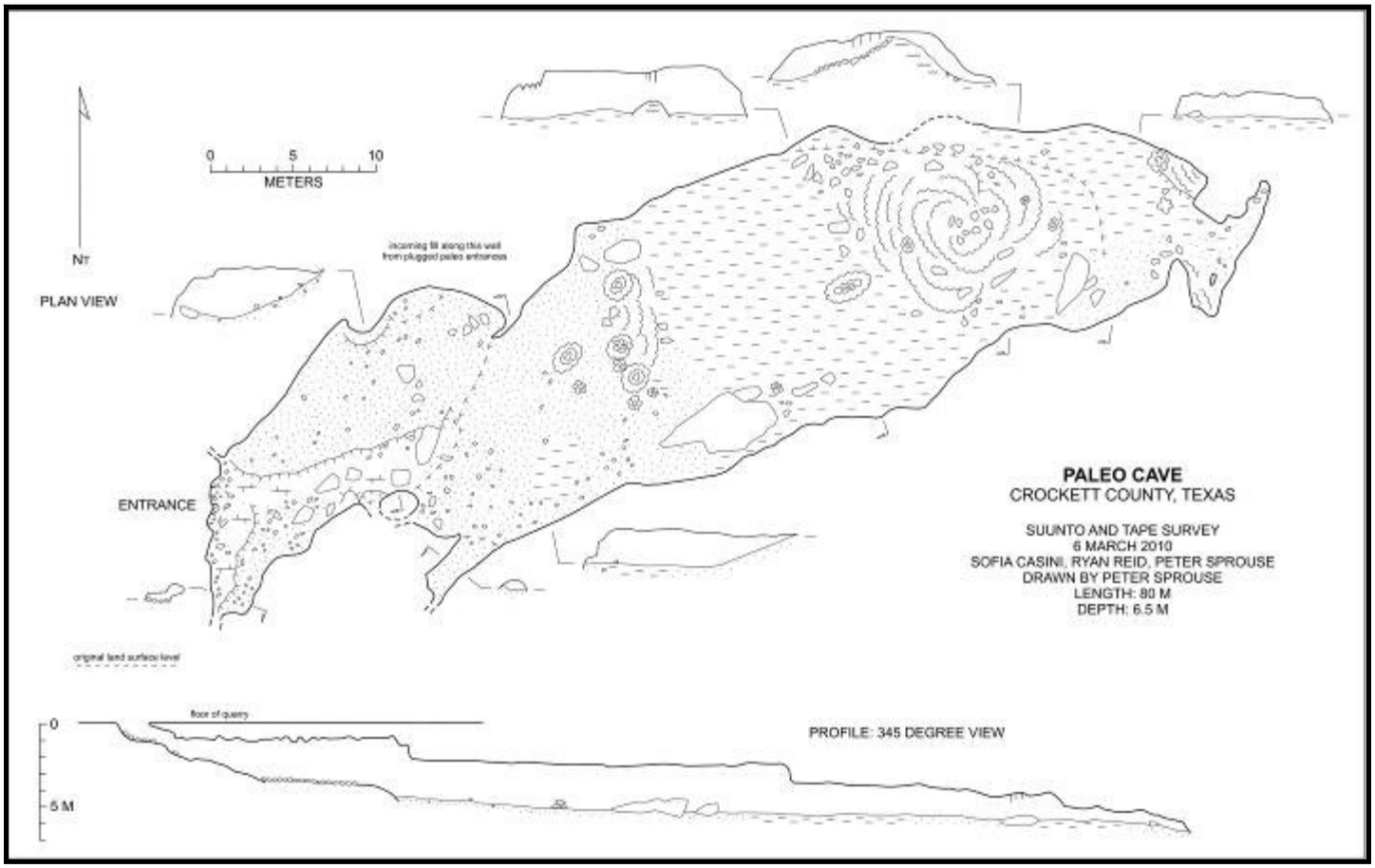
Sofia dropping into Rattling Yoyo Cave. Photo by Geoff Hoese

just enough room for everyone inside and standing room at the back of the cave. Two small skulls and other body parts, possibly raccoon, were discovered, along with an old rusted metal yo-yo with whistling holes on each side. Animal scratches were also found closer to the entrance. Quite lovely, the cave walls were decomposed limestone of chalky white with unknown black markings, and the floor consisted of large piles of rich black dirt. The day's excitement pinnacled when trip leader Peter Sprouse, the last to enter the cave, stated, "How come none of you noticed these two rattlesnakes?" They were staring at him eye level, with their tongues flickering. Peter descended and the survey team (Peter sketching, Ryan setting stations, and Don on instruments) continued, while the team strategized on how to exit the cave safely. Peter thought of sending out an initial member, who could then drape a rain jacket over the snakes. Sending up the member with largest body mass was discussed, as was sending out the member who was smallest and quickest. Don Arburn, at 6ft 3in, went to observe the situation, at which time he noted the snakes nestled in a crack near the entrance, just 8 inches from body passing, and exclaimed, "Oh, no, this changes everything. We have a problem here, guys." Mustering courage, Don played sacrificial lamb and exited the cave first, draped the jacket over the wall crack, and each member proceeded to exit. Phew!



Back at the ranch, the caving team celebrated Toby Carlton's 81st birthday with him and the entire family, and then slept soundly after a full day exploring.

A good day's caving!



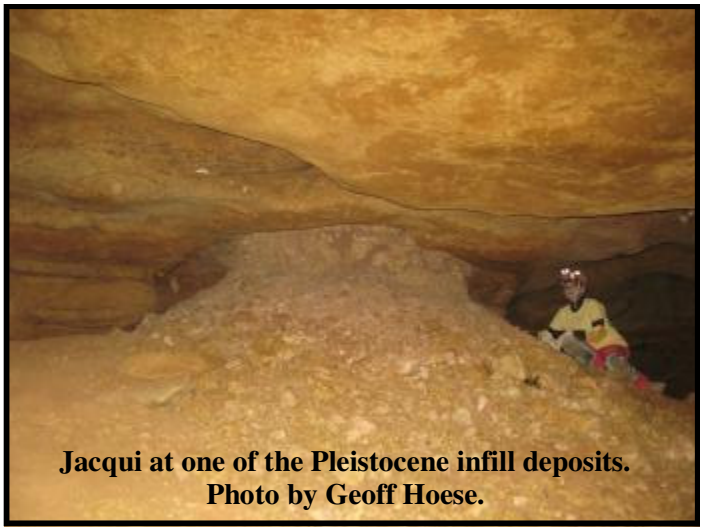
Ozona Caving

Submitted by Peter Sprouse

I was contacted by Crockett County ranch owner Toby Carleton about a cave on his place, thanks to a mutual acquaintance. It is always interesting to check out caves in West Texas, so I gathered up a crew and we headed west in Don's big Ford one Friday night. Before leaving San Antonio I wanted Don to show us a legendary spot on the south side known as "The Tracks". You can look up this popular urban legend online at snopes.com. Supposedly a school bus crossing the tracks many years ago was struck by a train, killing many children. It is believed that if you pull your car up to the crossing and put it in neutral, invisible hands will push your vehicle safely over the tracks and out of harms way, leaving small handprints on the back. People line up nightly to test this out. Don told us that due to an optical illusion, the road actually slopes downward to the tracks, not up, so there was no magic to it. We had to test this out. We pulled Don's big Ford truck up to the tracks and he put it in neutral. The truck rolled forward, and stopped in the middle of the tracks! This was not good. Maybe evil leprechauns had taken the place over from the benevolent schoolchildren.

Don put the truck back in gear and we headed on to Jacqui Thomas' house in Sonora to stay the night. The next morning we headed west to Ozona and then south to the adjoining Philips and Carleton ranches, meeting the families at the historic ranch house. Soon we were on our way over to see the new cave they had told us about. Crews digging caliche for oil well pads had scraped open a cave, and some hunters had noticed it in November 2009. The family had explored the cave and wanted cavers to assess it for them. A duck into the low entrance quickly took us into wide walking passage. The cave was about 80 m long, with a few crawlway leads that pinched out. The most interesting aspect was several infill deposits along the north wall from presumed plugged entrances. These were full of ancient bone material, probably from the Pleistocene era. Since the cave had clearly been closed for a very long time, this seemed like a valuable undisturbed deposit. Plans are underway by Dr. Ernest Lundelius of the University of Texas at Austin to investigate this. He says it would be the westernmost cave deposit site in their research project, making it quite interesting.

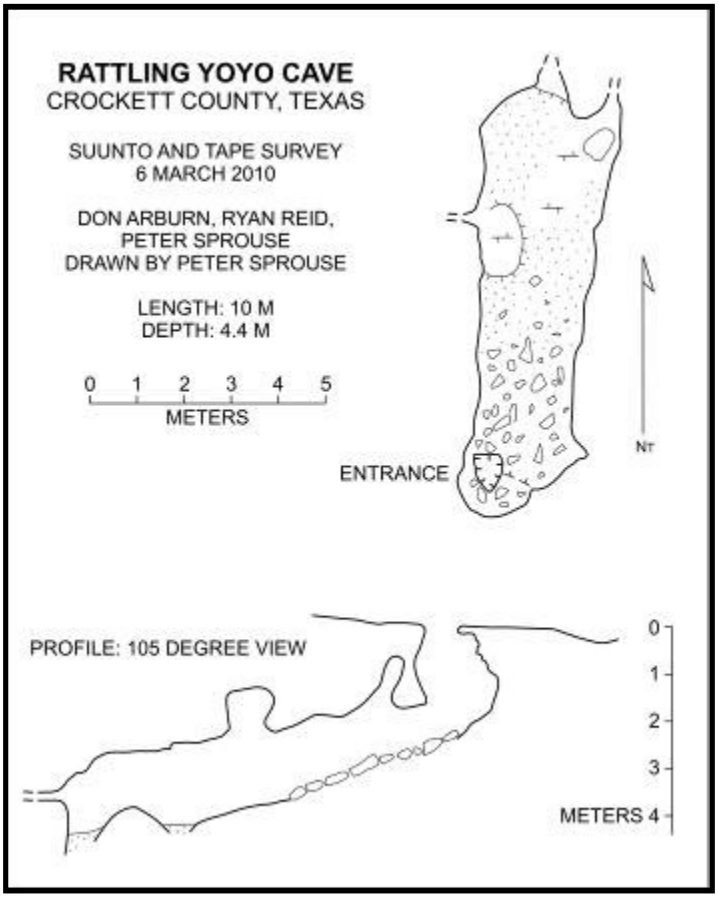
The only recent source of input into the cave appeared to be an area just south of the new entrance, where there was a pile of rocks with organic debris, suggesting the presence of a loosely plugged sinkhole that was removed during the quarrying process. Later that day we were taken to another cave on the ranch that appears in the TSS cave files. Phillips Cave is a 6 m deep pit that takes quite a bit of local drainage. We were told it was a rattlesnake den, which turned out to be true. Looking down the pit we could see three large coiled diamondbacks. So we passed on that one. Next we set off to search for a third cave that one of the family members had been in years ago. The location was only vaguely known, so we spread out to search a large area of the ranch. Persistence paid off after several hours when Sofia called out "I found it". It was a small triangular hole in bedrock along a cleared geophysical transect. Sofia squeezed down the 1.7 m drop first, followed by the rest, with me coming in last to sketch. As I dropped in I noticed two rattlers in a bedding



Jacqui at one of the Pleistocene infill deposits. Photo by Geoff Hoese.

plane slot just below the lip. Now we were all in the cave faced with the prospect of having to squeeze by these guys to exit the cave. We lingered awhile mapping the cave, noticing an antique metal yoyo at the end of the short passage. We discussed how the first person out of the cave could drape my rain jacket down over the wall to cover up the snake slot for the rest of us. The logical thing would be for the person with the most body mass to be the one to do that, since the poison should affect them least. Don bravely took the short straw and popped out to the surface. What a gentleman!

That night we celebrated Toby's birthday with family, cake, and burgers. The next day we took the family over to show them the location of Rattling Yoyo Cave. While we chatted it came to light that Jacqui, a volunteer firefighter, had been on the ranch a few years back to fight a wildfire, for which Toby was quite grateful. Soon we were on the road back to San Antonio.



Texas Caver Buys Bender's Cave

Submitted by Kurt Menking



Bender's Cave near Spring Branch Texas was purchased recently by B.T. Price of the Bexar Grotto.

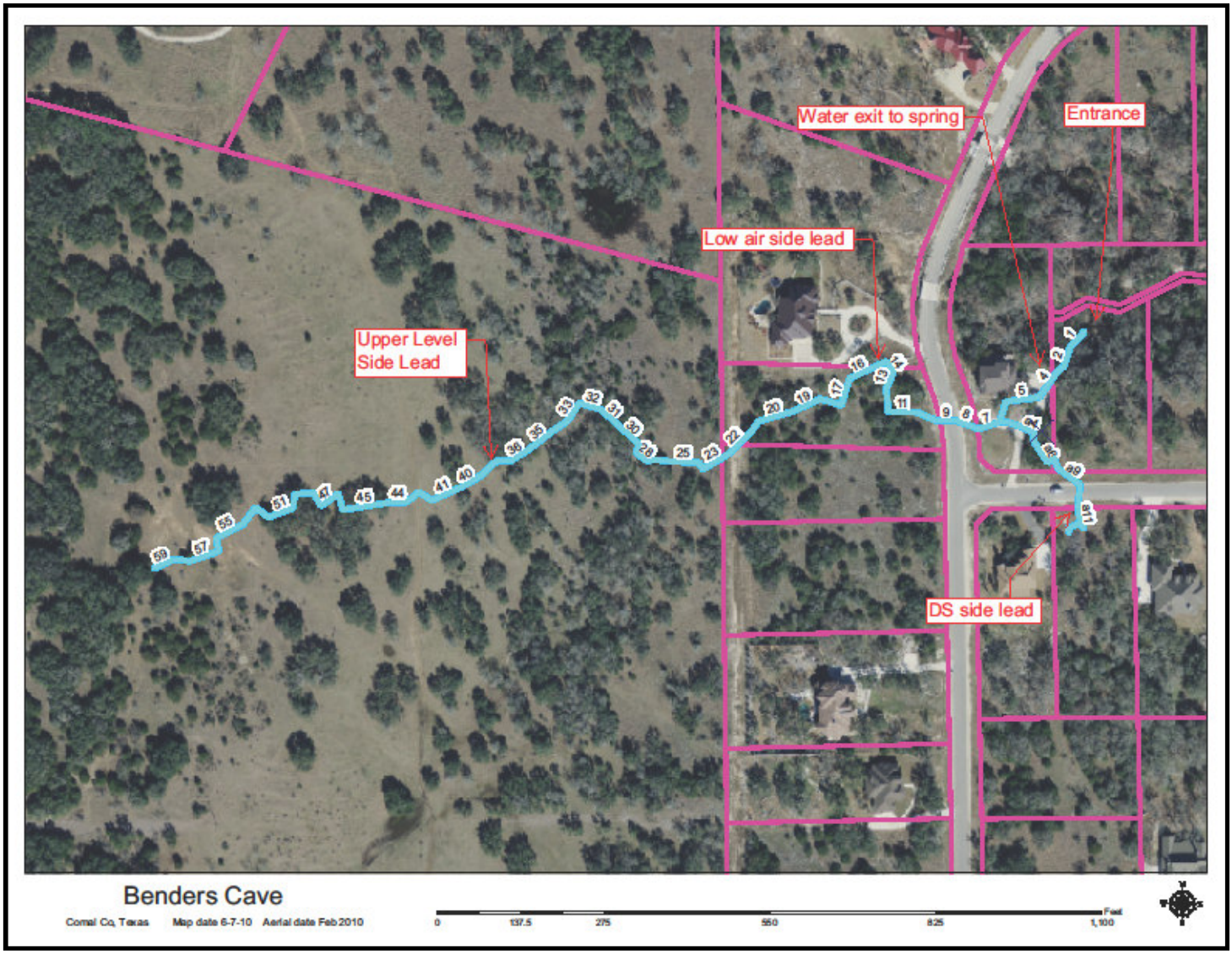
The cave for many years was well inside of a large ranch, but in 2005 most of the ranch was purchased by a developer, and by 2006 it was subdivided into a residential neighborhood. As the new subdivision was being developed several cavers recognized this was the area with Benders Cave. They quickly located the lot and inquired about the purchase price. The listing price at the time was around $250,000. In June 2006 the owner/developer agreed to let us do a trip into the cave since we were interested in the purchase of the property. At the time TCMA and other local cavers agreed it was just too much money. We knew it to be a long nice water cave, but the cost was just not reasonable.

Due to the current real estate slump new inquiries were made regarding the cave price. TCMA began looking into the property again and learned the asking price was now at $156,000. B.T. offered to help TCMA by financing the purchase if they could work out the purchase details. B.T. never heard any more about TCMA's progress so after about six months B.T. called the realtor to make inquiries of his own. Turns out TCMA was indeed quietly working toward the purchase of the cave. B.T.'s research and his background in banking helped him recognize that the property had been foreclosed, so he called the bank, and made an offer of $118,000 (cash sale) which was accepted by the seller and the bank. B.T.'s quick action helped him make a great deal on the property, but he unknowingly pulled the rug out from under TCMA. B.T.'s plans include building a house on the property, and he has stated more than once that he plans to give the property including the house to TCMA at some point.

B.T.'s first order of business was to gate the cave. Due to the new neighborhood surrounding the cave many kids, and adults have "discovered" the cave, and unauthorized visits were commonplace. The cave entrance and well into the cave are strewn with old inner tubes, plastic bottles, Styrofoam blocks, and blow up floaties of all sizes and shapes.

B.T. contacted Charlie Savas, who submitted the designs and was given the green light by B.T. With the help of myself, B.T., Terry Holsinger, Marvin Miller, Josh Rubenstein, Ellie Thoene, and Tom Florer, we were able to dig a trench for the foundation of the gate.

A large rain the day before our trip caused the water to rise and complicate the trench project. We persevered even while digging under a foot or more of water to complete



the trench. Charlie and Terry showed up to build the gate and also met less than desirable conditions.

Charlie was regularly shocked by the welder, they constantly were sinking up to their ankles and knees in mud, and Terry had to bail water before Charlie could weld each piece in the trench. Remarkably, they finished the gate in 3 days.

Bender's cave is a significant water cave in this area. Access to the cave has been off and on as owners and other changes occurred through the years. Reportedly several miles of cave have been surveyed and or explored. I assisted in some surveying there in the 80's as did several others. There are also several seemingly significant side leads that have never been pushed or surveyed. All old survey notes have been lost except George Veni's survey in 1987 of the first 553 meters of the cave. Additional surveys have already begun with many more to follow.

B.T. plans to allow plenty of trips into the cave. In the beginning survey trips will have priority but recreational trips will also be available. B.T. is retired and is pretty easy to reach. He currently lives about 2 miles from Benders cave. Texas Cavers are welcome to call B.T. Price at 210-274-8989, or send him an email at texascaveman@fastmail.com.





Kickapoo Caverns State Park Grand Opening

Submitted by Megan Files

Let's begin by confirming that yes, the long road out to Kickapoo State Park is a hellacious one, but definitely worth the drive. Those present for the touring adventures included Joe Ranzau, Lee Jay Graves, Lisa and Elena O'Bryan, TJ Tidwell, Krishna Gandhi, Sara Mitcham, and Megan Files.

The drive began in Houston with TJ, Krishna, and Sara. A seven hour drive through the expansive state of Texas to the border can be an arduous and boring one, so naturally, the great gods decided to stir things up a bit. Once the crew passed the border checkpoint, they passed through the most intense storm cell imaginable. Rain, hail, lightning, floods? Bring it. They threw the back-windowless jeep into 4-wheel drive and proceeded at about 35 mph for an hour or so to Brackettville. It was about 3 am at this point and too late to let a little squall stop a jeep of Aggies. Once past Brackettville, they were intently studying the unique surroundings of the town when Meg called to inquire as to what time the tours started in the morning. Apparently the wedding she was attending in San Antonio was serving free cave water. Obviously a phone call like that needs to be put on speakerphone so that all may enjoy. After pulling over on the side of the road because they were laughing so hard, they continued on through the night toward their destination, dodging deer when appropriate.

After passing the storm and laughing at the riotous



2009 Photo by Geary Schindel.



T.J. Tidwell pointing out "Harvestmen Haven".

phone call, the Jeep arrived at the park around 3:45 am, and as usual, set up camp in the dark. Just a few hours later, the three of them awoke, and after greeting the O'Bryan's who had managed to get to the park during waking hours, the group met in the cave at 8:15 to get better acquainted with their office.

Tours of between 20 and 30 visitors went through Kickapoo Cave every couple hours throughout the day. People of all ages went through that cave, from pre-natal (yes, a woman who looked about 6 months pregnant who kept fending off her protective husband came through the cave) to grandfatherly. Before anyone entered the cave, they were instructed to bring an adequate flashlight, sturdy tennis shoes, and of course, a sense of adventure, because although Kickapoo is a fairly reasonable cave, as most of you know, walking on a floor comprised of loose rock can surprise you. One by one, visitors entered the cave (escorted by cavers and at least one State Park Police Officer, who were also very enjoyable and pleasant) and once all were inside, they gathered around to listen to the rules and a little background information, led by Joe, TJ, Sara, or Lisa. Before all the volunteers arrived that weekend, each was given informative materials to read so that nearly any question asked could be answered appropriately by any one of us; such as, What's up with all these rocks on the floor? Why is it named Kickapoo? How did this cave form? How are those formations made? Are there any bats in here? What about raccoons? Every volunteer who came that weekend was needed. Taking that many people through a cave can get tricky. Three stops were made on the tour to give a brief talk, once at the beginning, the flowstone, and then again at the back of the cave. Volunteers were scattered among the touring group and at intervals in the obstacle course to ensure that everyone entered and exited all areas as safely as possible.

As expected, there were a few almost-tumbles and some people opted out of progressing further than the giant formations in the center of the cave. TJ recalls, "carrying a very old lady through the cave," and "telling a teenage girl that if she touched the cave popcorn killer bats would attack and echo-locate her eyes out," at which the girl laughed and continued enjoying the cave.

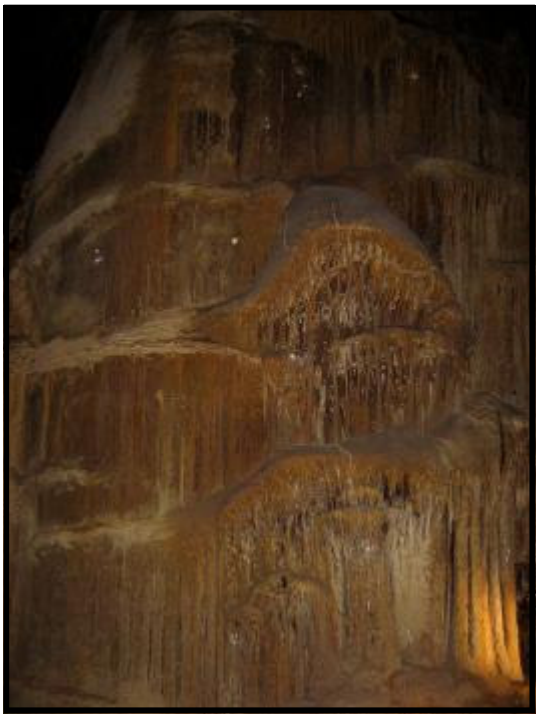
Back at the sign up station behind the state park headquarters, we noticed that there were quite a few people



Trail guide, Joe Ranzau.

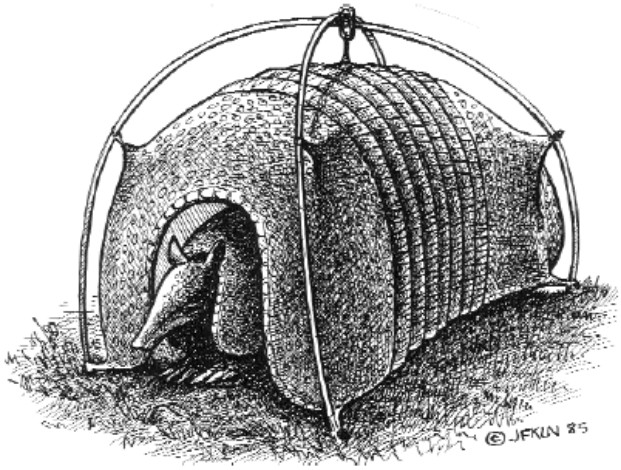
signing up to take the tour again! It was incredible. A big turnout was expected, but what a pleasant surprise that so many enjoyed it enough to take the tour again. It's a pretty wonderful feeling to know you've shared such a cave like Kickapoo with someone else that otherwise wouldn't have known what they were missing.

The last tour began around 7pm. All was going relatively smoothly. A nimble, but elderly man stumbled a bit then fell onto a cushy caver escort and a couple of adorable future cavers climbed over those rocks faster than their mother could screech at them to, "Stop, girls, stop!" Nearly every person was out of the cave. There were only about a handful of people left inside just a few yards from the entrance when someone slipped on some loose rock. She landed badly and we believe she broke her wrist. But she was tough! Not a single tear or a cry. She was doing a fantastic job of toughing it out and the police officers were figuring a way to get her out safely when she began to go into a bit of shock. In the end the police officers and park rangers did a terrific job of taking care of her and handling the situation, and she was a -okay. Afterward, around 9pm, the bat flight began at Stuart Bat Cave. WOW. What an amazing sight! Even if you've seen it before, you've got to go watch it again. It never gets old watching thousands of bats fly up and around the entrance at dusk. However, after the bat flight, another accident visited the group of cavers. Krishna had managed to dislocate his shoulder in a biking accident. Sara, being deft at all first aid and emergency protocols, made a shirt into a sling in 5 seconds flat. Tell you what, Krishna is tough as nails. It took a while to get him out of the park and into Uvalde, thus he went about 4 or 5 hours without anesthesia to numb the pain. Once we got to the emergency room and Krishna had had some x-rays taken of his shoulder, the doctors could finally administer powerful, pain-saving drugs. However, because they had already given him some less effective painkillers, his consent for more was not enough. The nurse entered the room where Sara and Megan were waiting with Krishna and asked which one of us was his fiancé because only a fiancé or family member could sign the necessary papers. Sara and Krishna are now officially engaged in the city of Uvalde. You are all invited to the wedding, the date of which has yet to be announced. After sedating Krishna with the biggest syringe you've ever seen, the doctor easily and quickly slipped his arm back into place. Krishna came out of unconsciousness soon after and despite the orderly's attempts to keep him laying down, Krishna kept trying to sit up and would put his finger in the air and say, "I'm ready! Let's roll!" Everyone in that ER thought that Krishna was the cat's meow. Cavers, if you're ever in need of some emergency tending in Uvalde, those doctors and nurses are fantastic. The doctor was even kind enough to call all the hotels in Uvalde and Hondo to check for vacancies, and reserved a room for us. After some chitchat, many congratulations on Krishna and Sara's engagement, and a nice bottle of happy pills, we left for Hondo around 4 am.



Back at the camp, TJ, Lisa, Elena, Jim, Joe, Lee Jay and some park personnel, enjoyed some dinner and a little cave water.

Although there were a couple unfortunate incidents in the cave (don't worry, everyone is fine), it was an amazing weekend delivered by the TPWD, the State Park Police Officers, . Good news, guys. They loved it! Nearly every person who walked out of that cave (alive) loved it. They ogled and awed at the beautiful formations and asked tons of great questions. Who knew it was so easy to get people excited about caves? With any luck, we made some cave-lovers out of those folks.



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Bats, Birds and Biking: Kickapoo Cavern State Park Now Open After Years of Limited Access. Park Hosts Grand Opening and Trail Dedication

Back Cover Photo and article—**Brian Frazier, © Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**

BRACKETTVILLE, Texas – Visitors from as far away as Houston, Austin and San Antonio came out to enjoy the day's free activities at the grand opening of Kickapoo Cavern State Park on Saturday, marking the first day the park is open for full public access for recreation and overnight camping, after more than 20 years of limited public visitation.

Highlighting the day's activities was the dedication of the Seargeant Memorial Trail, a hike and bike trail named in honor of the late Tommy Seargeant, former Kinney County Judge and rancher. The Seargeant family owned the property before selling it to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, with the expressed intent that the public be able to access and enjoy the land. Today, the 6,300-acre park preserves three distinct ecoregions: the Texas Hill Country, Trans-Pecos and South Texas Brush Country.

"I think this is an extraordinary realization of Judge Seargeant's vision to see this property transformed to a state park, particularly for the folks of Kinney County," said TPWD Executive Director Carter Smith. "He had a lot of pride in this part of Texas, and he wanted to protect it so that the people here could always enjoy it. Tommy Seargeant was a friend of my family for some 15 years, and my only regret is that he was not here to see it. But I have no doubt that he was looking down on us today."

Visitors who ventured out to the grand opening at Kickapoo Cavern, located some 22 miles outside the town of Brackettville, enjoyed hiking tours, birding tours, plant and nature walks, archaeology exhibits, mountain biking and wild cave tours of Kickapoo Cavern.

The day closed with a bat flight viewing at Stuart Bat Cave, one of some 20 caves located inside the park, where hundreds of thousands of Mexican freetailed bats emerge at dusk for their nightly hunting trip for insects during warm weather months.

For more information, contact Kickapoo Cavern State Park at (830) 563-2342, or visit the park's Web site at www.texasstateparks.org

(Just in time for Fall Caving...)

TPWD Restricting Cave Access on Agency Owned Lands to Protect Bats - White Nose Syndrome is No. 1 threat to bats

AUSTIN – Access to **Gorman Cave** at Colorado Bend State Park has been **closed** to the public and additional precautions are being taken at other Texas Parks and Wildlife Department caves to protect bats from the spread of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), a contagious disease that can be fatal to bats.

"Gorman Cave is home to a hibernating colony of Cave Myotis, a bat species known to be susceptible to White Nose Syndrome," said David Riskind, TPWD Director of Natural Resources for Texas State Parks.

Operation and public visitation of Longhorn Caverns, near Inks Lake State Park, will not be affected. Private show caves are also not affected, though landowners may impose similar precautionary actions on their own.

Public viewing of bat flights at Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, Stuart Bat Cave at Kickapoo Caverns and Devil's Sinkhole near Rocksprings will not be affected. However, public access inside those caves is now off-limits.

These precautions are being implemented under a TPWD executive order and only affect agency-owned sites.
Since 2006, when WNS was first discovered in a cave in New York, more than a million hibernating bats of eight species in 14 states have died from the disease. Five of those eight species also inhabit Texas, where more than 50 species of bats live. The fungus that causes WNS has not yet been detected in Texas, but was confirmed in Oklahoma in May 2010.

Riskind said the department's strategy to prevent the spread of WNS includes increased public awareness for park visitors and decontamination procedures for researchers who are working around or in the caves.

"All of this is being done out of an abundance of caution," he said.

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is named for a white fungus that is found on the noses and wings of infected bats. Bats with WNS awaken prematurely from hibernation and leave their caves, using up their fat reserves that they need to last through the winter which can cause them to freeze or starve to death.

John Young, a TPWD mammologist, says scientists still know little about the disease or how to treat it. He said because bats are migratory, the fungus is often spread when bats from an infected cave migrate to another cave.

Young also said there is some speculation that humans can spread the fungus through spores on their clothing and backpacks, but this method of transfer has not been confirmed. Nonetheless, he said, it's a method officials can control.

"We know we can limit the potential for people accidentally transporting the fungus by limiting or restricting access to caves," Young said.
Young said the need to protect bats from WNS is urgent, add-

ing that bats play a vital role in the environment. "Bats eat millions of insect pests," he said. "We can't even begin to estimate the impact that a massive loss of bat species would have on crops, the Texas economy and our environment."

Young added that anyone whose sees a bat behaving strangely or has questions about WNS can contact him at 512 -389-8047, john.young@tpwd.state.tx.us or the TPWD Kills and Spills Team at (512) 389-4848.

Media Contact: John Young, Aug. 6, 2010

Quick Reference for White –Nose Syndrome (WNS) Containment and Decontamination Procedures for Cave Activity

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – June 2009

Before caving:

A cave should only be entered with clothing, boots, and equipment that have been fully cleaned using the protocol below. We ask that you not take gear into a cave if that gear cannot be thoroughly decontaminated or disposed of (i.e. if harnesses, ropes or webbing, etc. cannot be decontaminated, we advise that you not enter caves or parts of caves requiring use of this gear).

After EVERY caving trip please abide by the following steps.

Step #1: Upon exiting a cave…

- Thoroughly scrape or brush off any dirt and mud from your clothes, boots, and gear and then place them in a sealed plastic bag or plastic container with lid to be cleaned and disinfected off site.
- Outer clothing should be removed prior to entering a vehicle after/between a site visit. A clean change of clothing is recommended. Surface cleaning of exposed skin (arms, face, neck, hands, etc.) with antibacterial hand sanitizer (i.e. Purell®) should occur prior to entering the vehicle's cab.

Step #2:

- For clothing – Wash all clothing and any appropriate equipment in washing machine using the hottest cycle possible for material and conventional detergents. Laboratory testing has found Woolite® fabric wash to be the best surfactant for clothing. Rinse thoroughly, and then follow by soaking with sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water in a tub or plastic container. Soak for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- For submersible gear (i.e. soft-sided gear.) – Disinfect any equipment that can be submersed in a solution with an appropriate and compatible disinfectant such as sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water in a tub or plastic container or 0.3% concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds (i.e. Lysol® All-purpose Professional Cleaner or the antibacterial form of Formula 409®). Keep submersed for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- For non-submersible gear (i.e. hard-sided gear) – Disinfect any equipment that cannot be submersed by applying an appropriate and compatible disinfectant to the outside surface by using 0.3% concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds such as Lysol® All-purpose Professional Cleaner, Lysol® disinfecting wipes or the antibacterial form of Formula 409®; or use sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Keep on surface for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- For boots – Boots need to be fully scrubbed and rinsed so that all soil and organic material is removed. The entire rubber and leather boots, including soles and leather uppers, can then be disinfected with an appropriate disinfectant such as 0.3% concentration of quaternary ammonium compounds (i.e. Lysol® All-purpose Professional Cleaner or the antibacterial form of Formula 409®) or sodium hypochlorite bleach (i.e. household bleach) solution diluted to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Keep on surface for 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry.
- For ropes and harnesses – This equipment should be dedicated to one cave or not used at all. Decontamination of vertical equipment is recommended. However, the performance integrity may be compromised by using these disinfecting agents mentioned above repeatedly. Laboratory testing is ongoing.

Note: This protocol is updated as of 6-9-09. Please visit http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html for a more comprehensive containment and decontamination protocol.

From the Editor and TSA Chairman—

As stewards of Underground Texas, we need to be sure that we follow these **requirements** and make sure that other cavers in our party follow them, as well.

This is indeed the most dire challenge us cavers have ever faced and we must do our part to insure this scourge isn't introduced or spread by our activities.

A little short tem inconvenience will help insure long term survival of these important creatures and our later and future access to the affected underground wonders.

Please do your part!

Mark



Rebecca O'Daniel-Hutchins

Submitted by Kurt Menking.
Photos by Rick Corbell.

A memorial service was held Saturday, June 19th, for Rebecca O'Daniel-Hutchins, who passed away June 1, 2010 with her loving husband, Fran, by her side.

She finally let down her guard from her more than ten year battle against breast cancer. She fought the good fight and continued to go caving, despite her doctors orders that those dirty nasty caves will give you some disease or infection which your reduced immune system cannot defeat. She far outlived multiple estimates, and all her friends are glad she did.

Rebecca was a long time caver and there are very few Texas cavers who have not crossed paths with Rebecca. She was underground every chance she got, and made it a point to get to know everyone on the trip. She helped survey many miles of caves and she did it the hard way because nearly all of the caves she surveyed in are less than 200 feet in length. She enjoyed the small caves and would dig for hours just to squeeze through another 20' of new passage then she would lure others to follow with stories of "it goes" or "it's plenty big for you to get through". She loved sitting around the campfire getting to know everyone and listening to caver stories.

One of her favorite caving properties was out in Uvalde County where we would cave all day, swim and lounge in the Frio in the afternoon, spend lots of time around the camp fire, and then the entire group would go for a long walk in the pitch dark with no flashlights allowed.

Rebecca and Fran met on a similar long walk in the dark at one of the Kickapoo project trips. After they married, both of them became involved at their church, and Rebecca spent many hours volunteering there.

Her faith and her friends helped her through the toughest of times, and she was at peace at the time of her death because she knew she was going to a better place. Fran and Rebecca had many good times, but their time together was cut short. Fran, like all the rest of us, will have many incredible memories of Rebecca, and we will all truly miss her.

The family request donations be made to the TCMA, in lieu of flowers.



Jenni Arburn, Don Arburn, Joe Ranzau, Sara Ranzau, and Bob Cowell



Cheryl Montemayor, Alan Montemayor, Geary Schindel, Aspen Schindel, and Sue Schindel



Missy (Christie's sis), Christie Burrell, Mike Burrell, and Michael Cunningham



Gail Corbell, Justin Menking, Carly Menking, Courtney Corbell, and Aaron Corbell



Cheryl Montemayor, Linda Palit, Allan Cobb, Gil Ediger, and Alan Montemayor.



Front-Christine Cunningham, Monica Ponce, Steve Gutting, and Patty Gutting holding her granddaughter.



Lisa Miller, Marvin Miller, Christin Miller, and Lea Miller (signing helmet).



Rafal Kedzierski and Dale Barnard



James Loftin, Liz Loftin, Jonn Deluna, and David Deluna



Kurt Menking and Kitty Swoboda Menking



Jill Orr, Tom Florer, Mike Harris



Rick Corbell and Fran Hutchins

33rd Annual Texas Cavers Reunion!

Hidden Falls Adventure Park, October 15-17, 2010

Come one, come all, y'all are invited to the 33rd Annual Texas Cavers Reunion. This year, TCR will be at the 3100 acre Hidden Falls Adventure Park just 5 miles east of Marble Falls in the Texas Hill Country. Visit www.hiddenfallsadventurepark.com for more details.

Be sure to join the fun...hot tub and sauna, competitions, great food, vendors, and bring your 4WD, ATV, dirt bike, or mountain bike to explore the trails and, best of all...lots of fun times.

A Bit of History—The Texas Old Timers' Reunion was organized in 1978 by Gill Ediger, Chuck Stuehm, and Mike Walsh in order to fill a need created by the absence of a TSA Labor Day Project during most of the previous decade. It was felt that the TSA needed a fall caving event to bring Texas cavers together for fun and frolic and social interaction, an all important part of most cavers' caving education and experience.

Over the years, the event grew from the original 90 participants at Luckenbach to well over 500 at recent gatherings. A few years ago the name was quietly changed from TOTR to TCR--the Texas Cavers' Reunion--to avoid confusion with the "original" OTR--Old Timers' Reunion--in West 'by God' Virginia. Although many cavers help with the event, the general philosophy is to try to make the Reunion appear that it just happens spontaneously without any or much direction from anybody.

As always, well behaved dogs and children are welcome. **TCR asks that you please pick up after your dog.**

For the latest information about TCR 2010, visit the website at www.oztotl.com/tcr.

A few general rules and fine print:

- Please remember to bring your own reusable eating utensils to the Grand Feast and to come prepared to take your garbage home.
- Well behaved dogs, friends, and family members are welcome, in that order, those that may tend to be obnoxious should be left elsewhere.
- Port-a-Potties will be provided.
- **JOIN THE TSA!** - As a convenience to cavers and in support of the Texas Region of the NSS, the TSA will be collecting dues for the 2010—2011 membership year. If you are not a TSA member, this is a very good opportunity to join and to show your support for the organization that cares about cavers and caving in Texas. *The TEXAS CAVER*, and the many caving projects are obvious benefits provided to you and other cavers by the TSA. The TSA provides many other benefits that aren't so obvious--so please join and support the TSA.
- Vendors of caving equipment and publications will be present and open for business.

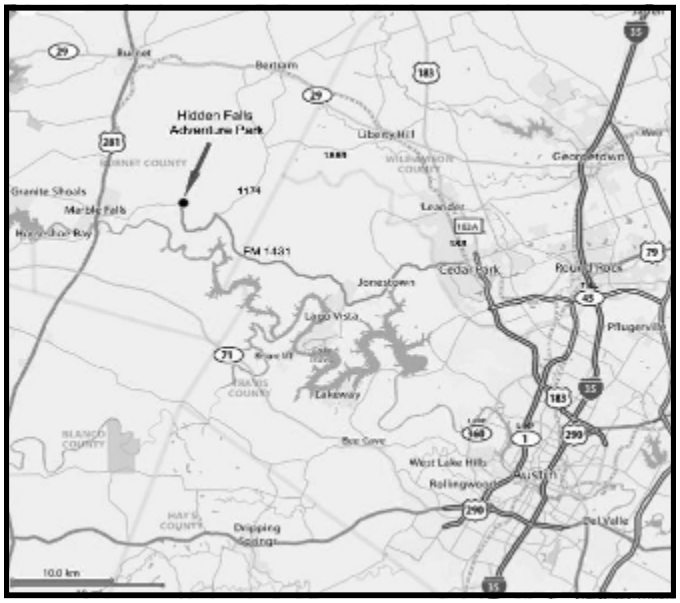


- The TCR staff is not in the police business. That means everyone should police themselves and those in their clan. In other words.....you are responsible for the behavior of your children and your guests.
- Using Common Sense and Common Courtesy is the best policy.
- Remember, this is primarily a caver event. People who will contribute to the general craziness are encouraged to attend, those who will detract are discouraged.

7030 E. FM 1431 Marble Falls, TX 78654, (830) 798-9820

- From Marble Falls , take FM 1431 East, 6.6 from the intersection of FM 1431 and Hwy. 281.
- From Austin, take US 183 North to Cedar Park, go west on FM 1431 West, 30 miles from Hwy. 183 in Cedar Park. We will be on the right side of 1431. (NOTE: Drive the speed limit through Jonestown!)
- From San Antonio, take 281 North to Marble Falls. Take FM 1431 west from 281 in Marble Falls. Drive east on 1431 7 miles. We are on left side of 1431.
- From IH-35 , take the Chandler Road exit also FM 1431 West, 40 miles. We are on the right side of 1431.

Our main gate GPS coordinates are:
30 degrees 34' 57.80" North , 98 degrees 10' 21.02" West





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Members of the Seargeant family were on hand for the grand opening of Kickapoo Cavern State Park and the dedication of the Seargeant Memorial Trail, named in honor of the late Tommy Seargeant, a renowned Kinney County judge and rancher who owned the land before selling it to TPWD to become the park.

Pictured here are David Seargeant of Brackettville (left), Nell Seargeant Walker of College Station (middle) and Tommy D. Seargeant of Buda, TX, as they unveil the memorial bronze plaque at the trailhead. Other members of the Seargeant family traveled as far as Tennessee, Florida and Virginia to be here for the opening, and a family reunion dinner held in nearby Fort Clark.

Texas Speleological Association
1312 Paula Lane
Mesquite, TX 75149

Attn: Editor