

# The TEXAS CAVER

## 3rd Quarter

### 2008



## ***The TEXAS CAVER***

**July—September - Vol. 54, Number 3**

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Front Cover— James Brown begins his ascent of the waterfall drop in the entrance to Sótano de San Agustín. This excellent photo is by Ernie Garza.

Back Cover — Top Left Photo—"Joe Datri Descending" and Top Right Photo "Golondrinas". Both by David Ochel.

Lower Photo— Hwy 90 Pecos River bridge, the highest highway bridge in Texas, looking upstream from Moorhead Cave.

Photo by Michael Harris of the Bexar Grotto.

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The Texas Speleological Association is a not-for-profit organization that supports cave exploration and studies in and around the state of Texas. It is comprised of both independent members and local grottos. 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 throughout the state.

# The TEXAS CAVER

*Written by Texas Cavers FOR Texas Cavers*

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## Where's Waldo in Huautla?

December 14-20th, 2007

By Bill Steele



**From left: Diana, James, Don and Ernie near the end of the de-rig trip. Photo by Bill Steele.**

This excellent article originally ran in a past issue of *The OZTOL Caver*, the official newsletter of the DFW Grotto, and is reprinted here by permission. Enjoy! - Editor

Our plan was four fold: to check out a lead noticed 27 years ago in the Sótano de San Agustín section of Sistema Huautla, to go out the new road north of the village of Agua de Cerro seeking permission to look for caves in that area and perhaps find some entrances, to meet Tony and Marion Akers after Christmas and go caving with them in the Ayuatla area, and for James Brown to dive the Río Uluapan and scope it out more thoroughly than had been done in the past. None of our plans worked out very well.

Diana Tomchick, James Brown, Don Broussard, Ernie Garza and I met up at Don's place in the country west of Austin on Dec. 14th. The next morning we were on the road. We planned to take the central highlands route to the vicinity of Mexico City, skirt the world's largest city trying not to get lost along the way, and then arrive in the Huautla area by way of Tehuacan, Puebla.

The first night we camped just south of Bustamante, Nuevo León. We sought what we termed a "Strickland approved" campsite late at night. Finding such a campsite is an art. You take a dirt farm road and look for a lesser-used side road off of it as your site. It's a method that's worked every time I've ever tried it, without any problem ever.

In the morning we headed to Monterrey. Before we got there, however, we were pulled over for speeding. The usual negotiations ensued, with Ernie as our chief negotiator and me not able to resist getting involved. Finally we agreed to the fine, a convenient system wherein you are able to negotiate what the fine will be, then pay it in cash, with no record of it going to your insurance company.

A couple of days later we arrived in Huautla. There we visited some American expatriates I know who live there and have adopted two Mazatec kids. We then saw the Presidente of the Huautla area and got a letter of permission from him to be in the area, and pushed on to the village of San Agustín Zaragoza, perched on the ridge above the deep, funnel-shaped, giant sinkhole at the bottom of which is the awesome entrance to Sótano de San Agustín. We rented a large room above a store, which is attached to the home of the storeowner, and late in the day we hiked down 500 feet in elevation to the entrance of San Agustín. We found three bolts and hangers from the 1994 expedition that we would use for rigging the next day.

Our lead was above Camp I, about 250 meters deep. Our plan was to rig to that depth on the first day, take a good look at the lead with strong lights, then come in and do an aid climb up the wall; the lead was said to be 10 meters up to the passage above.

The water was higher than normal in the entrance pit; this would be a factor at lower levels in the cave. Actually, it caused us to not make it to the lead. When we got to the fourth drop, the bolts there were old and untrustworthy, so I put in a new bolt. As everyone waited for me to get the bolt placed by hand, James Brown got extremely cold, so he and Ernie headed out. Don descended the next pit and in the



**Don takes a turn driving the bolt. Photo by Bill Steele.**



**Waldo (at right) and his brother.  
Photo by Diana Tomchick.**

process got soaked. In about an hour came back up, shivering uncontrollably, saying that he had gone the wrong way as he descended, he was very cold, and wanted to leave the cave.

That night I slept restlessly, thinking about how few we really were on this trip, how the water was high and the bolting up the wall to the lead would take a lot of time with self-drive anchors. By morning I had thought through it enough to decide to convince everyone to abort this part of the trip and go on to our other objectives.

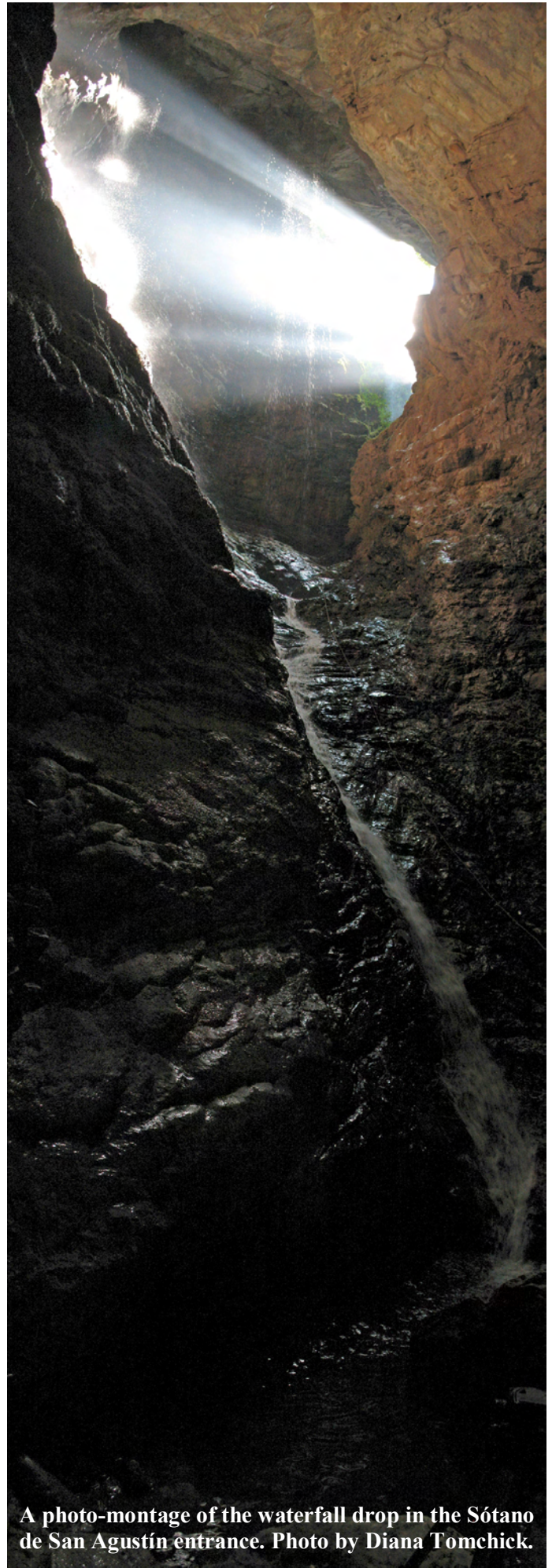
That day we took a tourist trip to Millipede Cave, a short cave high in the Sotano del Río Iglesia dolina. Iglesia is the more than 500-meter deep cave we connected to Sistema Huautla on our spring 2007 expedition. In Millipede Cave we checked hard for leads and took numerous photos of a large, ancient clay vessel I had seen on previous trips.

The following day we de-rigged San Agustín. While James Brown and Don Broussard went deeper to remove the ropes, Ernie, Diana and I climbed up to the top of the massive breakdown and dirt wall at the base of the second drop, where in 1987 Doug Powell, Mark Minton, and I discovered the Fool's Day Extension route to the lower cave. Once up high on the end of the huge Sala Grande room, we realized the date: December 21st, the winter solstice, the day the sun is at the lowest point in the sky for the year. It was breathtakingly beautiful, with low angled sunbeams lighting entrance waterfalls that are non-existent during the dry season. Many photos were taken.

The next day we headed to an area named Llano Verde, at the end of the newly bulldozed road to the north of the ridge with the highest entrances to Sistema Huautla. It is very karsty there and I described it to everyone as an illustration one might see in a Dr. Suess book, with houses perched precariously on karst pinnacles. Diana and I had driven out this same road when we had been caving in Huautla in the spring.

When we got to the tiny village of Llano Verde no one was there. Finally we found someone, who wasn't very friendly, and she fetched the jefe, or the elected head of the area. He was a little friendlier, but he didn't give us permission to be in the area. He said that there were bad people around there and that he needed to get permission from the people in the area for us to hike around and look for caves. He said we could come back in a year and see what the people had decided at a town meeting.

With two of our four objectives behind us, we looked forward to meeting up with Tony and Marion Akers. We were given the name of their amigo in Huautla to contact, and in a couple days'



**A photo-montage of the waterfall drop in the Sótano de San Agustín entrance. Photo by Diana Tomchick.**



**Don Broussard at the entrance to Millipede Cave, near the village of San Agustín Zaragoza, Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Diana Tomchick**

time we rendezvoused with them. Tony and Marion are cavers that have bought land near Ayautla, which is about a half hour drive from Huautla, east toward the coastal plain. Tony is originally from Indiana and Marion is from Georgia. They now live in Ohio part of the year and Mexico part of the year, and import garden pottery from Mexico into the U.S. for a living.

We met up with them and followed them to the tiny village of La Carlota, where we were going to camp in buildings built in the 1890s as a German coffee plantation. Our caving objective in the area was to climb up to a giant cave entrance in the cliff face above the old coffee plantation, and visit other caves in the area.

We set up camp in the electrical generator building, where the owner, Waldo, and his brother, who lived there, had installed a new toilet for us. In addition to Tony and Marion, their five-year-old son Simon was with us, a clever kid, who held his own matching wits with all of us. Also along was Jill Hemperly's son Jonathan Dible (JD), who was working for the Akers. He's a strapping young man in his early 20s and I sized him up as the person to carry the big coil of rope up to the cave entrance high above La Carlota.

The entrance was named Cueva de Aguila, or Cave of the Eagle. It was said that when the coffee plantation was in full swing a large eagle lived in the cave. It would occasionally swoop down and pick up a dog, or goat, and they worried that a child might be next. So they hid a man in a large basket under a blanket with a goat tied on top of the blanket. When the eagle came after the goat the man

stabbed it with a spear.

Once we'd settled into the old coffee plantation, Tony headed to Oaxaca City to obtain permission for us to go caving in the area. While he was gone, we took a day trip to the Presa Miguel Aleman, the large reservoir that flooded out 50,000 Mazatec farmers in the 1950s. We hired a boat to take us to an island with a village on it, said to be the first Mazatec village. However, before our hired boat showed up to give us our ride, we had time to eat a delicious meal of fried fish, locally caught from the lake. When the boat came for us we clipped fast across the water to Isla del Viejo Soyaltepec, which is perched on a hill that is now an island in the Presa. My guess is that around 800 people live on the island. We hiked around, causing a stir, because very few, if any, gringos have ever been there.

The next day, Tony had not returned from Oaxaca City, so we were unable to check out Cueva de Aguila, so we decided to go check out a small cave on the coffee plantation. Marion and Tony had been in it before and identified a promising (but tight) lead. Simon went with us. I tied up a Swiss seat harness for him, and he hung off a tether as I rappelled in the 10-meter deep entrance pit. At the bottom of the pit was a crawl, but then it opened up to walking passage. Marion said that they had seen a crab in the cave on previous trips, and we also saw it. Who has ever heard of a crab in the dark zone of an inland cave? It was about 4 inches wide, and very lively. Diana took a short video of the crab defending its territory as I jabbed a finger at it; you can even hear my screams as it attempted to pinch me.

Next we came to a couple of climbs. One was about 20 feet deep, slick, and overhung. James Brown was in the lead. Marion said that they'd done the climb before with no rope, but when James descended it partway, he climbed back up it and declared it was a tricky climb and that he wasn't sure that Ernie and Don could do it because they're shorter than the rest of us and would have a hard time getting back out.

I was at the rear in the narrow passage leading to the pit when I heard my name called. They wanted me to look at the pit to see what I thought. As I passed Marion she whispered that they had free-climbed it twice before, and had even passed Simon down and back up it.

I took a glance and didn't like the looks of it, but after what Marion had said to me, I decided to climb it. It looked worse than it was. Once at the bottom I started back up and climbed back to the top. I told everyone that it was

okay, and then climbed back down it halfway, Marion passed Simon down to me, and then she climbed to the bottom. Diana was next. I was looking up at Diana as she slipped off the climb and was falling head first down it. Operating in the timeframe of less than a second, I made the decision to remain at her landing zone, and not sidestep and let her land on the floor. Diana disputes what I say happened next. In the instant that she fell on top of me I flipped her in midair so that she landed on her butt rather than her head. She can't dispute that she landed on her butt, and she knows it happened somehow, but she can't bring herself to believe that I consciously pulled it off. I say I didn't do it consciously, I did it instinctively, with years of caving behind me, as well as from watching many Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan movies. If they can make lightening moves in their genre, why can't I in mine?

Anyhow, Diana hurt her wrist and got a huge, triangular-rock-shaped thigh bruise. Don and Ernie left the cave and sent JD (who had remained at the surface) back to our camp for a rope to rig the pit so Diana could climb out. She got herself out of the cave and wasn't hurt nearly as much as she might have been from falling head first down a pit.

The next day Tony returned from Oaxaca with the official permission letter, and then he and Ernie went into Ayautla to obtain the local permission for us to cave in the area. The plan for the day was to support James in a cave dive in the resurgence cave, the Río Uluapan. While we busied ourselves loading caving and diving gear into the trucks, Tony and Ernie returned with the local permission. Ten minutes later two trucks full of local "bosses" arrived at the coffee plantation. A long conversation ensued, but in the end we did not have permission to hike across any private landowners' land. The big hassle was due to the turnover in the local political administration at the end of the year, and the lame-duck politicians didn't want to be responsible for giving us permission. We couldn't go caving.

We decided the next day (our last in the area) to take a drive around the north side of the Presa Miguel Aleman. It is thought the resurgence of the 1,223-meter deep Kijahe Xontjoa is forever submerged in this area of the presa. Swiss cavers explored the Kijahe, and I camped over 1,000 meters deep in that cave for five days in 1993. In 1995 on a boat trip in the cove, James Brown had located an underwater cave using a sonar fish-finder. He wanted to get a GPS location from the shore near the dive site, as he had collected a new species of fish in this location. The road had been extended around the cove and we drove to its end. It had been many years since the dive and the area had changed greatly, so James took a GPS reading in the place that seemed the most likely location for the dive site.

We left Ernie behind to spend another week with the Akers; they hoped to go caving after the first of the year once the local government changed hands. Diana, Don, James and I returned north by way of the coastal road, taking two days to get back to Texas, and arrived in time for the cavers' New Years' Eve party at Pete Strickland's place in Austin.

## From the Editor —

These cavers were inadvertently omitted from the article *A Historic Weekend at Honey Creek Cave - Texas Longest* by Bill Steele, which ran in the last issue of *The TEXAS CAVER*.

The cavers who participated in the activities at Honey Creek Cave over the April 11 – 13, 2008 weekend, are printed here with the Editor's apologies and we appreciate their efforts!

### Cavers

Barry Adelman	Austin	Sat. only
Don Barker	Houston	Sun. only
Rob Bisset	San Antonio	Sat. and Sun.
Don Broussard	Austin	Fri., Sat., and Sun.
Sandi Calhoun	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Rick Cordell	San Antonio	Sat. and Sun.
Tom Florer	San Antonio	Sat. only
Ernie Garza	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Ed Goff	Dallas	Sat. only
Devra Heyer	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Rob Hirsch	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Ted Lee	San Antonio	Fri. only
Kurt Menking	San Antonio	Fri, Sat. and Sun.
Evelyn Mitchell	San Antonio	Sat. only
Bill Mixon	Austin	Sat. only
Patrick Olsen	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Wes Schumacher	Austin	Sat. and Sun.
Bill Steele	Dallas	Fri., Sat. and Sun.
Diana Tomchick	Dallas	Fri., Sat. and Sun.
Arron Wertheim	Austin	Sat. and Sun.

### Scientists from Southwest Research Institute

The list of people that were at the cave for the deployment of sensors were:

Ronald N. McGinnis – Research Scientist\Structural Geologist, Division 20 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday through trip

Ben Abbot – Institute Scientist\Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday through trip

Joshua Kenney - Research Scientist\Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment and Saturday cedar clearing

Ronnie Killough - Director\Electrical Engineer, Division 10 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing and Sunday attended the through trip

Bob Gray – Stepfather of Ben Abbott: Sunday attended the through trip

Ron Green - Institute Scientist\Hydrologist, Division 20 SWRI: Saturday cedar clearing

Scott Rubio – Student Scientist\Geologist, Division 20 SWRI: Friday Deployment, Saturday cedar clearing, and Sunday attended the through trip



## Gear Guy—Finding A Really Good Flashlight

By Lawrence Najjar

Flashlights can be very helpful to cavers. We should carry a good flashlight in our cars if we

get a flat or have engine trouble on the drive to a cave. At the campsite, we can use a flashlight to illuminate our tents or to get to the latrine area in the dark. And, although I prefer hands-free lights, some cavers use flashlights as backup caving lights. I've even seen Mini Mag Lights attached to the sides of some cavers' helmets.

A good flashlight is hard to find because it needs to have a lot of different, sometimes conflicting, features. I believe a good flashlight should be:

- **Bright** — Allow you to see objects that are reasonably far away.
- **Light** — The flashlight should not be a burden to carry, which generally rules out powerful, but heavy, D-cell flashlights.
- **Able to use common batteries** — Although many small, bright flashlights use powerful and long-lasting coin-shaped lithium batteries, lithium coin-shaped batteries are hard to find, especially when you are on the road.
- **Water resistant** — The flashlight should work in challenging conditions, like in the mist from an underground waterfall or in the rain at night as you walk out of a cave or change a flat tire.
- **Long-lasting** — A good flashlight should provide bright, useful light for several hours.
- **Easy to operate** — You should be able to turn the flashlight on and off quickly and easily with one hand.

It is very hard to find a flashlight that includes these features. The combination of bright, long-lasting, and water resistant was especially challenging.

After hours and hours trying to find a very good flashlight, I finally found one -- the Fenix L2D CE Premium Q5.



The Fenix is bright because it uses a new, powerful, 3-Watt, Cree XR-E LED that is brighter than some 5-Watt flashlights. In the brightest mode, the flashlight is absolutely blinding.

The flashlight is light because it uses 2 AA batteries and weighs only 105 grams (3.7 ounces).



Angled side view showing recessed lens and textured sides.

Since it includes a digital regulator circuit, you can use easy-to-find alkaline, rechargeable NiMH, or powerful lithium AA batteries. I like using the rechargeable NiMH batteries so I can reduce battery pollution. To replace the batteries, you simply unscrew the tail cap, take out the old batteries, and slide in the new batteries facing the same direction as the old batteries.

To keep water out, the Fenix has O-rings at each end, a rubber on-off switch, and a sealed bezel. The manufacturer does not provide the depth at which the Fenix is waterproof, but it should be fine in the rain or even a quick dunk in a shallow underground stream.

The flashlight has several brightness levels. With alkaline batteries, low lasts 59 hours at 12 lumens, medium lasts seven hours at 53 lumens, high lasts 1.5 hours at 107 lumens, and turbo lasts 41 minutes at 180 lumens. NiMH and lithium batteries last even longer. The regulator keeps the beam consistently bright until the batteries start giving out and the brightness drops to 50% at the end of these times. Due to heat build-up and the possibility of damaging the flashlight, only run it in turbo for 10 minutes or less at a time.

There are a total of six lighting levels, four in regular mode and two in turbo mode. The regular mode lighting levels are available when you leave the flashlight head loosened about a half turn. To turn the Fenix on, you press the tail cap button all the way down until you hear a loud click. The flashlight turns on in low, which is good for tents and crawls. To cycle between the regular mode brightness levels, you press the tail cap button halfway in on a series of soft, quiet clicks. You move from low to medium (narrow walking passageways), high (wide passageways), an annoying SOS blink mode, then repeat the cycle. To get to the blindingly bright and short-lasting turbo modes, you tighten the head of the flashlight about a half turn until it stops. If the flashlight is off, one hard click turns it on in turbo (domes, pits, and leads). A soft click puts the flashlight in an annoying and blinding strobe. Another soft click repeats the turbo mode cycle by putting the flashlight back in turbo. To turn the flashlight off, you do a hard click.

The beam is fixed so you cannot focus it like a Mag Lite. But the incredible brightness means you don't really need to focus the beam.

The Fenix L2D CE Premium Q5 has lots of other great features.

- Rugged aircraft grade aluminum with an anodized finish

- Toughened, slightly recessed, very clear glass lens with antireflective coating
- Convenient wrist lanyard (to figure out how to tie it onto the flashlight go to <http://www.fenixlight.com/info/index.htm>)
- Textured grip areas
- Accidental activation lock-out by loosening the tail cap a half turn
- Spare accessories such as extra O-rings, a rubber switch boot, plus the wrist lanyard and a belt holster

There a few features I don't like about the flashlight.

- **Body** -- The body is round, so when you place it on a hard, flat surface it rolls away. If you attach the wrist lanyard, though, it stops most of the rolling.
- **Modes** -- There are too many modes and they are a bit challenging to figure out. You certainly don't need the SOS and strobe modes and turning the head to change from the four regular modes to the two turbo modes is not obvious. Plus, you have to use two hands to change from the regular modes to the turbo modes.
- **Button** -- The on-off and mode button is on the tail cap at the end of the flashlight. When you are using the flashlight, you have to shift the flashlight awkwardly in your hand to press the button on the tail cap. This awkward movement also makes it more likely you will drop the flashlight.



Rear view showing tail cap.

I would like to see Fenix add a couple of square edges on the body to reduce rolling. And I would like them to remove the SOS and strobe lighting levels and the need to turn the head to change modes. Instead, I would make all four lighting levels available in a single mode. However, these suggestions are pretty minor and would only make the excellent Fenix flashlight even better.

The Fenix L2D CE Premium Q5 is very bright and light, uses common batteries, is water-resistant, and provides very good light for a very long time.

This is a really good flashlight.

You can get it for \$59.50 at [BrightGuy.com](http://BrightGuy.com) or \$62.50 at [Fenix-Store.com](http://Fenix-Store.com). Also, you can get powerful, slow draining, Sanyo Eneloop rechargeable AA NiMH batteries at Fry's, Circuit City, or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

Great gear. Great caving. I'll see you underground.



How do Texas cavers stay in contact with each other, other than *The TEXAS CAVER*?

This is a question that has been asked over the history of caving in Texas, and has changed over the years.

From reading 50 years

of *Texas Caving* by Carl Kunath, letters and long distance telephone calls were used early on. In the modern age of computers, internet and email, we have mailing lists. Mailing lists allow the mass distribution of email without clogging our email boxes (too much).

Today we use the [Texascavers.com](http://Texascavers.com) (not to be confused with this publication, *The TEXAS CAVER*) mailing list, hosted by yours truly.

Information for subscribing can be found at <http://texascavers.com> or by sending an empty email to [texas-cavers-help@texascavers.com](mailto:texas-cavers-help@texascavers.com).

The mailing list started with the name CaveTex and during a round of technical difficulties, the list was renamed and ownership was passed to Bill Bentley.

Bill handed the baton off to me in January 2006, and it currently resides in a large internet hosting facility in downtown Dallas since then. It's sharing an electronic home with other notable caving sites, such as [cowntown-grotto.org](http://cowntown-grotto.org), [netcavers.org](http://netcavers.org) and [cavetex.net](http://cavetex.net).

I acquired [cavetex.net](http://cavetex.net) in mid 2007, mainly for sentimental reasons. Of note, [cavetex.net](http://cavetex.net) is just forwarded to [texascavers.com](http://texascavers.com) in case anyone with a really old address runs across it.

There are currently 326 subscribers to the mailing list, which is about the same amount of people we had in 2006 when I took over the list.

There are roughly 400 messages a month that get posted, ranging from a wide variety of trip announcements, gear reviews and the pretty regular off-topic posting.

Of course, with this many people all posting their opinion on various topics, there will be the usual flaring of tempers. The community as a whole does a very fine job of policing itself; private emails usually take care of any problems.

Come join in, if you aren't already a subscriber. The more cavers that participate, the more information that can be shared.

If anyone has questions, feel free to email me at [wokka@justfamily.org](mailto:wokka@justfamily.org).

Charles Goldsmith, administrator of the [texascavers.com](http://texascavers.com) mailing list.

# Sotano de las Golondrinas – May 2008

Trip Report and Photos by David Ochel



**Joe Datri on rope.**

I had wanted to “do Golondrinas” for quite a while. Summer 2007 I bought a rope and slowly started planning. Early this year, an extended Memorial Day weekend was set as the date. When the day of departure came close, Joe Datri and Gary Franklin were the only ones left

from all the folks that earlier had expressed interest in going.

At the Grotto meeting on the Wednesday before the trip, Alex Benavente spontaneously decided to join us as well. Being originally from San Luis Potosi and knowing his way around the caves in the state, this naturally put him into the position of becoming our tour guide for the trip.

We left Austin, Texas on Saturday morning and were on the road by 8 am. We had decided to cram all four of us into my little Tacoma XtraCab, for gas-saving reasons and because we were not totally sure that we would be able to make it up the mountains without a 4-wheel drive vehicle. (Turns out that one could probably make it with a 2-wheel drive and high clearance, as long as it doesn't rain a lot.) Everybody, including the truck but excluding Gary, had the necessary papers already. Luckily and a bit surprisingly, there was no waiting line for getting Gary's tourist card in Nuevo Laredo, and off we went into Mexico, staying on highway 85 because it reportedly has the best (and fastest) roads. By 3:30 pm, we had made it through the moderately heavy traffic in Monterrey. We stopped for dinner in Ciudad Victoria and made it into Ciudad Mante shortly after 9 pm. We had a few beers in a bar aptly named “La Cueva” and then went to bed in our hotel room.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, our little group was back on the road and made it to Aquismon before noon. Following a brief stop in the town center, we headed up the





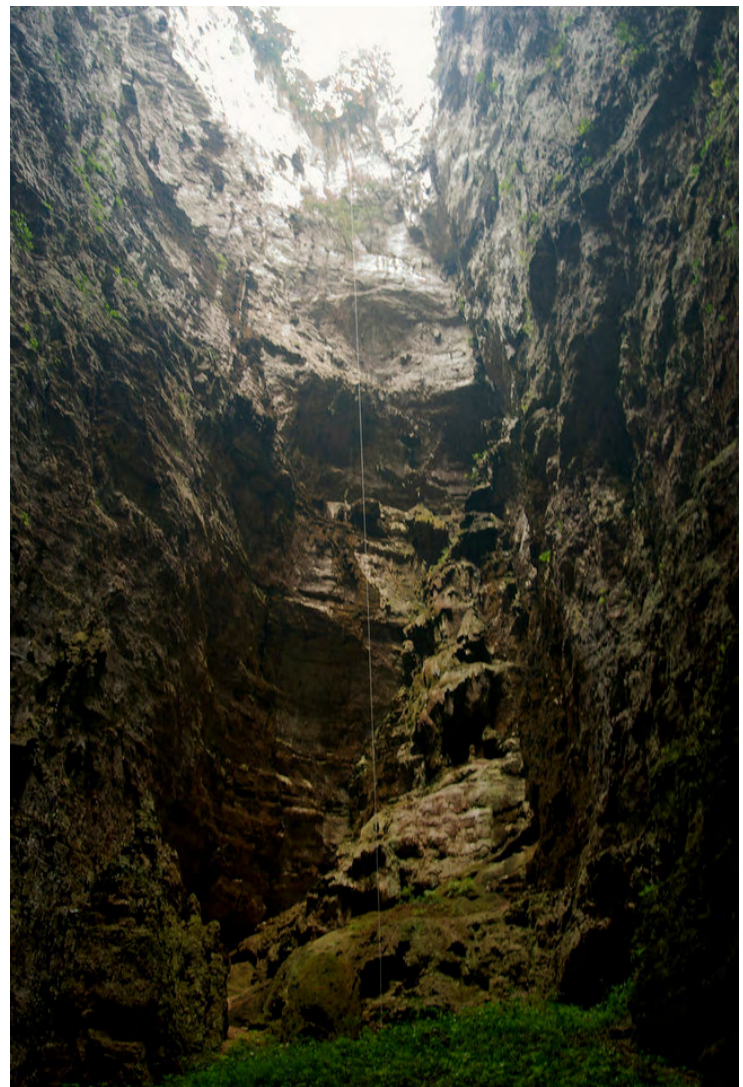
tial beehives in the entrance and were on the lookout for them. Indeed, we could see bees swarming in and out a small crevice on the left-hand cave wall (when looking from the lower side), but agreed that using the right one of the two easily accessible rigging spots on the lower side should be far enough away from them. Using natural anchors, it took a little while until I had rigged the drop with a rebelay to my satisfaction, keeping the rope from rubbing on the ledge. Once Gary and Joe had followed me down, I climbed back up to release Alex, who had stayed on top to watch the rope. By then, it looked like the bees had already gone to sleep.

While I was climbing, a local muchacho came by and told Alex that it was time to leave the cave – which we did, as soon as Alex had made it down to tell the others to come back out. Watching the returning swifts diving full-speed into the pit made me wanting to be able to fly like them, too. We arrived at the truck past 9 pm and started our drive back to Aquismon, but not before having a lengthy encounter with a drunk Huastec who accused us of stealing rocks from the cave. Since Gary (also known as “el hombre peligroso” on this trip) had been the last one coming back up the trail, sweating under the burden of his heavy cave pack, it was obvious that he must be the one carrying the stolen rocks in his pack.

Monday morning came, our rope sherpa arrived in

mountain in order to check out the situation at the Sotano. Not much (apart from a lot of wood construction – signage and additional platforms) was going on, and after paying our 10 pesos each for visiting the cave, we talked to the two guys who seemed to be in charge. (The mentioning of “we” talking to locals in this trip report usually refers to Alex doing the talking and then translating for the rest of us.) We were told that we could drop the rope into the cave at 10 am and had to be out by 3 pm, and that it would cost us 40 pesos per nose – more or less consistent with what other recent trip reports said. We agreed to meet one of the locals at 9 am the next morning – he would carry our rope the relatively short but steep path from the road to the cave (and back) for 150 pesos. After staring down into the Sotano for another while and checking out potential rigging options, we decided to head towards Guaguas.

We spent about an hour at the regional Sunday market that we ran into on our way, finally made it to the entrance to Hoyas de las Guaguas (also spelled Huahuas on local signs), and decided to pay the 35 pesos each for rappelling into it. I had brought 200 m of 9 mm rope that we carried down and up the trails to the cave with the intention to rig the low side of the entrance pit (about 180 m) – due to it being afternoon already, we were only going to drop the entrance and not continue down into the rest of the cave. Back in Austin, we had heard several warnings about poten-





time, and by 9:30 am we were busy rigging to natural anchors on the low side of the Sotano de las Golondrinas, a drop of approximately 330 m. Philip Rykwaldler had told me about an elegant rigging solution that Matt Oliphant had used when they went there together the last time: Wrapping the rope with ample padding around a big boulder that is overlooking the pit, and anchoring it to another big rock further back. It worked like a charm – the 10 mm Talon rope was hanging free and there was even room to get on and off it without any hassle or changing over from and to another access line. No need to set bolts or trust other people's bolts. By 10:30 am we were finally ready to lower the rope down the pit, and shortly after I started my descent. Gary and Joe followed.

Alex – who had already shown up with a knee bandage on Saturday– decided to give his knee a break and watch the rope, instead of going for a new personal Golondrinas record. We did not time our descents, but it felt like Joe and Gary took their time, while all three of them claimed that I was speeding on my way down there. (It did not feel that fast to me – I touched down pretty slow and smoothly.)

I started frogging back out solo once Joe hit the floor, about half an hour past noon and after having had ample time to explore the bottom of this beautiful cave. It took me about 70 minutes – I guess a rope walker and/or more training might be in order for next time. Due to our given 3

pm deadline coming closer, Gary and Joe decided to frog out tandem, which took something between 2.5 and 3 hours. In the meantime, I had prepared a little haul system, and by the time when large numbers of birds started their descent into the cave and a surprisingly big crowd of Mexican tourists showed up to watch their return, the rope was back in its two cave packs. No complaints about missed deadlines from the officials, and after mastering the climb back up to the truck and stopping for a couple of beers up in the mountains, we were on our way to Xilitla for a late, but excellent dinner.

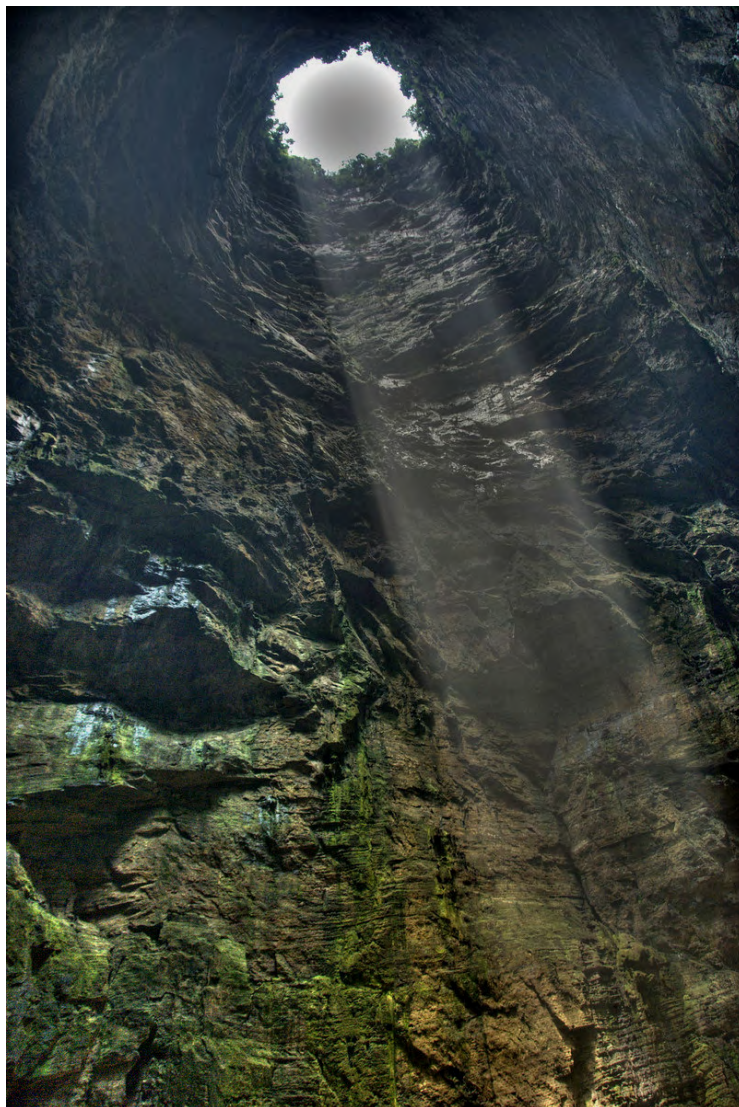
Tuesday was tourist day. We spent most of the day visiting Las Pozas de Edward James, and then drove towards Rio Verde and camped at Media Luna, a small park outside the city and a great place to swim.

We visited our last cave on Wednesday just off the highway towards San Luis Potosi, in the Valle de los Fantomas, where Alex knew some caves he had been visiting years ago. Looking for Llantas, a pit with a 60 m drop, we first ended up mistaking a nearby, shallow sinkhole for it and decided that it must have been filled with trash and debris in the years that had passed. This led to us rigging Encino Rojo instead, a little pit just deep enough to make my 30 m rope not reach the bottom by a couple of meters, and with an average diameter of maybe 3 m and some flowstone to admire – good enough to briefly drop down for a look without taking any backup gear? When it was my turn, I

arrived at the end of the rope realizing that I had forgotten to bring the footloop for my frog system with me. This resulted at first in a foolish attempt to turn my chest harness into a footloop, which would have worked over the short distance if I had not relied on its plastic buckle to hold my entire weight – standing up in it resulted in the buckle popping open and the harness falling onto a ledge out of reach. Now without both footloop and chest harness, and not much rope below me to turn into a loop to stand in, I finally ended up using a 50 cm or so piece of Prussik cord that I was carrying on my harness as a rather short footloop. Lesson learned. We went to take a brief look down the “real” (and very impressive) Llantas pit that Alex had located in the meantime with the help of a local passerby, and then hit the road.

Around 5 pm, we dropped Alex off in the periphery of San Luis Potosi, where he was going to visit with his mother, and then continued North to Saltillo, stopping at a hotel around 10:30 pm. Thursday morning we got on the road around 8 am and, taking the toll roads towards Nuevo Laredo, made it to the border in 3.5 hours. Our 1700 mile-long trip ended shortly before 4 pm in Gary’s driveway back in Austin.

Notes on gear and preparation:



\* The Talon rope I bought from PMI seemed to suffer from sheath slippage – I knew that there was a problem that had supposedly been fixed by summer 2007, but in contradiction of my memory I may have bought my rope before the problem had been fixed. This resulted in about a meter or two of very loose sheath right below the spot where Gary, Joe and I had gotten off our racks, and in the chest ascenders noticeably pulling down the sheath for few millimeters after grabbing the rope while climbing out. Not a big deal all in all. Apart from that, I thought that the rope was noticeably less stretchy than an all- Nylon rope and very nice to climb on.

\* I was using an ABC chest ascender, and while I like the metal trigger that you pull on in order to disengage the cam completely (vs. the plastic one on newer Petzl crolls), it happened about half a dozen times while climbing out of Golondrinas that the cam would stay open (in the “thumbed down” position) after moving the ascender up the rope and sitting down, instead of grabbing the rope, resulting in some cursing and fiddling on my end. I was wearing a loose shirt that would wrinkle a little bit. The trigger, which has a slightly inward-bent shape, would rub against the shirt, and due to the much weaker spring (compared to the Petzl ascender) that pulls the cam into the closed position, it would just stay there instead of being pulled back and grabbing the

rope. Very annoying – I am going back to using Petzl’s croll.

\* Both Gary and Joe complained about their legs falling asleep during the descent into Golondrinas – fortunately not more than that. This didn’t happen to me. (Maybe because of my speedy descent?) A general precaution against this could be to rig a footloop to your rack that you can occasionally stand up in to take weight off the leg loops of your seat harness – I heard this recommendation from several people.

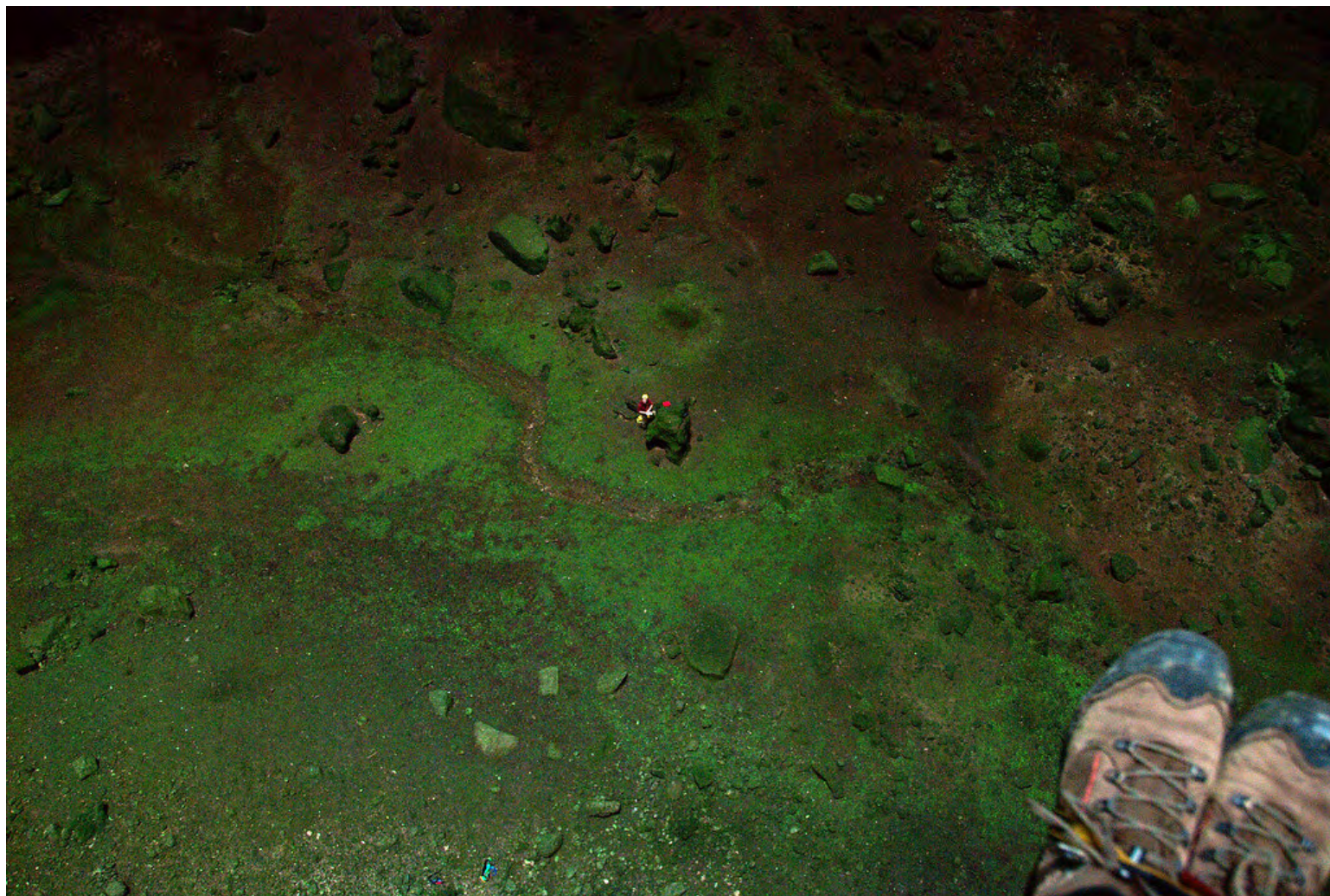
Also, per Philip’s recommendation, I was wearing bike shorts under my normal shorts, which provided for a very smooth ride.

\* I believe that the trip into Guaguas on the day before Golondrinas served as a worthwhile real-life check/preparation (getting used to long drops, elevation, etc.) for everybody. I made Gary, Joe and myself climb the Golon-



From left: David Ochel, Joe Datri, Gary Franklin, and Alex Benavente

drinas rope in its full length in the treadmill back in Austin to be sure that we would be able to climb the distance, but this is of course not quite the same as looking down a deep pit.



# Postcard from a Texas Caver— Ice Cave, Wayne County, Kentucky, June 21, 2008

Submitted by Marvin Miller



Bill Walden wanted to continue the survey of Ice Cave. Sounded like a good thing to do on a hot day. We parked along the tree line at the edge of the pasture on Saturday morning, Bill, John Cassidy, Harry Goepel, and I.

Packs and ropes were slung on backs and we trudged up the trail through the woods to the top of the ridge. There, just as Bill had promised, was a great big hole in the ground, fluted walls dropping to the breakdown blocks 15 feet below.

Bill and Harry surveyed around the edge of the pit while John and I rigged a rope and cable ladder for the drop. A black vulture flew, disturbed, from her nest somewhere below.

At the bottom of the entrance drop, huge boulders lay jumbled around expectant holes that opened to greater depths. We followed Bill down one side of the breakdown pile into the larger entrance chamber of the cave. Bill had two survey objectives – finish the survey on this level of the cave and also survey down at least one of several pits to possible virgin territory below.

John joined Bill for the upper level surveying while Harry and I rigged around a large slab of breakdown that projected over the edge of the deeper of the pits. We backed up to another breakdown boulder and ended up with a nicely balanced system that pleased us both.

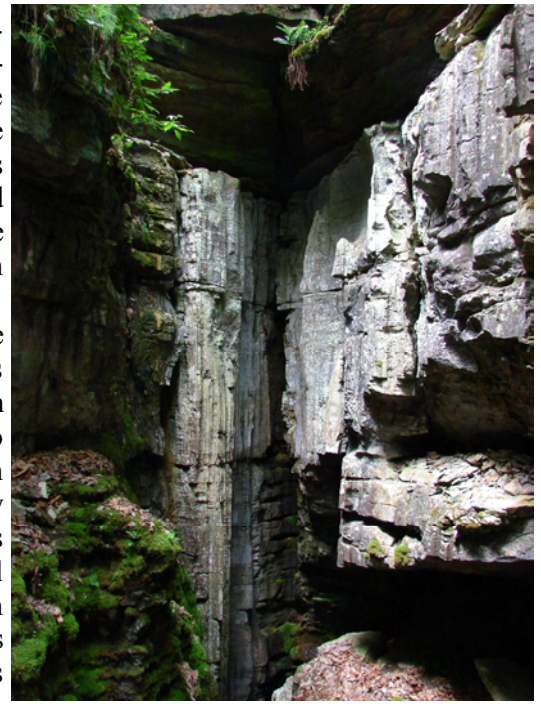
Harry descended first and then we taped the drop. 52 feet. While I sketched Harry explored and found the bottom of one of the other pits we had been looking at. He also pulled some rocks out of a crack and found the cave continuing down another 20+ foot drop into a nice room. After I rappelled we surveyed around the bottom of the pit room and then up into an area of several nice little dome rooms, one of which continued up for quite a distance. Later, while

I was sketching, John appeared some ways above the bottom of this pit and dropped a tape to tie in with our survey.

The cave deserves its name. I am accustomed to caving in Texas so any cave up here is going to feel cold, but even the veterans say this cave is colder by 10 to 20 degrees than it ought to be. Historically, the cave did contain ice formations but we didn't see any. No formations of any kind, really. The impressively fluted walls made up for this.

Harry and I ended the day by surveying into the continuing lead and taping the next drop at 23 feet. We didn't have any rope with us to go down and check it out. We climbed out of the cave to the late afternoon heat. Headed back down the ridge, looking at several interesting sinks on the way.

Thanks for a good and productive trip, Harry, Bill, and John.



**John Cassidy rappelling into the cave**

*Marvin is a longtime Texas caver and member of the Bexar Grotto. He and his family are living and working, temporarily, in Nashville and, as you can see, thoroughly enjoying the area. Marvin also is the long time project leader of the Government Canyon State Nature Area Caving Project, where they have discovered and mapped several caves. The project is currently on hold till Marvin, his wife, and his daughters return to the Lone Star State.*

# Texas Cavers Reunion!

## Paradise Canyon Park on the Medina River

October 10th - 12th, 2008!



Howdy Y'all!

The 31st Annual TCR will be on the weekend of October 10 thru 12.

The magnificent site is located just outside of San Antonio below the Diversion Dam on the beautiful Medina River. The site has a half-mile of river front with many good camping areas. The swimming will be superb and there are even some small caves across the river.

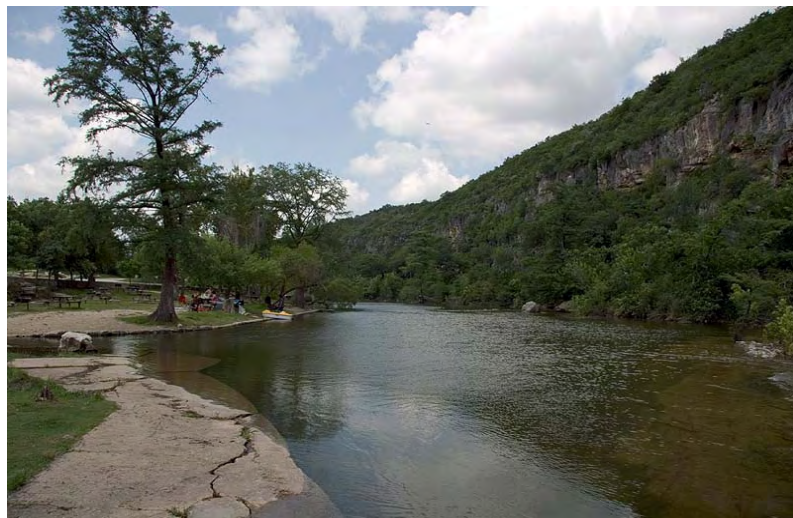
As always, well behaved dogs and children are welcome. We have obtained special permission to allow dogs as the park generally prohibits pets.

### Because of this, TCR asks that you please pick up after your dog.

For the latest information about TCR 2008, visit the website at [www.oztotl.com/tcr](http://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 2008 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 set up.
- The TCR staff is not in the police business. That means



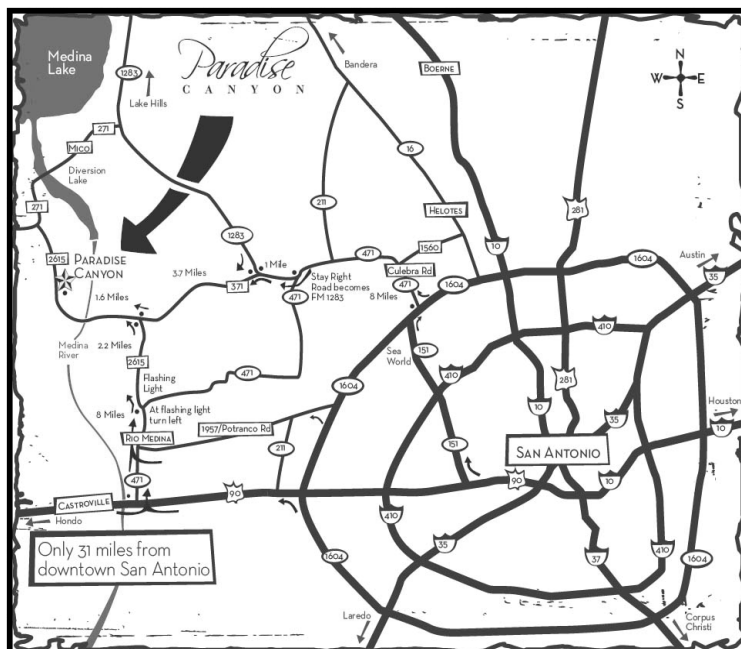
everyone should police themselves and those in their clan. In other words....you are responsible for the behavior of your children and your guests.

- 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.

See y'all there... Allan Cobb

Directions to Paradise Canyon Park: From Loop 1604 in San Antonio, take FM 471 (Culebra Rd.) west approximately 7.5 miles until the road forks with FM 471 going left and CR 1281 goes to the right. A sign will say "Medina Lake - 9 miles" on the right fork. Take the right fork toward Lake Medina. Approximately one mile on the left will be a sign "Paradise Canyon". Turn left. Turn right at the next fork (CR 2615) and follow that road until it crosses the Medina River. Paradise Canyon Park will be on the right one-half mile after the river (just past Paradise Farms).

More info at [www.paradisecanyon.com](http://www.paradisecanyon.com)





## **15th International Congress of Speleology— Are you Ready to Register?!**

By George Veni and Andrew Eavis

The International Congress of Speleology (ICS) is the world's premier speleological event. An event of the International Union of Speleology (UIS), it is held once every four years in a location selected by the delegates of the UIS member nations. The next ICS will be held in Kerrville, Texas, USA on 19-26 July 2009. An estimated 2,000 people from nearly 60 countries are expected to attend to share the results of their latest exploration, research, and techniques. Registration will begin by the end of July 2008.

The National Speleological Society (NSS) of the United States will host the ICS in combination with its annual convention for a truly spectacular affair. All of the usual ICS and NSS events will occur in 2009, as well as some new ones. This article covers some of the many activities planned, but first, some important information:

- Read the website: [www.ics2009.us](http://www.ics2009.us). Everything we know and plan is immediately posted there. If something is not there, we don't know it or haven't finished planning it yet. If you want more details on anything below, go to the website!
- The 2nd ICS Circular will include the registration form and a summary of all activities. As previously announced, it will only be mailed to those on our mailing list who don't have e-mail addresses (Internet access) or have specifically requested printed copies. It will be downloadable from the website.
- Reservations for all trips, rooms, and activities will be based on the order in which you register. Reservations will not be held for people who have not registered.
- If you are submitting a paper, full registration must be received when or before submitting.
- If you need a visa, the Congress Organizing Committee will gladly provide a letter of invitation to assist in the visa application process, but the committee has no control over the visa process or the decision of the U.S. Consulate.
- A limited amount of support toward the payment of U.S. entry visa application fees will be available to Congress registrants from countries with developing economies.

- Register early for the lowest price. For even lower registration fees, some registration items are optional and can be deducted.

### **General Information**

The 15th ICS will be held at Schreiner University, a small, beautiful private university in Kerrville, Texas, USA. A shuttle bus will transport people between the university and the many nearby hotels, which are available at a wide range of prices. Some hotels offer discounts for people attending the ICS. Clean, air-conditioned apartments and dormitories are available at Schreiner University within a one- to three-minute walk from the sessions. Plenty of room for camping exists at the university and along the Guadalupe River at a nearby former state park.

The Junior Speleological Society (JSS) will provide educational, recreational, and social activities for children of ages 7-17 who attend for the ICS, bringing young people together from all over the world. The JSS will provide a schedule of over 50 chaperoned activities. Participation is voluntary but open to any child registered for the Congress. Some optional JSS activities will require a fee in addition to normal child registration.

Nearly 700 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor space, as well as ample outdoor vending space, will be available for vendors selling caving books, equipment, and related materials. For people who just have a few items to sell, one large room will be available for consignment sales. Exhibit booths and tables will also be available for informational displays. A limited number of tables will be provided free to non-profit caving organizations. If reserved early enough, a booth will be provided for each UIS member organization bidding for the 2013 ICS. If no booths are available, a free table will be provided.

### **Call for Papers**

Papers on any scientific, technical, cultural or educational aspect of speleology are welcome. Sessions are planned in geology, biology, archeology, paleontology, paleoclimate, exploration, exploration techniques, and social and medical sciences. Fifteen symposia that cover a diverse group of state-of-the-art topics are also planned. The abstract and paper must be in English. The abstract text is limited to 30 lines. Papers should total no more than six pages. Submit digital files that are readable in Microsoft Word. The deadlines for papers are:

1 December 2008: Abstract submission

1 January 2009: Notification of acceptance

If the abstract is accepted for presentation:

1 February 2009: Full manuscript submission and Congress registration

7 April 2009: Revisions completed and copyright release submitted

### **Classes, Workshops, and Meetings**

Are you new to caving or just want to learn something dif-

ferent? Three SpeleoArt workshops will be offered. Additionally, there will be a one-day technical class where experts in speleology will lecture on geology, meteorology, chemistry, hydrology, biology, and paleontology. Also, the UIS will have its General Assemblies and meetings of its departments, commissions, and working groups throughout the week. NSS Board of Governors, Sections, Congress of Grottos, and other meetings are also planned, and the international community is welcome to attend. All groups wishing to have meetings at the ICS must contact us and reserve a space by 1 April 2009.

### **International Cave Arts and Music Salons**

The International Cave Arts and Music Salons are competitions that promote and recognize excellent cave-related art, artists, and musicians. They are open to everyone and most entries will be exhibited during the ICS. The highest award for each salon will be presented, and a portrait of the winner will be shown during the Congress's Thursday evening Salon program. The salons are:

- Ballad and Songs
- Cartographic
- Cover Art (newsletter covers)
- Multimedia (exhibition by multiple image computer programs)
- Photographic (projected slide transparencies and digital photographs)
- Photographic Prints
- SpeleMedia (video)
- SpeleoArt
- Symbolic Emblems (pins, patches, logos, etc.)
- T-shirts

### **Social Activities**

Three delicious banquets will be offered during the Congress. The meals will be prepared by the best caterers in the region. The NSS looks forward to sharing its traditional "Howdy Party" on Monday night with speleologists from around the world. This outdoor, informal banquet will feature Texas-style barbeque, Texas-style music by a regionally famous band, and a few surprises. On Friday evening, the NSS will host its annual Awards Banquet to recognize the accomplishments of its members. Everyone, including non-NSS members, is welcome to attend. To help close the week, the 15th ICS banquet will be held on Saturday night with a formal and excellent dinner.

Tuesday offers a relaxing evening of music and song starting with some famous cave balladeers singing their tunes. Then the microphone will be open for anyone who wants to sing caving or non-caving songs or simply play music without vocals. Since the ICS is an international event, folk songs and music from the countries represented are especially welcome. Bring your voice and musical instruments and be ready to perform!

Each year, members of the NSS donate interesting, unusual, and often rare items for auction at the NSS annual conven-

tion. The funds support NSS projects and activities. This tradition is being brought to the 15th ICS. People from around the world are encouraged to donate cave-related items for the Wednesday evening auction. Money from the sales will go to the UIS or the NSS, your choice. What types of items are auctioned? Books, photographs, artwork, music, newsletters and journals, jewelry, historic equipment, registration to future conferences and trips... anything cave-related. Use your imagination! Remember, what may not seem special to you may be precious and rare to people from other countries. The auction is always exciting and fun, and will provide needed money to the speleological organization you select.

The Terminal Syphons, a caver band which has played at the NSS Convention since 1985, will perform later on Wednesday night. Come to this exciting party and dance to a blend of rock and roll and blues.

The SpeleOlympics will challenge athletes in five individual events, plus one team event. The teams will not represent nations but international friendship and cooperation. Each person on a team will be from a different country. The rope climbing, rebelay course, obstacle course, cable ladder climbing, and surveying competitions will be open to men and women of all ages.

### **Trips!!!**

Fantastic trips will be offered before, during and after the ICS.

Day trips will occur throughout the week to several caves and tourist attractions. Registration for these trips will take place at the ICS where times, locations, equipment needs, costs, and other details will be listed. Prices will be low, mainly to cover the costs of the transportation and any entry fees. The caving trips will include simple and difficult caves, wet and dry, horizontal and vertical—there will be something for everyone. Bring whatever equipment you'll need for your preference in caving. In addition to caving, a wide variety of cultural and family trips will offer shopping, family fun, and non-caving outdoor activities. Most day trips will leave the Congress in the morning and return in time for dinner.

Have you ever seen 40 million bats?! Special evening trips will be offered to watch the world's largest bat colonies fly out of caves. Evening trips to beautiful tourist caves will also occur: Cave Without A Name, Caverns of Sonora, and Natural Bridge Caverns. Like the day trips, registration for the evening trips will take place at the ICS. Most evening trips will leave the Congress in the late afternoon, have dinner at or near the cave, and will return at night.

You must register before the ICS to join the pre- and post-Congress field camps and excursions, as well as the special one-day trips that will occur during the Congress on Wednesday. Pre and post-congress field camps and excur-

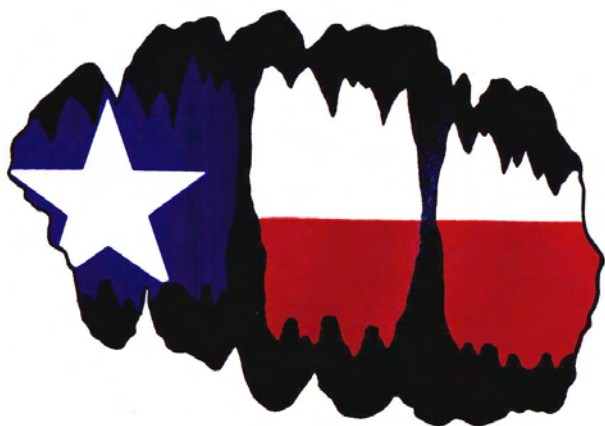
sions generally include all meals, lodging, and transportation (you will need to arrange your own transportation to the trips and between the trips and the Congress). Field camps focus primarily on wild (non-touristic) caving, and you will be expected to bring your own camping and caving equipment. Some will provide hostel style accommodations. Excursions may offer some wild caving, but will primarily focus on touristic caving, cultural activities, and other easily accessed activities. Excursions will include accommodations ranging from hostels to hotels, and restaurants will serve most meals.

Twelve pre-ICS excursions and field camps, nine post-ICS excursions and field camps, and 20 Wednesday trips are planned! Some trips will appeal to those with a general interest in caves, while others specialize in topics like exploration, geology, biology, and management. Registration for these trips must be received by 16 April 2009; participation cannot be guaranteed after that date. Combining one pre-ICS and one post-ICS trip, you can explore caves and karst across North America, from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. Combined, the 41 trips will visit 17 U.S. states plus the Bahamas, Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico.

#### **Are you ready to register?**

We hope you are, and we are ready to give you the best ICS we can. Remember, this is just an overview of the 15th ICS. Go to the website and download the 2nd Circular. Use it as a guide and then look at the website for more details. Don't forget to watch the 15-minute video on the website to see Kerrville and more of what the 15th ICS has to offer. If you still have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at: 15th ICS, P.O. Box 691965, San Antonio, Texas 78269 USA, 001-413-383-2276 (fax), [secretary@ics2009.us](mailto:secretary@ics2009.us) or [johnmoses@excite.com](mailto:johnmoses@excite.com).

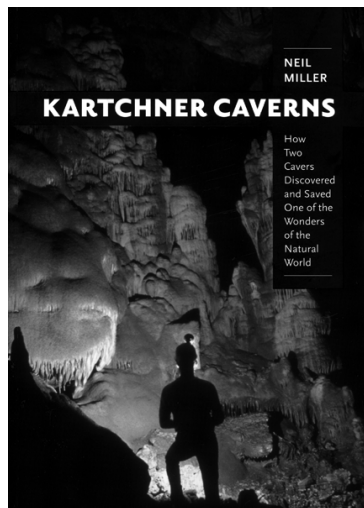
While the U.S.A. is the host country for the 15th ICS, its committees include members and assistance from around the world. It is with this help and your attendance that we expect this to be an excellent ICS where we can build and strengthen international friendships. On behalf of the UIS, the NSS, and the ICS Organizing Committee, we hope you will join us in Kerrville for the 15th International Congress of Speleology on 19-26 July 2009.



## **Book Review—*Kartchner Caverns: How Two Cavers Discovered and Saved One of the Wonders of the Natural World.***

Neil Miller. University of Arizona Press, Tucson; 2008. ISBN 978-0-8165-2516-4. 7 by 10 inches, 215 pages, soft-bound. \$15.95.

Submitted by Bill Mixon



This reasonably priced book is a thoroughly researched history of the discovery and development of Kartchner Caverns, with most emphasis on things up through the purchase of the property by Arizona State Parks. The cave

was discovered by Randy Tufts and Gary Tenen in November 1974 and kept nearly secret until the Arizona state legislature voted to acquire the cave in April 1988. After the discovery, Tufts and Tenen, recognizing that the cave could not be preserved forever by secrecy, the traditional means of cave conservation among Arizona cavers, soon decided that making it into a show cave offered the best route to preservation, despite the compromises that required. They spent years, in conjunction with the Kartchner family, trying to figure out how to develop the cave privately. During this period one gets the impression that they were obsessed CIA-wannabes, operating under assumed names and an out-of-state mailing address, as if even the knowledge that they were from Arizona would blow their cover. When plans for that fell through, they ended up getting the state of Arizona to buy the property, using parliamentary maneuvers that kept most of the legislature ignorant of what the money was for until the very last minute. All this takes up 135 of the 165 pages of the main body of the book.

The development of the show cave took a lot longer than anticipated, because of studies done and measures taken to protect the environment. I had at the time the impression that approximately equal amounts of effort were going into conscientious development and making a show of how conscientious the development was, and that impression isn't contradicted by the book. Tufts and Tenen remained involved during this period, although perhaps not as involved as they would have liked. Part of the cave was finally opened to the public in November 1999.

The writing is what can politely be called enthusiastic, as might be expected from the title, but I got used to it. The book includes a list of the dozens of people interviewed and notes on sources of the facts, nicely done in a way that doesn't clutter the text with lots of footnotes or endnote numbers. There are many color photos of the living speleothems in the cave. The photos tend to be printed a bit dark and flat for my taste, but they do show what all the secrecy and subsequent excitement were about.

## Michael Ray Moody: 1947-1994

Cavern in the early 1970s.



**Mike Moody posing with his spanking new Toyota FJ-40 in May 1970. This is the vehicle that transported 21 cavers across the international bridge to Acuña. Carl Kunath photo.**

It is with great sadness that I announce the death of a good friend and a major figure in Texas caving. Please note that this information is coming long after the fact.

Mike Moody, 47, died on April 7, 1994 only a few days after suffering a stroke at his home. Unfortunately, he had been absent from the caving world for quite a while and his whereabouts was generally unknown to his former companions. At the time, his death passed without a ripple in the caving community.

Mike was survived by his wife, Lucrezia, and by their adopted son, Breihan "Mikey." To compound the tragedy, Lucrezia passed away only a few years after Mike.

Mike got his start in caving with the Texas Tech cavers in the late 1960s, joined the NSS as #8808, and soon became a fixture in Texas caving. He was chairman of the Tech group in the fall of 1966 and was a Charter member of Carta Valley Sucks. He was a staunch member of the Dallas – Fort Worth Grotto and chaired that group in 1971, Mike visited many caves in Texas and New Mexico and he attended virtually all the TSA events during the next few years. Mike was honored as Texas Caver Of The Month in December 1971. Another of the high points of his career was editing the Texas Caver for 1972. Mike was also a mover and shaker of the major effort to survey Longhorn

Mike and Lucrezia Doughty were married on January 1, 1972 at a small ceremony attended by family both of blood and of guano. The ceremony was traditional until, at a critical moment, the cuckoo clock on the wall began to sound off the hour and the entire group, which might have remained straight-faced had it been, say, 2 PM, convulsed with laughter as it relentlessly announced 11 AM! There was a wonderful party afterward in the true CVS style.

Mike worked for Southwest Labs (a soil testing company) in Dallas, and had many outside interests including ham radio, RC aircraft, and firearms. It was Mike's .357 Magnum that expeditiously dispatched a rattler at the entrance of a new Edwards County cave and thereby christened the cave.

I recall many things about Mike. He was a fine caving companion and a nice guy to be around. He was an accomplished photographer both of black and white, which he processed in his own darkroom, and of color transparencies. I am reminded of the party that followed the 1970 wedding and champagne reception for Pete Lindsley and Karen

Bradley. The evening's final destination for many of us was at Moody's apartment in Euless. Here, we consumed the remainder of a case of champagne donated by Karen's parents and were feeling no pain. Mike produced a Carousel slide projector and commenced a free-form slide show. The projector became balky and Mike was cussing and complaining, shaking it, fiddling with it, and it seemed that eventually it would accept the next slide. The group was too far gone to fix the problem or even to care much and by 4 AM or so, the party was over. In the cold light of noon, it was discovered that the projector had ceased to function because it was stuffed with now-mangled slides that Mike had crammed into it one after the other; refusing to take "no" for an answer.

In 1970, Mike bought a Toyota FJ-40 and took it anywhere, anytime. It wasn't unusual to take four cavers and all their gear from Dallas to the Guadalupe Mountains for weekend of caving. Remember, this is a fairly small vehicle and not intended for long road trips. There is a great story about Mike and that vehicle in 50 Years Of Texas Caving. (Follow this link: [http://pages.suddenlink.net/carl-kunath/50\\_Years/Stuffing\\_the\\_FJ-40.pdf](http://pages.suddenlink.net/carl-kunath/50_Years/Stuffing_the_FJ-40.pdf))

So, M. Ray, your caving friends miss you still and are saddened that you have left us.

We are diminished.

===Carl Kunath



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## Westside CAVE DAY Saturday September 13th, 2008

Cedar Park is home to some pretty unusual characters, but one of the most reclusive may be Ricky Rhadine.

That name doesn't ring a bell? Well, perhaps that's because Ricky is a bug, a cave beetle to be exact. In fact, Cedar Park is the only place you can find this rare cave beetle that was nicknamed Ricky by local cavers. It also goes by the scientific name, the Rhadine persephone beetle.

CAVE DAY is sponsored by the City of Cedar Park Parks & Recreation Department and hosted by the Texas Cave Conservancy. The event is from 10:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. There is no charge. On Saturday, September 13th, 2008 the TCC will offer cave related activities at five sites.

All information is available at Kay Redden Park. Come by and choose what site or sites you want to visit.

One hike starts at Kay Redden Park and visits seven caves in the Buttercup Cave Preserve. There is no cave entry on this site. You may also come on out and check out the preserve on your own any time throughout the year. Educational signs have been installed at each cave.

The second site will be at the Twin Creeks Historical Area. This new park has a historical log cabin, beautiful springs, tall trees, running water year round and even an Indian Shelter Cave available for visitation. Allow a fifteen-minute drive to the site. It is available all day.

The third site will be the Texas Cave Conservancy owned Avery Ranch Cave. Cavers will assist you while in the cave. Pick up a cave entry pass at Kay Redden Park. Allow a fifteen-minute drive to the cave.

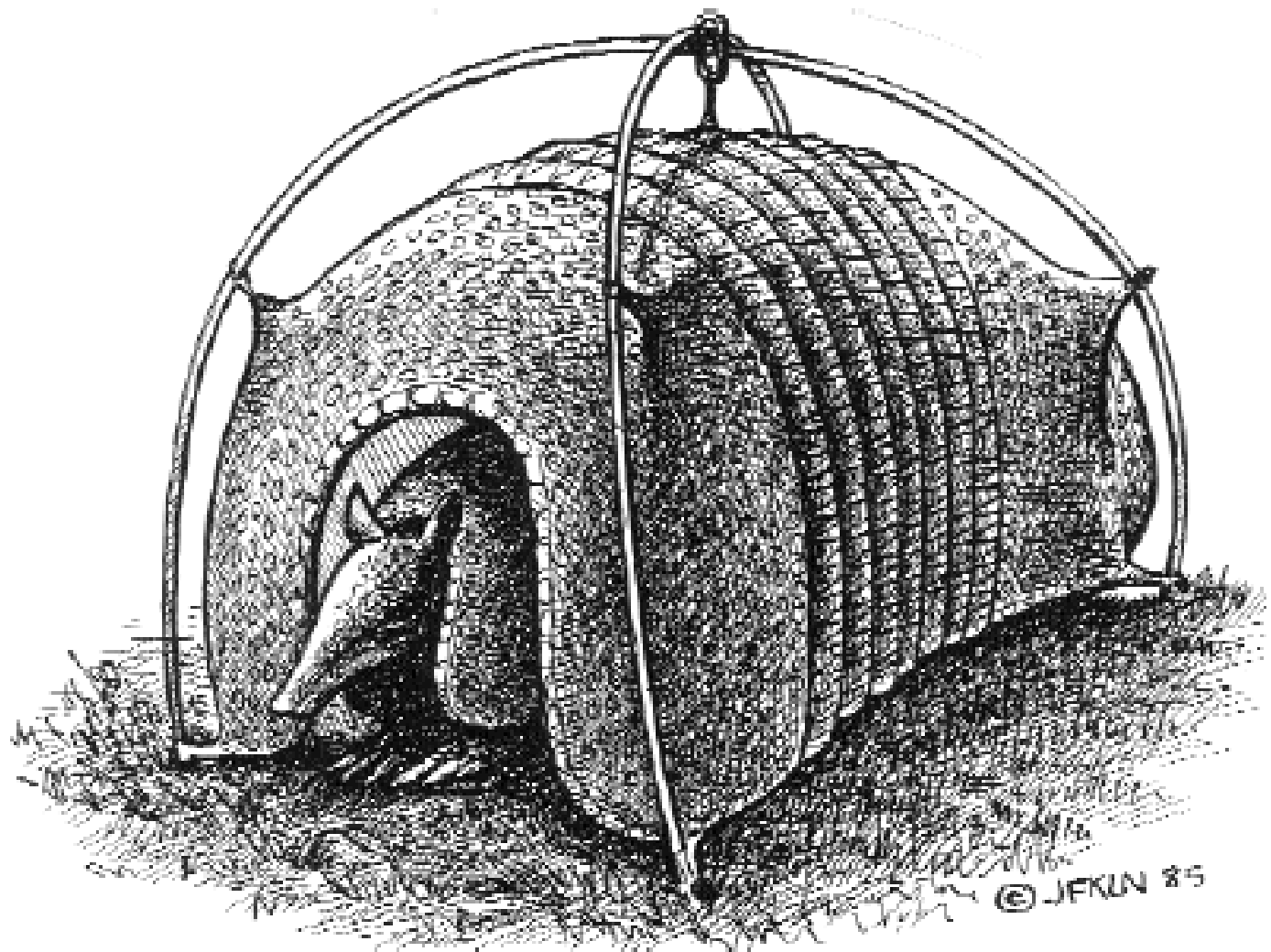
The fourth site will be a special access to the new City of Cedar Park-Discovery Well Cave Preserve. Signs will be up at the caves and the trails will be marked by flags. Allow fifteen-minutes to drive from Kay Redden Park to the Discovery Well Preserve parking area.

This year we have a fifth site where you will be able to enter another cave. The Texas Cave Conservancy owned Dies Ranch Treasure Cave will be available. Allow fifteen-minutes to drive from Kay Redden Park to the parking area. Kay Redden Park is located at the intersection of Lakeline Boulevard and Buttercup Creek Boulevard, Cedar Park, Texas.

For additional information, contact the City of Cedar Park-Parks & Recreation Department. 512-401-5500 or visit

<http://new.texascaves.org/>.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!**



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