The Texas Caver

October 2025
Vol. 70 Fall Issue

A Publication of the Texas Speleological Association



Cover Photo: Brodie Cave Recharge in July 4th Floods

Letter from the Editor

By Dane Smith

Hi folks. I hope you enjoy this issue of The Texas Caver that I have compiled from contributed writings sent in by Texas cavers. One of the objectives of the TSA is to promote cooperation and to coordinate the caving activities within the state. I hope this issue helps in that regard. If you would like to contribute your ideas in the next issue, please share your experience, story, or discovery by emailing me at speleosmith@gmail.com.

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Texas Cavers (and their activities)

By Marvin Miller

Bexar Grotto

There was a workday in January at the Honey Creek Cave shaft entrance to service the pulley, cable, and other items needing maintenance. Jim Funk attended and helped out. Tobin Simpson and others attended SPAR training at Caverns of Sonora.

The Mitchells – Joe, Evelyn, and Kayla – made a family affair of checking out a hole reported by a Bexar County landowner. They found a solution feature with a nice formation but it was only 4 ½ meters long.

Another hole was investigated in Medina County by Tom Florer, Geary Schindel, and Matt Taylor. Only Matt was able to squeeze into the cave. He solo-surveyed, calling out measurements to Geary until he ran into a raccoon. The survey ended at 20 meters.

Jim Funk, Joe Mitchell, Amy Schoenenberger, Tobin Simpson, and Matt Taylor surveyed in Jaime Hole in Medina County in February. Bexar Grotto cavers at the February Hill Country SNA Karst Project surveyed Al's Roadside Pit and Mark's Cave.

On February 8 Marvin Miller arranged a cleanup at Bear Cave in the City of San Antonio Stone Oak Park. 14 cavers participated.

At the February 10 grotto meeting Kayla Mitchell reported on doing the drop into One O'clock Cave. One O'Clock Cave is a dramatic 43-meter pit in Medina County that was discovered in 2023. Matt Taylor, Justin Davis, and Galen Falgout explored a lead high in the pit wall. Kayla was also active at the Station C Cave property in Bandera County. Several surface digs were worked on. She was joined by Evelynn Mitchell, Caitlin Stoops, Julian Gonzalez, Pam , Caleb , Tobin Simpson, and Matt Taylor.

Greg Mosier, Mio Spyker, and Aubri Jensen attended the first week of the PEP (Proyecto Espeleologica Purificacion) Expedition and presented the program at the meeting. It was Greg's first expedition experience. They found a new cave that turned out to also have been mined. Mio helped push Cuchilla and assisted in the search for a cave-adapted tarantula. Jim Funk helped with the Three Whirlpool Cave dig. The goal of the dig is to drop a shaft

into passage beyond the sump in the cave, thus hopefully opening up miles of passage to explore. Fernando Calderon Gutierrez spent 2 weeks in Mexico exploring underwater caves in Cozumel.

Geary Schindel and Steve Bryant led a UTSA student trip to the Deep & Punkin Cave Preserve. Lydia Hernandez, who I think has one of those dual-grotto citizenships, also led a trip to Deep & Punkin.

Caitlin Stoops and Aubri Jenson were part of a team at the February Honey Creek Cave survey project that managed a remarkable 370 meters of resurvey in the CC passage. Aubri was the sketcher. The Honey Creek Cave survey project in March saw Mio Spyker, Chris Lafferty, Matt Taylor, and Avi Patel successfully break through the long-time mining project at Michael's Butt Hole. Only Mio was small enough to actually make it through the dig. She reported rappelling into a nicely decorated room with several leads. The team will attempt to get more people through the tight spot on the next trip and survey the new find. On the same project trip Justin Despain, Marvin Miller, and Louis Valdez headed upstream toward the DR lead but had to turn back when Louis could not negotiate a squeeze.

Also in March, Geary Schindel led a research trip to Devil's Sinkhole. Cavers who assisted were Tom Florer, Chris Lafferty, Matt Taylor, Tobin Simpson, and Jennifer McMurray.

The program at the March 24 grotto meeting was presented by noted Welsh cave photographer Martyn Farr, who was there as a guest of the Schindel's.

The Dinosaur Cave survey trip on March 29 yielded 127.8 meters. Both teams ran into hypothermia issues. Marvin Miller and Jennifer McMurray exited the cave after 12 stations. Greg Mosier, Joe Mitchell, and Joe Schaertl abandoned the upstream survey to push an intersecting fissure lead that was out of the water. It proved to be a tall, narrow passage floored by boot-sucking mud. They struggled through 31 meters of this and reached a 10-meter by 6-meter terminal room with no obvious way on.

In April Joe Mitchell organized the first Robber Baron Cave cricket count. They counted 1 cricket in 2 hours. Other activities at the cave preserve included Jim Funk helping with removing unwanted plants and dead trees and a bio-survey weekend in the cave led by George Veni. A vulture was found nesting in the entrance area of the cave.

Greg Mosier, Lindsey Haun, Seth and Wyatt Willcockson, Joe Mitchell, Jennifer McMurray, Matt Taylor, Tobin Simpson, Marvin Miller, Kayla Mitchell, Arron Wertheim, and Victoria Sommers spent the weekend of April 12 at Deep Cave, exploring and surveying new passage. 150 meters were added to the cave map. Matt proposed to Tobin and she accepted.

On a different April weekend Tobin led a Cave Formation Repair Project at Caverns of Sonora. Thirteen people attended. Amy Schoenenberger found 40 matches for broken formations in the Devil's Pit area. Matt Taylor and Lauren Stevens repaired formations using the stalactijack tool. Geary Schindel led Welsh cave photographer Martyn Farr and Rachel Smith to take photos in the cave. It's not surprising that they got carried away and did not actually

take any photos of the repair activity. Other participants in the workshop were Jenna Crabtree, Katheryn Jager, and Garrett Smith. Geary, Martyn, and Rachel continued west and north to meet Phyllis Boneau and Pat Cicero to tour several caves in the Guadalupe Mountains.

Tom Florer and Geary Schindel went to Harper on a weekday to check out a cave reported by a landowner. The entrance dropped 8 feet into a 5-foot diameter room. There was a too-small hole leading down into more space noted as a dig lead. See the UT Grotto report for more on Fiedler's Cave.

Mio Spyker assisted with a Lost Oasis open house in Austin. Geary and Sue Schindel attended the Karst Waters Institute at University of South Florida and toured Florida karst.

The April team for the Dinosaur Cave survey consisted of Marvin Miller, Mio Spyker, and John Moretti. The goal was to finish the downstream survey of the Dinosaur River to its junction with the Rain Room and then survey river passage upstream from the Jungle Drop. They surveyed 87.4 meters.
The May trip to Dinosaur Cave on the 31st saw Bree Jameson tackling 2 small climbs to leads. The lead in The Rift did not go but the lead with the small waterfall in the Rain Room looks like it goes, but no one actually got into it. That will be the goal of the next trip. Marvin Miller, Joe Schaertl, and John Moretti continued pushing the Dinosaur River upstream but had to turn around when the sketcher, yours truly, could not negotiate a 5-meter long false floor squeeze in an otherwise fairly nice passage. The 104.2 meters of survey pushed the cave to a total of 1,713 meters (5,619 feet).

Tobin Simpson married Matt Taylor in May at the Cuatro Paisanas Ranch, George West, Texas.

At the June 22 meeting Amy Schoenenberger reported on a trip she and Amber Miller took to the Carlsbad area. They toured Carlsbad and then teamed up with Tom Evans and Allison Nelson for a visit to Parks Ranch Cave and Sand Cave. They also got in some SPAR practice. Chris Lafferty, Joe Schaertl, and Marvin Miller met Mio Spyker at her property in Leakey to survey the two known caves.
On June 28 Ceasar Perez organized a team of Bexar Grotto cavers to attack the graffiti in Bear Cave in San Antonio. Allan Cobb, Jacob Diez, Julian Gonzalez, Lauren Guzman, Abby Reed, and Carolina Richardson learned from Ceasar and Allan and made a good start in getting the cave cleaned up. On the same trip Chris Lafferty, Jennifer McMurray, and Marvin Miller finished the survey of Ursa Palace and worked on a dig lead.

Joe Mitchell organized a work day at the TSC for the grotto. Twelve members attended. The reward was a trip to Whirlpool Cave.

Marvin Miller organized a dig at the Ladder Sink in Bulverde on July 19, and, with assistance from Jill Orr, Mark Ross, and Richard Silver, the floor was lowered another 4 feet. It looks promising, folks.

Erich Schlegel and Scott Bauer, assisted by Jennifer McMurray, Greg Mosier, Matthew Taylor, & Ethan Perrine, entered Woot Cavern in Medina County on July 27 to

“Chase The Beam” and recreate Jennifer’s photo from July of 2023. Several memorable photos of the narrow sunbeam slanting down into the cavern space resulted.

At the July 28 meeting, Kurt Menking brought everyone up-to-date on progress at the Three Whirlpool Dig. The dig from the surface is deep enough to have intersected the cave ceiling but there has not yet been a breakthrough. Kurt is now studying the survey notes and plotting where next to turn the drill. The problem is, with the recent rains, the hole is full of water.

DFW Grotto

Dean Cullen, Kevin Liow, Christine Saw, and Sierra Shephard attended the Honey Creek Cave Project workday in January. Bill Steele runs the project, so naturally, he was there as well. When the work was done the team was joined by Justen Despain for a trip into the cave from the natural spring entrance. There was a lot of swimming.

Kevin and Christine also reported on a trip to the High Guads and Hell Below Cave at the January grotto meeting.

The grotto is organizing regular vertical sessions under the Lancaster Avenue Bridge in downtown Fort Worth.

Bill Steele and Diana Tomchick led a grotto trip to Jester Cave in Oklahoma in March. Jester Cave is the longest gypsum cave in the western hemisphere. The through trip is 2.5 miles long with lots of stoop walking and waist-high water.

Five grotto members attended the TSA convention in May at John Knox Ranch outside Fischer. New knowledge was gained at vertical, rigging, and survey workshops. Kevin Liow reported at the May grotto meeting on another trip to the Guads, this time with Elaina and Ted Linzy, Dean Cullen, Gabe Montemayor, and Christine Saw. They visited Parks Ranch, Hell Below, and Cottonwood Caves. John Kerr reported on his 4 week sojourn to a region close to Cueva Cheve in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Christine Saw joined a group of Arkansas cavers on a trip to TAG over the Memorial Day weekend. Kevin Liow and other DFW cavers supported the Honey Creek Cave project in May, investigating and closing two leads. On Sunday, after the Saturday survey trip, they did a recreational trip into the spring entrance.

On the weekend of June 21 & 22 Scott, John, Kevin Liow, and Christine Saw participated in the Rich Zarria-led project at Inspiring Oaks in Wimberly. The pit they worked on was successfully opened after many rocks were removed.

The July 4th weekend saw grotto members heading out of Texas to cave. There was a grotto trip to Ennis Cave and Blowing Cave in Arkansas. Bill Steele, Diana Tomchick, and Sierra Shephard traveled to Kentucky to participate in the CRF Mammoth Cave expedition.

Aggie Speleological Society (reported by Jenna Crabtree)

On April 24 a new officer team was elected by the Aggie Grotto and Aggie Speleological Society.
President: Kyle Welborn
Vice President: Nicolas Vain
Secretary: Jakob Denton

Treasurer: Benjamin Walker
Safety Officer: Russell Oplinger
Quartermasters: Kayla Boggess & Cassidy Whitehead
Outreach Officer: James “Dylan” Oliphint
Webmaster: Christian Argenbright
Advisor: Jenna Crabtree

In April Jenna Crabtree entered the first map ever published by the Aggie Grotto into the TSA Spring Convention Cartography Competition and was awarded an Honorable Mention.

Spring Break included roughly 20 Aggies travelling to Carlsbad, New Mexico. They visited Carlsbad Caverns National Park and participated in a lint cleaning project in the cave. Hilariously, the entire group dressed as the rapper, Pitbull, representing “Mr. Worldwide” at the World Heritage Site. One group worked with Mike Mansur’s Cave Formation Repair Project and repaired speleothems in Carlsbad Cavern’s Music Room and in Lake Cave. Other groups visited Wind-Hicks Cave, Doc Brito Cave, Sand Cave, Bobcat Alley, Selenite Moon Crystal Cave, Guadalupe Mountain National Park, and Sitting Bull Falls.

The Aggies kicked off the semester with three beginner trips to Whirlpool Cave - because Old Army does it thrice.

Throughout the semester the Aggies visited Powell’s Cave, Whirlpool Cave, Deep Cave, Honey Creek Cave, and Punkin Cave with digs with Rich Zarra and Drew Thompson sprinkled throughout!

The Aggie Speleological Society participated in a few Park-in-the-Dark outreach events in Lick Creek Park educating the local community on bats, caves, and karst. Two Aggies received NCRC scholarships. Josie Shaw attended SPAR and Jette Polasek attended NCRC Level I. Consistent with past semesters and years the Aggie Grotto held weekly meetings every Thursday in HEB 203 at 8 PM. Guest speakers for the spring consisted of Dr. Gilly Elore, Evan Bowen, Dr. Pat Kambesis, and Krista Bartel.

Underground Texas Grotto

The following events and happenings were gleaned from the grotto Facebook page. The grotto has been organizing regular dig nights in the Austin area. Peter Sprouse is one of the instigators of this activity, as is Enzo Monfre, and others.

Erich Schlegel posted some great pics of Midnight Cave taken on a February 2 trip. Scott Bauer was also on the trip, and Ethan Perrine posted some critter pictures, including that of an alligator lizard who seemed quite happy to be living in the cave.

The Thicket of Moderate Discontent is host to Rope Nights, Rescue Practice, and a Late Valentine’s Day Party on February 28.

Lydia Hernandez led a Deep and Punkin trip on February 14 – 16.

Chris Vreeland and Eleonora Chouquetta got a chance to see Harrell’s Cave via a real-estate agent hook-up. They took some photos of the cave for the agent.
The March 3rd Tuesday night dig was hosted by Drew Thompson at Lost Oasis Cave. Drew says airflow at the entrance has been measured at 17 mph, and no one yet knows exactly where it is coming from.

A March 18 dig trip into Whirlpool Cave added a respectable 20 feet of passage and uncovered a promising lead heading straight down. Liz Frank posted about that.

Patricia Calabrese organized a March 27 after-work trip to Maple Run Cave. Aaron de la Garza posted about the trip and about finding out that the cave has some tight, awkward spots. Also on the trip were Drew Thompson, Lindsey Haun, Joe Datri, Howard Chang, and several others.
Lydia Hernandez led another trip to the Deep and Punkin Preserve, this time on Easter weekend.

Aaron de la Garza led a team to the Kirkpatrick Ranch in Gillespie County and Agarita Ranch in Blanco County on April 26. Cavers participating were Sydney Neuse, Cole Pavao, Kara Posso, and Bryce Smith. They moved a lot of dirt out of Fiedler's Cave on the Kirkpatrick Ranch and demolished some obstructing rocks to clear the way to a lower chamber. When finished with the dig they surveyed the cave. There are continuing dig leads in the cave. They also investigated the nearby Fiedler's Sink and Fiedler's Spring. The owner of Agarita Ranch had concerns over the lowering water levels in her pond. She thought the water could be draining through subsurface fissures. The team investigated several springs and did some ridgewalking but found no open caves. A 15 page (!) report was produced documenting the results of this trip with location coordinates and photos of all features and was submitted to the TSS. Nice!

Lots of grotto members attended the TSA Convention on the weekend of May 6.

Aaron led a return trip to Fiedler's Cave on June 7. Other members of the team were Chris Cormier, Alex Dorgan, Briana Du, Sydney Neuse, Tania Rosales, Bryce Smith, and Cole Pavao. They continued the dig on Fiedler's and also enlarged a blowing hole in solid rock. Apparently Bryce was able to get into it because it was reported as being one Bryce-with-helmet deep. If you know Bryce you know about how deep that is. No report on if there is more promise in this one.

Dane Smith announced a new TSA project in Hays County. The first workday 8/16/25, the team was able to open up "Big Persimmon Cave", named for the cluster of large Texas persimmon trees growing in its sink. After the cave was opened, Alex Dorgan was the first to enter the cave and came upon a nicely preserved jaw bone and proposed it be added to the name. The feature is now called Jawbone Cave in Big Persimmon Sink. You enter the cave through a narrow slanted climbdown to a depth of about eight feet. Then the cave opens up into a 20 foot wide passage with 2-3 foot ceilings that are heavily decorated. The highest ceiling is in the wash at the middle of the passage through which you can crawl, descending gradually, for 65 feet where the passage forms a "T" that is about 100 feet wide. The next workday will include a survey. Please see the calendar on the TSA website for work dates.

Lubbock Area Grotto

At the February 4 meeting Lee Ann Dean reported on the Small Party Rescue training that took place at Caverns of Sonora on January 18 – 20. It was very – extremely – cold. And more cold – Levi Ramsey

attended the January Yeso, NM trip, at which there was more snow than the available vehicles could handle, therefore cancelling the trip.

The February trip to Yeso was more successful. A lot of cavers attended. Pierson Miller reported that Deception Cave earned its name by looking like going cave but then just ending. Michael Mansur may have found a new cave. Someone got stuck – or just couldn't get out of Wedgie Cave. (Maybe it also earned its name). Austin came to the rescue by rigging a length of webbing with foot loops which helped the stuck caver escape.
Lee Ann Dean, Matt Brasher, and Matt's sons Gunnison and Jenson attended the Southwest Region trip on McKittrick Hill. Gunnison and Jenson reported on their trip into McKittrick Cave.

John Johnston and William Tucker attended the March restoration trip to Carlsbad Caverns.

At the April grotto meeting William reported on the innovative method used to clean a cave pool along one of the tourist trails. At the same meeting Pierson Miller reported on the latest Yeso trip. He helped survey Tummy Trouble Cave and did some digging in Alien Crash Cave.

Ryan Marshall, Levi Ramsey, and Pierson all had reports for the April trip to Yeso. Ryan ridgewalked, Pierson assisted with the surveys of Weggie and THC Caves, and Levi found 4 caves. Levi had a fun weekend!

At the June meeting Brian Alger reported on a Merus Cave survey trip. Cave length is now 274.4 feet. Lee Ann Dean attended the May edition of the Fort Stanton Cave Study Project.

Jordan Glassman took a trip to the High Guads.

Taylor Kuiken found a new cave in the Balmorhea area that turned out to be the already known Powder Keg Cave. That would have been an exciting hole to stumble upon!

Lee Ann Dean, Ryan Marshall, Ford Brehmer, Pierson Miller, and Piper Weekly attended the Southwestern Region's Summer Regional and visited Royal John Mine.

Greater Houston Grotto

Casey Campbell, Bethany Carter, Sadott Corona, Alex Rush, JT Shelley, Will Steveson, and Brooke Tolston attended the February Honey Creek Cave Project. The team's objective was to explore the QA199 lead. It turned out that it was too narrow and blasting would be required to get into it. They observed that water flowed from the passage. On day 2 they did a recreational trip. Alex and Sadott also helped with the tower maintenance trip in January.

Bethany Carter, Alberto Gaudio, Telly Manos, and JT Shelley joined the March 1 weekend trip by the DFW Grotto to Jester Cave in Arkansas.

Sadott Corona, Alex Rush, and others attended the March 15 Honey Creek Cave trip and tried to make progress on the QA199 and QBB19 shaving and digging leads.

A grotto trip was made to Austin to provide opportunities for beginners to experience Whirlpool Cave, Goat Cave, and Maple Run Cave.At the April grotto meeting Wes Skiles presented on a diving trip to Peacock Springs in Florida. Other participants on the trip were JT Shelley, Ben Riley, and Mike Blue.

A grotto trip to the Deep and Punkin Preserve took place on the weekend of March 29

Ongoing Projects

Hill Country State Natural Area Karst Project
By Marvin Miller

In the past two years the TSA karst project at Hill Country State Natural Area has accomplished the following:

- Finished the surveys of Al's Roadside Pit, Copperhead Cave, Mark's Cave, Mosquito Heaven Cave, and Raybin's Find Cave.Performed biological collections in 1924 Cave, Al's Roadside Pit, Copperhead Cave, Mark's Cave, Mosquito Heaven Cave, and No No Cave.
- Drafted maps of Backup Cave, Blind Ambition Cave, Missed Opportunity Cave, No No Cave, and Scott's Cave.
- Surveyed 186.8 meters in 1924 Cave.
- Ridgewalked approximately 36 acres.
- Documented 5 new karst features.
- Written 5 reports for park management and TPWD.

Mosquito Heaven Cave was a small cave when it was surveyed by C. Gravelle and M. Warton in 1986. On Warton's map he noted a dig lead at the end of a down-trending passage. Bennet Lee managed to open that lead on the first trip of the new Hill Country Karst Survey project on February 1, 2020. The dig revealed a nice room. Ayana Monreal and I finally finished the survey up into a dome at the far end of the room on December 10, 2023. I had hoped that the dome would be the path for the airflow that can be felt flowing into the room from the entrance, but the air in the dome was dead. There was no continuing passage as the walls pinch together as they continue up. The airflow mystery is still to be solved. While Ayana and I were surveying the dome, Christin and Leah Miller were collecting bugs. The cave has a lot of life.

Also on the December 2023 trip, Adam Daw and I started the survey of 1924 Cave. The cave is located on a high, narrow hilltop. It is a block creep fracture cave, characterized by linear canyon passage with floors underlain and held up by chocked breakdown. The canyon can be traversed on several overlying levels. Since that initial trip we have done 3 more trips, with Peter Anderson-Sprecher, Jennifer Arbeiter, and Greg Mosier assisting on the surveys.

The most recent was in April of this year, when Peter and I surveyed along the lower canyon back toward the entrance until it pinched down. We then climbed 4 meters up the fissure to a high lead and followed it to a nice room characterized by large blocks protruding from the floor. We named it Monument Hall.



HCSNA 1: Marvin Miller

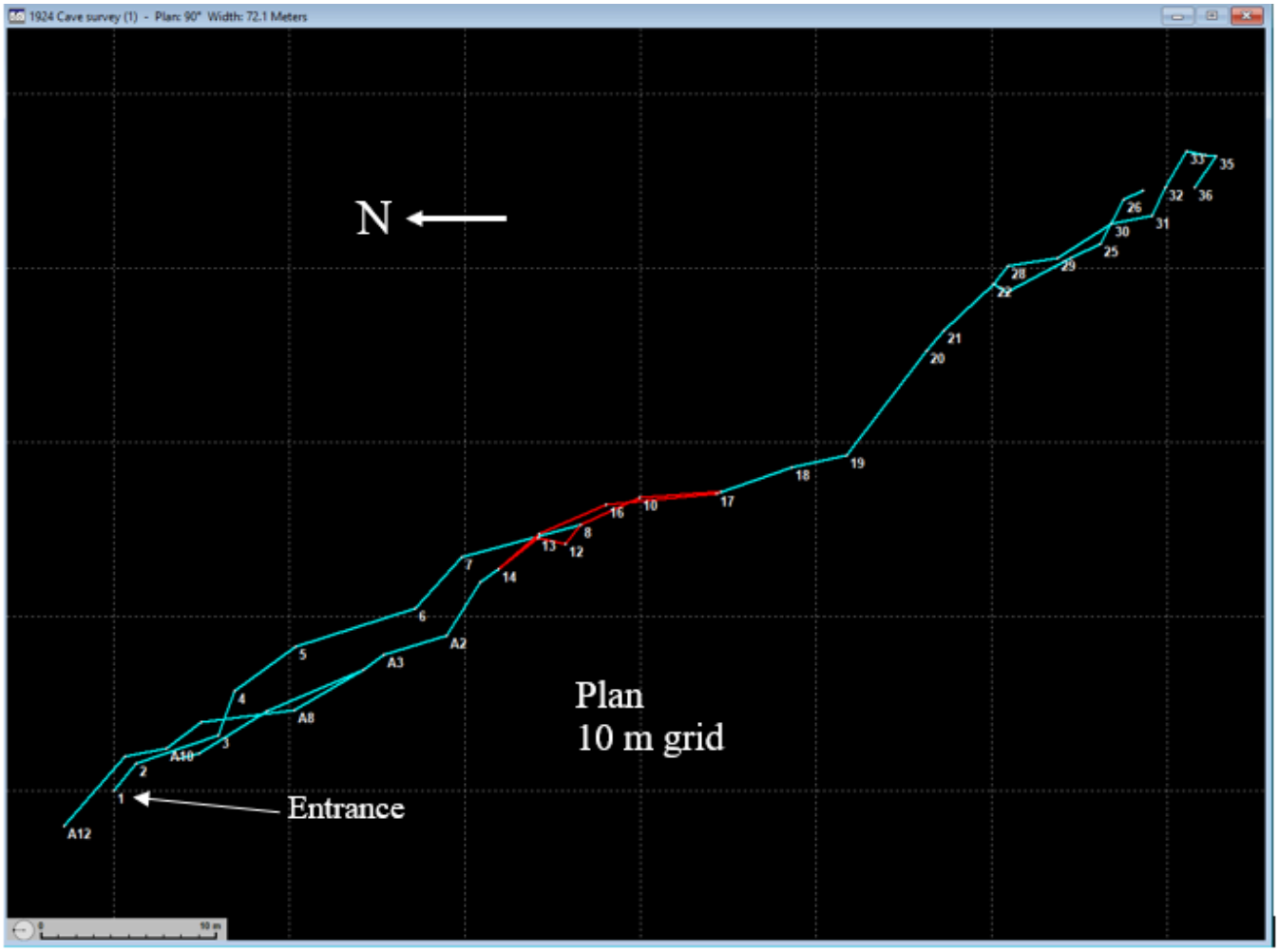
Jennifer Arbeiter and Greg Mosier at the skinny end of 1924 Cave lower level

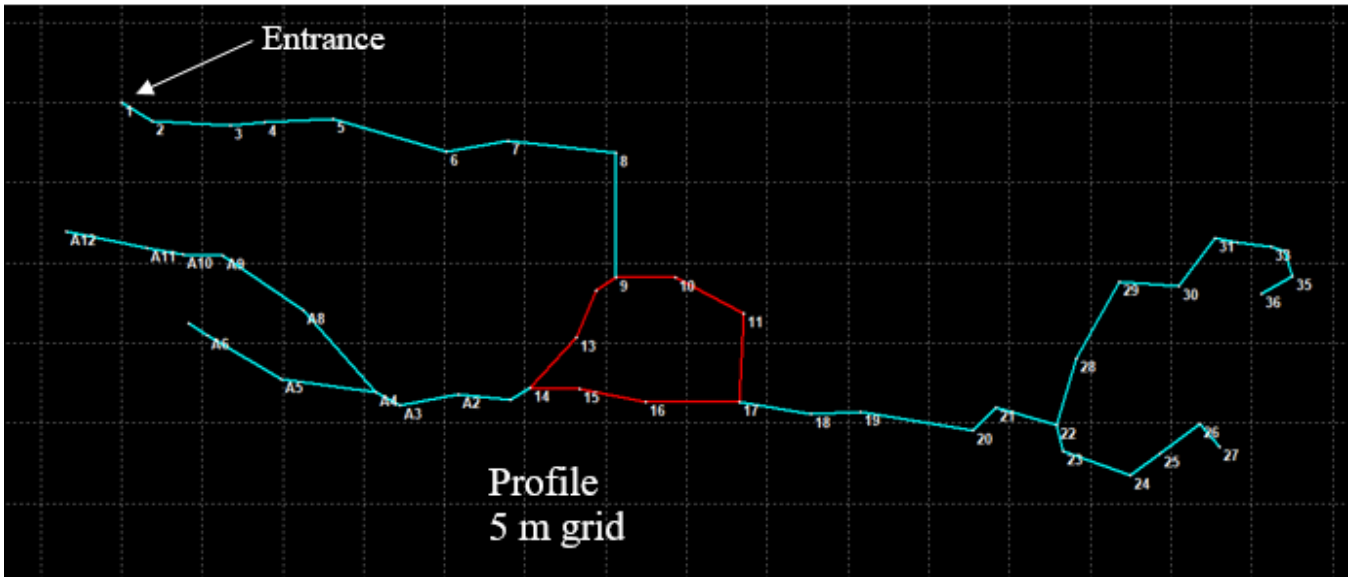
That passage also pinched down several meters beyond, but there is a lead heading back the other way. The lineplot showed that we had surveyed beyond the entrance above.The cave now stands at 186.8 meters long and 23.3 meters deep. We have pushed the lower levels as far as we can with only some small-person hammer leads continuing down to even lower levels. There are more promising leads in the higher levels, including where the passage from the entrance comes to an 8-meter drop. The drop is the path to lower levels, but about 10 meters along the fissure the entrance level passage can be seen to continue. On the last trip Peter determined that climbing back up from the bottom of the drop was feasible and not too difficult. That will be a lead for the next trip.



HCSNA 2: Jennifer Arbeiter

Marvin Miller looking down the drop in 1924 Cave





1924 Cave Line Plots

On the February karst project trip this year we assisted park ranger and resource specialist Augie Medellin in constructing a new cover over the entrance of Al's Roadside Pit. This cave opened up in 2002 by collapse of a dome ceiling into the 2.5-meter deep void of the cave. The collapse occurred at the side of an established trail, necessitating a re-route of the trail. At the time, a cover made from pressure-treated 2 x 6 's screwed to railroad ties was constructed to block the entrance. Gaps were left between the 2 x 6 boards, allowing a view of the cave beneath.

This view of the cave was apparently an enticement to some individuals who ventured off the new trail and happened to discover the blocked entrance. When I saw it in September of 2024, there were scorch marks on some of the boards, as if someone had tried to burn through them, several boards were broken, and one of them was lying on the floor below. I suggested to the park that we remove several of the boards to allow access for a survey and then repair the damaged parts. Augie Medellin opted for replacing all of the boards and placing them so that there are no gaps to entice vandals. (There are gaps around the sides of the structure that will still allow passage of invertebrates and small animals.)



HCSNA 3: Marvin Miller

The old cover over Al's Roadside Pit

Matthew Feibelman assisted in the survey of the cave. Emily Martinez, Lisa Miller, and Caitlin Stoops carried supplies and assisted with construction. Matthew, Emily, and Caitlin were in the cave while I was preparing for the survey.One of them looked up a too-tight side passage and saw a cottontail rabbit sitting there, a bit more than a meter away. The rabbit appeared to be healthy. We searched exhaustively on the surface for a burrow by which it would have gotten access to the cave. We could not find anything. It's possible that the rabbit fell through the opening created by the broken board, though it doesn't seem too probable. We felt bad closing it up and potentially sealing it in the cave, but there was no way for it to escape on its own, if it had to.

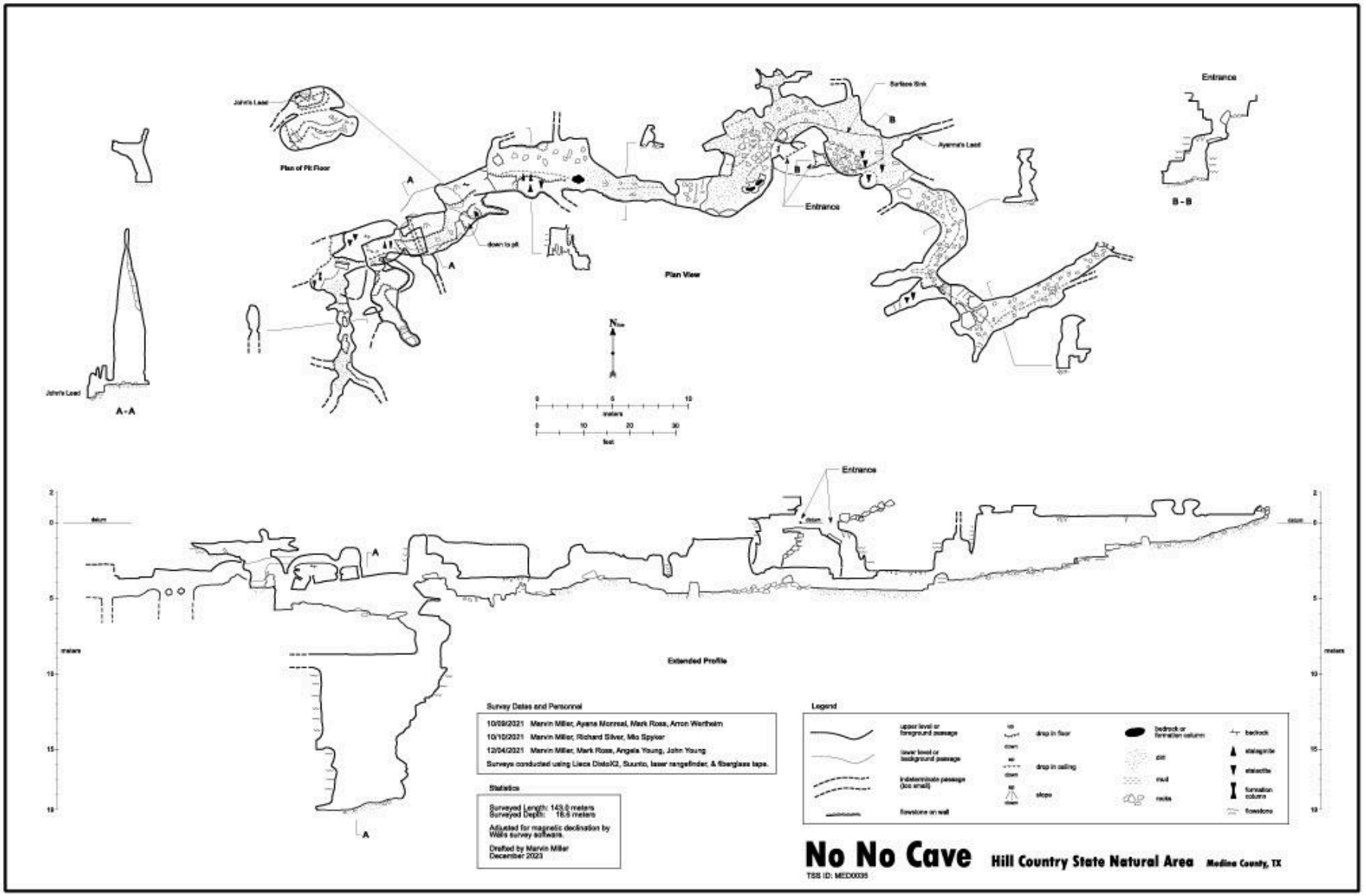


HCSNA 4: Augie Medellin. The crew on the stout, new cover of Al's Roadside Pit.



HCSNA 5: Augie Medellin. Matthew Feibelman in Al's Roadside Pit

We will soon begin ridgewalking the southern part of the park and are almost guaranteed to come across some new entrances. The project is open to all who want to be a part of this experience. Entry to the SNA and camping at the peaceful Chapa's camp site are free for project participants. The project schedule is posted in the TSA website calendar.


Plan of Pit Floor
John's Lead
A-A
Plan View
Surface Sink
Ayana's Lead
Entrance
down to pit
B - B
Extended Profile
Survey Dates and Personnel
10/09/2021 Marvin Miller, Ayana Monreal, Mark Ross, Arron Wertheim
10/10/2021 Marvin Miller, Richard Silver, Mia Spyker
12/04/2021 Marvin Miller, Mark Ross, Angela Young, John Young
Surveys conducted using Leica DistoX2, Suunto, laser rangefinder, & fiberglass tape.
Statistics
Surveyed Length: 143.0 meters
Surveyed Depth: 18.6 meters
Adjusted for magnetic declination by Walls survey software.
Drafted by Marvin Miller
December 2023
Legend
upper level or foreground passage
lower level or background passage
indeterminate passage (too small)
flowstone on wall
drop in floor
drop in ceiling
slope
bedrock or formation column
pit
mud
rocks
bedrock
stalagmite
stalactite
formation column
flowstone
No No Cave
Hill Country State Natural Area
Medina County, TX
TSS ID: MED0035

Government Canyon State Natural Area 2024-2025

by Steven Gutierrez

Fall 2024's Government Canyon project began on a warm morning with the familiar sound of cavers talking about caves and the day's plans to explore the park. With digging still being off limits for the time being, the focus was on ridgewalking and completing the survey of the park and its caves.

We began our efforts searching for some lost features, and later focusing on an area of the park known as Kallison ranch (Area 26). West of the Joe Johnston trail and north of the park headquarters; Kallison ranch spans three ridgelines and some of the densest vegetation the park has to offer. There are rewards for those who dare to venture there though, with Government Canyon Bat Cave sitting at its eastern border. It's an area with quite a bit of promise.

November saw two teams searching to locate two lost features, Lacewing and Ixta's. While their locations remain lost for now, 4 new features were documented including one new shelter.

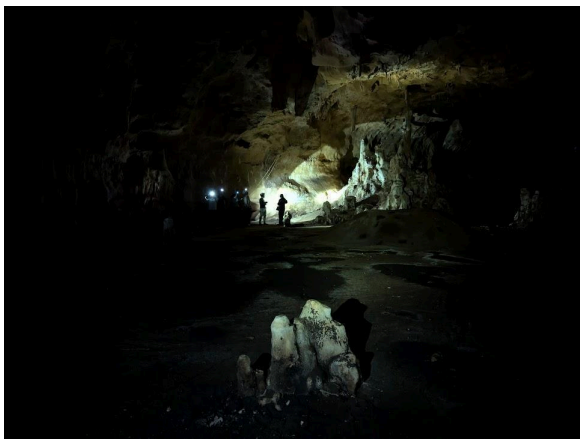
January saw one team locating 4 new features; Caitlin Stoops, Alyssa Correi, Amy Shoeneberger, and Jose Gamez helped to crash through the dense brush and search Area 26. Later that month we also had the opportunity and pleasure to work with Texas Parks and Wildlife's State Bat Specialist Dr. Samantha Leivers. Matthew Feibelman and I led her on a tour of some of the park's caves on the hunt for Cave Myotis, however we were unfortunately unsuccessful in locating any.



GC 1: Photo by Joe Mitchell. Marvin Miller and Mio Spyker surveying a small shelter cave



GC 2: Photo by Joe Mitchell. Marvin Miller and Mio Spyker inspect a small cliffside shelter

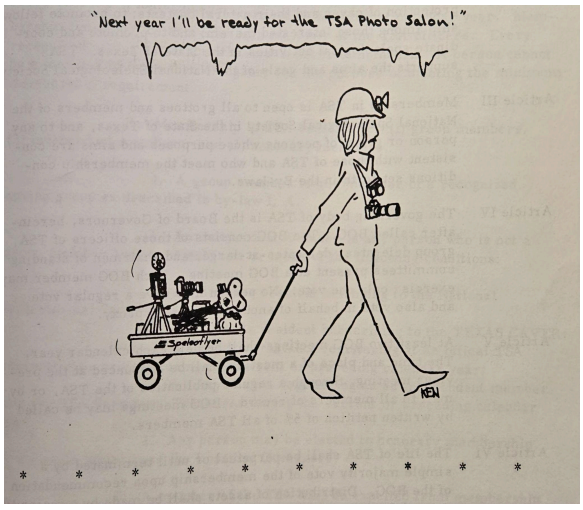


GC 3: Photo by Steven Gutierrez. The search for Cave Myotis in Government Canyon Bat Cave

In March we continued our ridgewalking, and had one of our most feature productive days of the year, finding 6 new features. Including one which had good airflow, and which I believe has potential to be a bigger find. Marvin Miller, Denys Osmak, and Abby Skelton all helped in the survey. While Bryce Renfro and Victor Vargas proceeded to the corner of Area 16 and Area 25 to help close up the last bit of survey for those two areas. Finding one new feature, and a possible midden which was reported to the park.

While we ended our spring trips officially in March, June saw another opportunity to team with Texas Parks and Wildlife on the hunt for bats, teaming again with Dr. Leivers lead teams to Government Canyon Bat Cave and Lithic Ridge in search of Cave Myotis. This trip included the use of acoustic listening devices, and was more successful than our January expedition. However we unfortunately did not witness any bats exiting our selected caves, but did record some bats locating and hunting.

Random Cartoon Throwback



(Texas Caver mid 1970's)



GC 4: Photo by Steven Gutierrez. A potential dig with good airflow



GC 5: Photo by Steven Gutierrez. An Eastern Black-tailed RattleSnake makes his presence known

Colorado Bend State Park
By Melissa Kinney

After over a decade of hard work and dedication, Kris Pena and Will Quast have taken on a new form of responsibility.... PARENTHOOD. After welcoming their beautiful daughter, and future caver, Lillie in early March, Will and Kris have stepped down as project coordinators. Countless hours of emails, data tracking, and traversing all over Colorado Bend State Park they have handed the project off to co coordinators Liz Frank and The Kinney's (Tony and Melissa).

Liz Frank has been a caver for 11 years and her favorite cave is Whirlpool of course! She has spent time as the UTG treasurer, the TSA secretary, and treasurer, and has been the co-coordinator of the TSA karst project at Colorado Bend since 2017. She is the Whirlpool Cave Preserve Manager and leads beginner caver trips for the UT Grotto. She loves digging, cave photography and traveling with her husband and friends to visit new caves. When karst walking with Liz be prepared to MOVE! This lady is serious about covering ground and finding new caves!!

This project is also close to Tony and Melissa's hearts as it was the first project they became involved with as new cavers in 2023. Don't let the year scare you, they dove in feet first, along with their 12 year old son Bradyn, since the day they discovered caving. The Kinney's have completed OCR and Tony has successfully completed NCRC level 1 in hopes of sharing knowledge and keeping safety at the forefront of this continued project.

There is tons of data in relation to this project,data that the co-ordinators are hoping to clean up moving forward. Times and technologies have changed since the beginning of this project and they are looking to bring everything up to date. This means new surveying, mapping, and photographing the entrances.

While this project needs experienced cavers, cartographers, and surveyors it is also the perfect place for new cavers. If you're looking to get underground, learn rope work, or just take in the scenery at Colorado Bend you definitely belong here. This is also the place to bring your cave curious children as our safety coordinator is only 12 years old. Half way joking Bradyn, a 2024 Chuck Stuehm award winner, takes his role very seriously and loves breaking down the rules of 3 to every new caver.

Whether you're looking to come teach, learn, or just get underground Colorado Bend is calling for you.

Creature Feature

By Ethan Perrine

Karst fauna are too often defined by what they don't have—eyes, pigment, or the ability to live amongst the surface dwellers—but if you look closely, you'll soon find these animals command your fascination. Let's take a moment to inspect this japygid. You would be forgiven for assuming he was an earwig, but that almost couldn't be further from the truth. This is a non insect hexapod called a dipluran, so named for the two pronged tail, and it diverged from the likes of insects at least 400 million years ago. Their pincer is an example of convergent evolution.

While he has no eyes, his antennae are nearly as long as the rest of his body, covered in thousands of sensory hairs. While you fumble to swap batteries in the dark, he detects the vibrations of your failure from across the room, his laughter too quiet to hear over your swearing. The other end of his body is equally fantastic, sporting a powerful pincer used to immobilize prey. These animals are near the top of the subterranean food chain, at the mercy of bats and amphibians, but not much else. They are rare, fast, and captivating. I hope you get a chance to see one. Think of him the next time you're racing down a passage. Leaving nothing but footprints is admirable, but where those footprints land is up to you.



Photo by Ethan Perrine. Japygid in Williams Well Cave.

Cavetech

Cave Survey and 3D Mapping with the Caveatron
By Joe Mitchell

The Caveatron is an all-in-one electronic, handheld tool for surveying and 3D mapping caves. It provides a caver-friendly, self-contained system for recording the usual shot measurements but with the LIDAR, can also “sketch” the cave in 3D. A major advantage of the Caveatron is that it scans while in motion, speeding up the survey and avoiding the need for additional equipment. The LIDAR is mounted perpendicular to the Caveatron’s axis, so that as the operator moves forward, it continuously scans detailed cross-sections of a resolution of a few centimeters. The design is focused on low cost, user friendliness with a reasonably compact and integrated package that can withstand the cave environment. Most importantly, the Caveatron is an open-source project that is available for anyone to build with the designs, instructions, and software available online. Under development on and off since 2012, the Caveatron has undergone several generations of revisions as new components have become available and the design has become more sophisticated. What started as a bunch of parts wired together inside a purchased electrical box has evolved to include a custom circuit board and a 3D printed enclosure with increasing capabilities and reductions in size. The focus all the while is on keeping it practical to build for a moderately skilled person. Essentially, it contains the capabilities you find in other electronic cave survey instruments like a DistoX or BRIC but with the addition of a LIDAR module and a touchscreen with a custom graphical user interface. The touchscreen allows for more control of the instrument and the inclusion of more capabilities than a few buttons would provide. The screen is recessed and protected to minimize the risk of damage and has proved resilient, working well even in very wet and muddy caves.

Operation of the Caveatron is designed around conventional cave survey techniques and can be used just as a survey tool if so desired. SHOT mode is used to take that data – the station names are entered directly in the instrument, it is held at one station, and its laser is pointed to the next station. With a single button press, multiple distance, azimuth and inclination measurements are taken, averaged, and recorded. A key difference, which is important for LIDAR operation is that a plastic retroreflective card is held on the station to which the shot is being taken. There are two scanning modes: PASSAGE or ROOM, with the difference being that in PASSAGE mode you scan while traversing toward a station whereas in ROOM mode the scanning is done from a fixed location while rotating the Caveatron. PASSAGE mode is the main scanning method and can start at any location so long as it is within sight of a station and a path exists to approach the station. ROOM mode is used when an area cannot be readily captured in PASSAGE, to get a broader overview scan, or when scanning vertical areas.

While scanning in PASSAGE mode, the Caveatron repeatedly pings the card with the rangefinder. If it detects a return from the card, then it knows its exact position. Since it is impractical to keep it constantly pointed exactly at the station, it uses its internal sensors to interpolate its position between times when the laser hits the card. So long as the laser hits the card every 10 seconds or so that's enough for it to know where it is throughout the scan. The Caveatron can use several LIDAR modules of varying cost and capability. The best module can reach out to 25 m and records 3200 points per second achieving a lateral resolution of about 2 cm centimeters in typical sized passages (radial resolution is less than a centimeter.)



The Caveatron (right) and the smaller survey-only Caveatron SV (left).



Passage mode scanning. Photo by Albert Parvin.



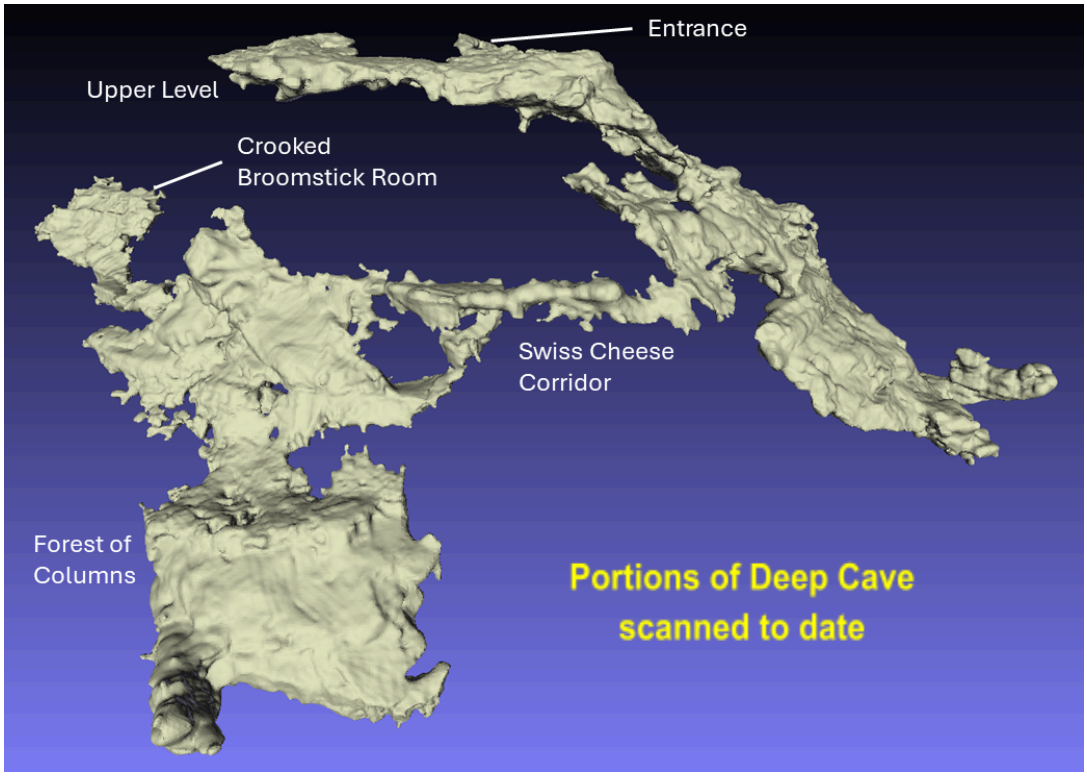
Some example Caveatron GUI screens

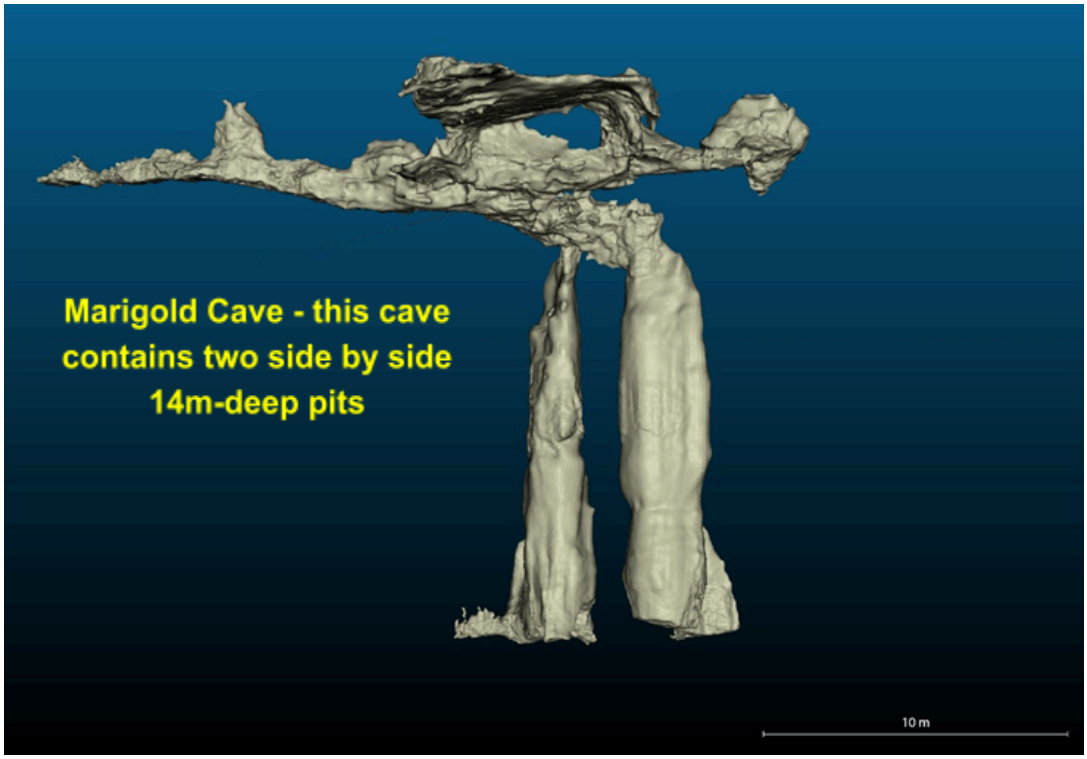
Beyond the scanning modes, the Caveatron includes a number of other functions for quick measurements, managing the survey (such as entering notes), the ability to view and edit shots, and adjusting instrument settings. Additionally, a line plot can be viewed as well as a plan and profile view of each LIDAR scan. As with all electronic compasses, calibration is required. Regular calibration is done onboard without any additional hardware using a simple function of repeatedly rotating the instrument in all directions for a couple of minutes. To download data, the Caveatron is connected over USB to any computer. The survey data is preformatted as a Walls survey file but can be easily converted to Compass format. Special software has been created to process and convert the LIDAR scans into standard point clouds viewable with a wide variety of open-source software. The data can then be rendered into a solid model and even 3D printed.

I've used the Caveatron to scan a wide variety of caves, mostly in Texas. These have ranged from smaller simple caves to much larger and more complex caves. These include Adam Wilson, CWAN, Fort Stanton, Robber Baron, Whirlpool, Station C, Marigold, Woot and many others. About a kilometer of a water cave in west Texas has also been scanned as well as very muddy parts of Dinosaur Cave. I've also been working on scanning the main route sections of Deep Cave, which has been challenging due to its complex morphology. With the Caveatron it is very possible to scan parts of caves that would be very difficult with conventional LIDAR. For example, small crawlways are quite scannable with the Caveatron. Some scans can be challenging but it's possible to develop your own techniques to use it most effectively.Since large sudden movements and too much time passing between hitting the reflective card can be detrimental to the scan accuracy, the Caveatron provides a warning or will end the scan automatically. However, its easy to restart the scan at that point and continue. For pits, I've found the best technique is to do half-arc Room scans at several intervals while on rope, first to one side, then to the other with a reference station at the top or bottom. In water caves, I constructed a small foam flotation device with a so that the Caveatron can be pushed along on the water's surface. Note that the infrared LIDAR does not penetrate water to any significant depth, which beyond a couple of inches becomes blank space. For very large rooms, like the 40 m wide, 140 m long entrance room of Harrison's Cave, multiple passes to each station from different approach directions were required to cover the area. One thing to be aware of when scanning is how the line of sight might be blocked by boulders, formations or other obstacles causing data shadows. Scanning around both sides of large objects or do a strategically placed Room scan ensures maximum coverage. Another consideration is that scanning is best done while moving up-slope. This is less hazardous since its easier to see where you are stepping while maintaining attention on the laser direction and also avoids scanning your own legs!

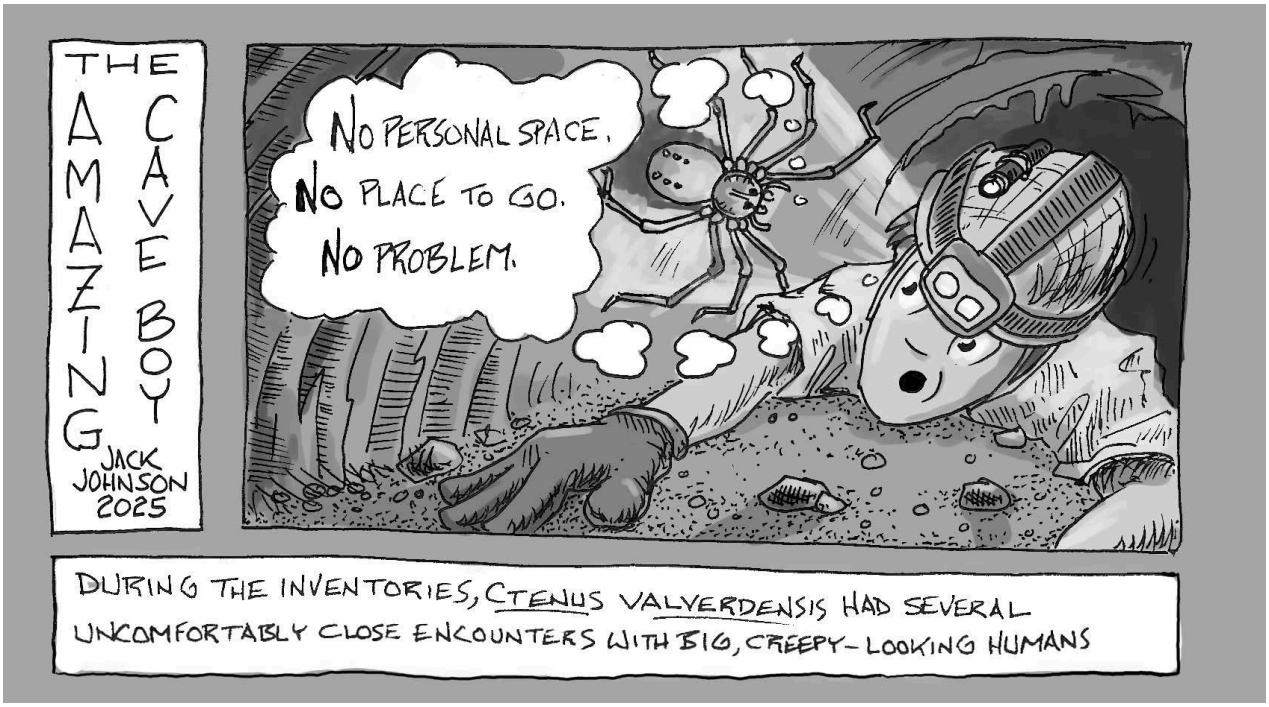
At this point, the Caveatron is fairly mature, however there is always room for improvements or new features. For example, the Caveatron SV was produced as a survey-only version which removes the LIDAR, has a smaller size, and adds features like LRUD measurements and a GPS. Other potential future features include interfacing to TopoDroid via Bluetooth, improvements to the calibration method, and adding newly available hardware options. If you would like to learn how to build your own or collaborate on design or software enhancements, feel free to reach out!


Woot Cave showing the raw point cloud data and stations used in the scan
A1
A2
B6
B7
B8
B9
B10
CA CA15
CA3
CA17
CA5
CA4
A5
A3
A14
CC2
A6
CA1
CA8
CC1
CA14
CA18
A15
CA27
B18
B16
CA9
B15
CA19
CA13
B17
B13
B14
CA20
CA26
CA10
CA12
A9
CA21
CA22
CA23
A10
CA11
A12
B1
CA25


Entrance
Upper Level
Crooked
Broomstick Room
Swiss Cheese
Corridor
Forest of
Columns
Portions of Deep Cave
scanned to date


Marigold Cave - this cave
contains two side by side
14m-deep pits
10 m

The Adventures of Cave Boy

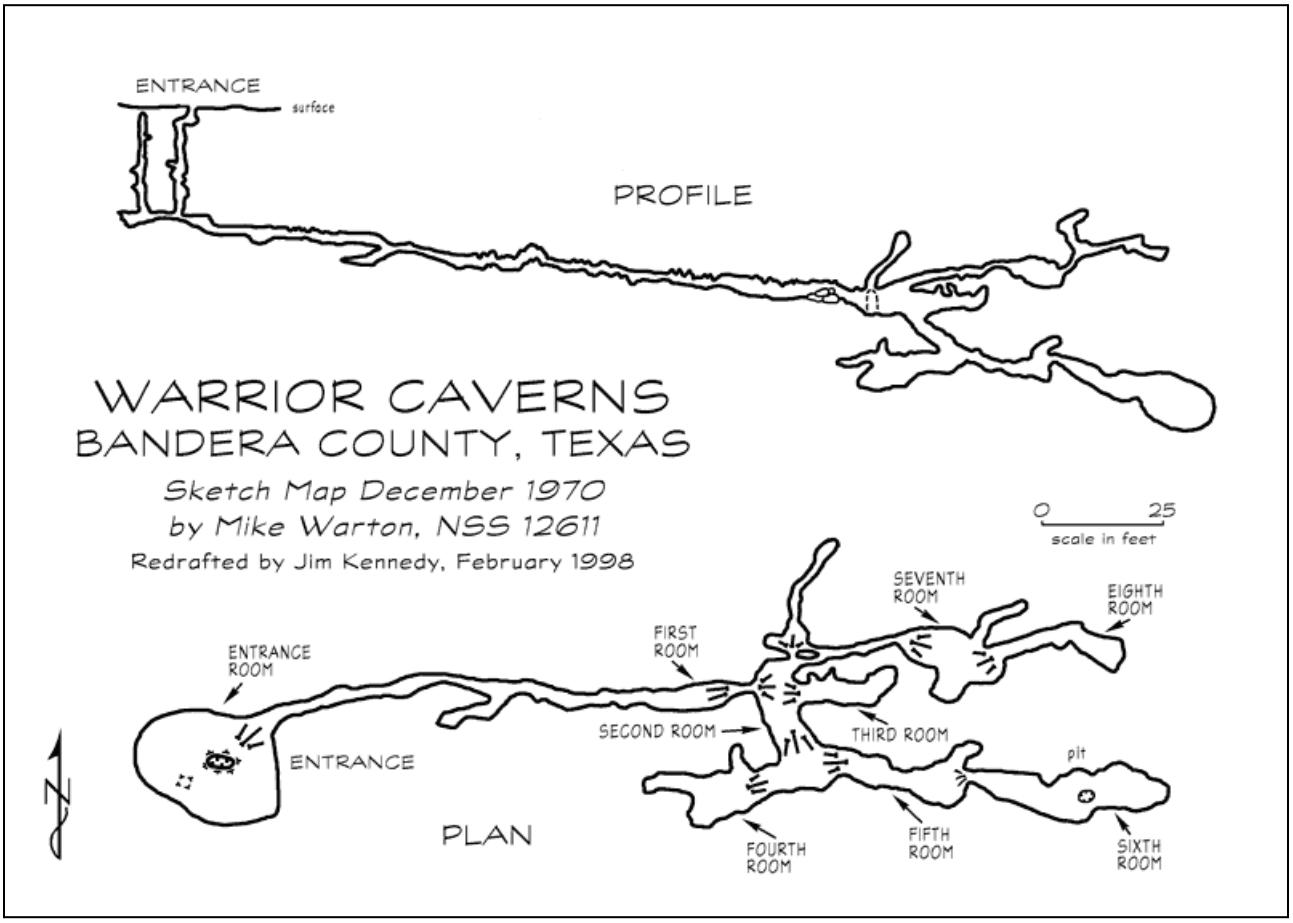


The TSS Treasury of Forgotten Caves

By Joe Mitchell

There are just a few caves that get the vast majority of regular caver visitation. But there are so many caves, more caves out there that we already know exist but still need that exploration. The Texas Speleological Survey (TSS) maintains a database of more than 7000 caves across the state. These records date back to the TSS's founding in 1960 and in many cases the cave was only visited a single time. Among these are some potentially significant caves which have not been visited since the 1970's or 80's for which little information exists – possibly only a general location. This column describes several caves in the TSS database that are ripe for further exploration and discovery but require some footwork to identify the present owner and gain permission for access. This time we look at four caves described as about 1000 ft long for which only a general location is available.

Warrior Caverns – Bandera Co.
Length: ~300 m/Depth: ~18 m
Mike Warton explored and sketch-mapped this significant cave in December 1970 but the only location information is that it is about 7 miles south of Bandera and in an area related to the drainage course of the Medina River. He noted about the cave: "Many good leads were left unchecked and the size of the upper drainage tunnels indicates there is more passage to be found. Many nice and unusually shaped formations are found in the lower portions of the cave." Describing the entrance, Mike said "I had not expected to find a cave in this particular spot because it was on a long gently sloping side of a large sink filled within a couple of feet from surface level with a thick covering of prairie grass. I began hammering away at the hole. It was surprising to see the thin covering shattering like glass being broken out of a window… The entrance through which we had come was only a domepit in the ceiling. At the bottom we found a low but very wide room. I was again surprised to find recent guano piles.

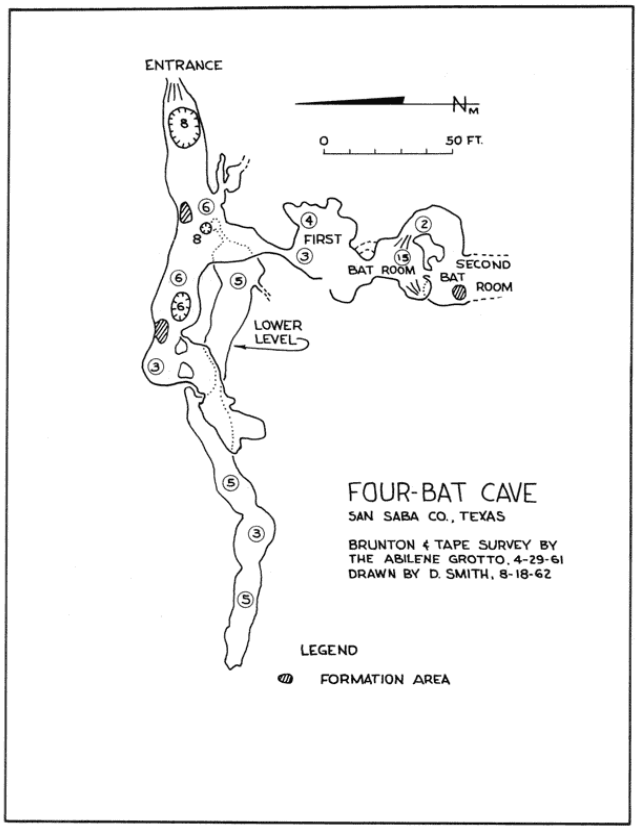


Boneyard Cave – Uvalde Co.
Length: ~300 m/Depth: Unknown
Boneyard Cave is located near Concan in Uvalde Co. It was visited during the 1990 TSA Convention by a group of cavers, possibly including Randy Waters. The cave is described as mostly horizontal with a couple of chimneys. Getting to the entrance required a 200 ft climb up a hillside. Not much else is known about this cave.

Unnamed Cave – Kinney Co.
Length: ~300 m/Depth: Unknown
Very little is known about this cave other than that it runs approximately east-west and is described as a “water route” with no crawling. The only location information is that it is near Palace Cave. The cave was reported by Jack Graves of Uvalde.

Four-Bat Cave – San Saba Co.
Length: ~300 m/Depth: ~6 m
This is one of 3 caves in close proximity in the Buffalo Knob quadrangle of San Saba Co. The entrance to Four-Bat is described as farthest to the left down the hill. The cave was explored in February 1962 by James Estes and Paxton Hutchison of the Abilene Grotto and Chuck Larsen, Jerry Fogelman, and Neil and Loren Roebuck of the Dallas-Ft. Worth Grotto. They observed 4 bats, giving the cave its name, but on a later visit in June 1962 the number of bats had increased to several thousand and the cave was infested with gnats. On this later trip, the lower level was mapped by James Estes and Tom Meador. The cave is mostly horizontal but does have a lower-level room.

At the back of that room there is a mud bank in front of a formation area with active soda straws and some flowstone. Left of the mud bank, one can slide through a small hole which leads to a low-ceilinged room with several 3 ft stalagmites jutting up into a ceiling crevice. This crevice gradually widens into the next room which has a miniature travertine dam. To the left side of the room just after the lower level is reached another small crawlway that seems to lead slightly down is too small to negotiate, but removal of loose materials on the floor might lead to more passage. A further visit in September 1963 led to the discovery of a small tunnel and two or three bat rooms, not yet mapped. At the time it was visited, the owner was Joe Ellis.



If you are interested in learning more about these caves or trying to establish access for further exploration, please contact me, Marvin Miller, or any Director of the TSS. Happy cave hunting!

Joe Mitchell, TSS President
joe@mitchellcave.com

Marvin Miller, TSS Database Manager
cave0miller@gmail.com



THE MAGNETIC HOLE REVISITED

Compiled by Sheila Balsdon and Bill Russell

The Texas Caver April 1978

Many years ago at a caver party Bill Russell was told the strange tale of Von Streeruwitz's Magnetic Hole. It seems that early settlers traveling across the flat desert of Transpecos Texas would follow a compass course from one mountain pass to the next. However, in a small area east of

the present. town of Van Horn their compass no longer pointed north and they learned to ignore directional readings in this short section. When the first geologist for West Texas, William H. von Streeruwitz, arrived in the area, he was asked the cause of this strange phenomenon. He answered that it must be a magnetic anomaly caused by a body of magnetic ore at a shallow depth. Acting on this information, enterprising locals decided to sink a shaft in the center of the magnetic area. Digging was started but at a shallow depth they broke through into a deep void. They were unable to reach the bottom with all the rope they could assemble, and gave up the project. Von Streeruwitz later visited the site and wrote a report. It was information from this report that was relayed to Bill at the party. Several years later an account was published in The Texas Caver as an amusing anecdote. The only real fact remembered at that time was the unforgettable name of the author of the report William H. von Streeruwitz. After the account was published, one of the Aggie cavers from Houston remembered reading in the clipping file of the Houston Public Library an account of a Magnetic Hole near Van Horn. Sheila Balsdon checked out this report and found the following article from the Houston Chronicle, Feb. 28, 1932. TEXAS UNFATHOMED PIT MAY BE WORLD'S BIGGEST CAVE
"A seemingly bottomless pit, which more than 4000 feet of rope failed to plumb, underlies a part of Hudspeth County, which is a region of mountain peaks and open valleys", according to Horace T. Chilton of Beeville, who has the information from one of the two or three persons who know of its existence. He tells the story of its discovery, recites that the entrance has been sealed for more than 40 years and notes a number of curious angles connected with it in the following article.

John E. Barlow, contractor to the United States army and pioneer ranchman, in 1886 began to dig a water well on his property about midway between Eagle Flat and Allamore in Hudspeth County, and north of the Texas and Pacific Railway. The first 30 feet was mixed with caliche. The next 20 feet was foliated limestone and so hard that it became necessary to use hard-rock drills and "single jacks" to make progress.
With no idea that anything weird was about to develop, the men quit work late one evening leaving their tools and a quantity of loose rock at the bottom of the shaft. The rock was hoisted out the next morning and the drills again brought into play. Only a few blows had been struck when the drill suddenly sank to its head. The surprised drillers pulled it out. Through the hole, which stared at them like a malignant black eye, poured a swift rush of air. Lengthy conferences at the bottom of the shaft were manifestly useless. The men were brought hastily to the top, glad to rest their feet on good sod instead of hollow sounding rock.
A man was dispatched for a few sticks of dynamite. The long fuse was lighted, and with a dull explosion that became an echoing roar the charge shattered the rod bottom. Where there had been rock there was now nothing but the black emptiness of a cavern mouth. Up from the depths came a steady draught of air, an eerie sort of blowing that did not tend to improve the poise of those gathered at the top to peer gingerly down the shaft.

BOTTOM NOT FOUND

But how deep was the thing?
Ropes were collected. A weight was attached to one of the smaller ropes and the others were knotted together until, by measurement, there were more than 4000 feet of line, with the heavier ropes at we surface end. The weight was lowered through the shaft into the cavern. Bottom was not touched. The long line was brought up and lowered again to make sure that it was swinging free and that the weight on the end was not resting on anything solid. Still there was no bottom. All the rope

in that part of the country was in the line. No more was available.

The measured depth of 4000 feet indicated it was one of the deepest known caverns

in the world. There remains the possibility that it is the deepest. Only a well-equipped expedition can determine that.
Then another strange thing was noticed. steel tools which were in the bottom of the shaft when the first blast of air rushed upward were found to be highly magnetized. The rock drills, for instance, would pick up their own weight in steel. It was known positively that they were not magnetized previous to that time. That led to another investigation.

Any steel object held in the out-draft of air became magnetized almost at once. Shovels, knives, tools of all kinds, and even a pair of scissors belonging to Mr. Barlow's daughter were equally affected. Then the air current developed even more peculiarities. The out-draft continued steadily during the morning, but dwindled toward noon until it ceased. Then it reversed itself and the air poured downward into the cavern all afternoon. Steel objects held in the downward air current were not magnetized. Only the out-draft held that power.

This is not a legend. The facts given here were furnished by J. S. Barlow, widely known consulting engineer of Dallas, and son of the late John E. Barlow, who made the discovery.

J.S. Barlow was present while the shaft was being dug. He was there when the dynamite charge blew the bottom out of the shaft. He watched the vain attempts to measure the depth. He has held steel tools in the out-draft and tested their resulting magnetization. It was he who held his sister's sisters over the shaft. The sister, who, in 1927, when the writer first heard of this thing, was living in El Paso was also there. So were other members of the Barlow family. So, too, were various other persons who happened to be in that then remote section at the time. In 1927 one of the men who helped sink the shaft was still living in that region, and although very old, he remembered clearly all of the details.

A comprehensive report on the surface geology of that area, together with extensive topographic maps, was made In 1886 by W.H. Von Steeruwitz, at that time state geologist for west Texas under the geological department of Texas. Of the report, printed in 1889, only a few copies remain, but J.S. Barlow has a carefully preserved set. In it are many references to the elder Mr. Barlow's various properties, and among other things it contains a full page plate of the Barlow family grouped on horseback at the foot of the Sierra Diablo.

AIR CURRENTS LAID TO UNDERGROUND TIDE

Mr. Von Steeruwitz, who spent considerable time at the shaft, attributed the air currents and their reversal of direction to tidal effects, but the younger Mr. Barlow does not recall just how that was explained. Unfortunately, no one thought to observe the air currents at night. Mr. Von Steeruwitz's opinion was that the magnetizing effects of the outward air current were due to the presence of a large body of magnetic ore somewhere in the cavern.

These two theories admittedly are open to argument. Scientists to whom the questions were put were unable to advance satisfactory explanations. If, as some held, the air currents and their reversal were due to differences in temperature inside and outside the cavern, then there is no way to explain why the reversal occurred at noon, a time when no change, under the temperature theory, should have

occurred. The extraordinary magnetizing effects of the out-draught left the scientific men at a loss. But they did not agree at all with Von Steeruwitz's theory. If Von Steeruwitz was correct in assuming the air currents were due to tidal effects, then they, in truth, were the breathing of a giant. It had long been noted that water from seasonal rains, often of torrential proportions, after flooding down the long valleys from the mountains collected in A sink where the shaft was dug, and disappeared into the ground in an unbelievably short time. Contour lines on the Von Steeruwitz topographic map show the location of the sink and the sweep of country draining into it. The sink itself is roughly egg-shaped with the small end to the southeast. It is five miles long and one mile wide. It lies between Arispe and Eagle Flat on the Texas and Pacific Railway and Grayton on the Southern Pacific Lines, and is in the angle formed by the junction of the two railroads. It is 4500 feet above sea level, and is surrounded by mountains.

Discovery of the cavern seemed to explain where all the water went. Whether enough of it had collected through the ages in that gigantic cistern to appreciably show tidal effects and by its ebb and flow create the air currents through the Barlow shaft will never be known until explorers investigate it. It may be the cavern is one of the largest as well as one of the deepest known to man. Anyone is privileged to make his own guess after considering the following brief items which may or may not have a bearing on the subject.

Drills Strike Other Caverns

Ninety miles north, 35 degrees east, lies the famous Carlsbad Cavern, reputed to be the largest in the world, and the end of which no man has ever seen. Sixty miles southwest of Carlsbad and on an airline between it and the Barlow cavern the Sun Oil Company attempted to drill an oil well at the foot of Apache Peak in Culberson County. At 250 feet the drill went into a seemingly endless system of supposedly connected caverns. Two others are known to exist on the same airline. North of Sierra Blanca and about 30 miles northwest of the Barlow shaft another oil test-drilled across a cavity at 1100 feet, through which on some days there was a strong outdraught, and on others an equally strong suction.

The old Barlow shaft could not be plugged, but it was sealed with rocks and timbers. It constituted a menace to the safety of livestock and occasional range riders. It has not been molested since 1886. The first thing whoever enters it to find out why a draught of air can magnetize steel and to delve into the grander aspects of nature's subterranean excavations must face is a known drop of 4000 feet straight down into a more or less terrifying darkness. How much farther he must go to reach bottom. He alone will be able to tell when and if he returns to safety and the clear light of day at the top.

With this additional information and a relatively accurate location only a few miles from Interstate 10, the magnetic hole, if it does exist could undoubtedly be located. Perhaps an air photo would be a convenient way to look for the tailings pile from the shaft, which should be visible even now. The area is underlain by about 500 feet of potentially cave-forming Finley Limestone.

THE END (FOR NOW)

Calling all Cavers!

The next great cave story could and should be **YOURS!** The next time you are on a cave trip, consider taking some notes or journaling about your trip shortly after you get back. If you like your caving story consider sending it in to be included in our Texas Cavers section.