



TSA Activities Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 3

March 2006

News & Notes

TSA Affairs:

TexasCavers.com Changes Administrators

Bill Bentley, the webmaster for TexasCavers.com, has decided to pass on the burden of administering the list server due to time conflicts. Charles Goldsmith of the North East Texas Cavers has graciously volunteered to take the position and maintain the remailer. The website has been recently updated with a few things; noticeably a new link to the archives, a search function to the page, and a banner ad at the bottom. All donations to TexasCavers.com that exceed the operating budget will be donated to one of the caving-related charities such as TCMA, TSA, NSS, etc.

Please give your thanks to both these gentlemen the next time you see them for a job well done!

Texas Caver Returns !

After a long period of noticeable absence, the *Texas Caver* is making its long-anticipated return. Mark Alman, current editor of the *Texas Caver*, has sent the first issue of 2006 to the printers at the time of this writing. It should be in the mail soon. Volunteer editors for the missing *Texas Caver* issues of 2004 and 2005 have been found and all the past material that had been submitted for publication has been recovered (this includes a huge amount of material dating back to 2000-2001). With a little luck and some hard work from the volunteer editors, we will hopefully get all of it published before the end of the year.

TSS Affairs

TSS Work Session

There is a scheduled work session of the Texas Speleological Survey, Wednesday, March 8th, at the JJ Pickle Research Center on Burnet Road north of highway 183. Several tasks require attention including the installation of hardware and software, filing recently received exchange publications, and help with organizing county files. Keith Heuss will be working the Colorado Bend files and may require some help also. The door will be open at 5:00 PM and stay open till we adjourn. We'll probably work until 8:30 or 9:00 PM.

The TSS office is in Building 18-A at the Pickle Research Center (PRC) in north Austin. PRC is between 183 and Braker Ln., and between Mopac and Burnet Rd. If coming north on Mopac, take the Braker exit, then enter from the north. If closed, continue east to Burnet, turn south (right) and enter from the east.

If coming west on Research (183), take the Burnet Road

exit, then north on Burnet to the east entrance on the left. After hours, you can only enter from the east off Burnet Road. A detailed map to PRC can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/maps/prc/>. On the PRC map 2 ("NW Area"), 18-A is the little building just above the "ra" in "Granberry". Park to the south in the PETEX lot across the street (Read Granberry Trail) from building 18-A. Remember that you must arrive before 6:00 PM, or the gate guards might not let you in! If you have questions, please contact Jim Kennedy <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

Ron Ralph.

NSS Affairs

Spring NSS Board of Governors Meeting in Texas

The Metroplex grottos will host the spring meeting of the NSS BOG in Irving, Texas on March 24-26, 2006. Evening parties on Friday and Saturday will be at Bill Steele and Diana Tomchick's house, Saturday meeting and catered lunch at the Irving Garden and Arts Center, and Saturday dinner at the Irving Spring Creek Barbeque. Come on out and meet your elected NSS officials and have a good time, too. For details, contact Bill Steele <speleosteele@comcast.net>, or see the website <<http://www.maverickgrotto.org/nssbog/index.htm>>.

NSS Convention in Bellingham, WA

Watch for next month's expanded announcement and details on the upcoming NSS Convention in Bellingham, WA, August 7-11, 2006. For more immediate information, visit the website at <www.nss2006.org>.

National News

Jewel Cave Third Longest Cave in World

Custer, S.D. - Explorers have added to the official length of Jewel Cave, moving it to third place on the list of the world's longest known caves. A recent four-day trip added about 3,700 feet to the cave's known length, bringing it to 135 miles and 10 feet. Making the survey trip were Mike Wiles, cave management specialist at Jewel Cave; Larry Shaffer, a computer specialist and cave volunteer from the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in Hill City; Andy Armstrong of Custer, an intern at Jewel Cave; and Stan Allison, a National Park Service cave specialist from Carlsbad, N.M. The official length of a cave is not the distance between points, but rather the cumulative distance of all explored and mapped passages, said Todd Suess, superintendent of Jewel Cave National Monument. On the longer multi-day explorations, cavers may spend six to eight hours traveling from the entrance to a main camp deep inside the cave. Water is stored along the way in plastic and nylon caches that catch drips from the cave roof. The main camp stores 20 gallons of water, enough to hold four people

for four days. Explorers then travel another three hours from the camp to the unexplored areas, work for six to eight hours, then make their way back to camp. Other cave explorations are single-day trips, but they also can be productive. "The longer trips push the far edge of the cave," Suess said Wednesday. "The one-day trips will go to areas closer in ... but they might break into a whole different section of the cave that's in a completely different direction than thought."



Heavenly Room in Jewel Cave (NPS photo)

Armstrong said he liked exploring beyond the End, the name of the last place that had been explored. "When we got beyond the End, we found lots more, like a passage 30 feet wide and 50 feet high that went on and on." But there are plenty of tough, tight spots to get through, also, including a stretch in the first few miles underground called the Miseries. "It took us an hour and 40 minutes to get through the Miseries," Allison said. "It's a thousand feet of belly crawling." But there are also high wide galleries where mobility is hindered less and jeweled walls reflect the light of headlamps, Suess said. Along the way, the explorers saw untouched calcite rafts, thin mineral deposits that look like water lilies; gypsum "flowers" with long streamers and hairs created by wind and water; walls lined with crystals; and deep inside the cave a mummified Townsends long-eared bat, hanging from a roof filled with fossils from the even more distant past. The explorations continue to find large passages and more passages, Suess said. The biggest surprise of the January exploration was that the cave is continuing east, Suess said. "It's, wow, there's more cave out here. We haven't found the end."

(Excerpted from: <deennews.com/mld/aberdeennews/news/13879279.htm>, and Steve Miller. 2006. <<http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/articles/2006/02/16/news/local/news04.txt>>)

(*Editor note:* The original press releases mistakenly stated that Jewel Cave was the second longest cave in the world. The second longest cave is Optimistcheskaya Cave in the western Ukraine at 146+ miles.)

Surveys Lengthen Wind Cave

Eighteen cave explorers surveyed more than 3,500 feet of unexplored passages in Wind Cave on Feb. 11, making it the fourth-longest cave in the world. Cavers from Colorado,

Nebraska and South Dakota brought the total distance surveyed in Wind Cave to 119.6 miles, pushing it past the former fourth-longest cave in the world, Holloch Cave of Switzerland, according to a news release from Wind Cave National Park headquarters. The most significant discovery of the weekend involved large passages on the southwestern edge of the known cave. Near "The Skinner," a 200-foot-long belly crawl, one of the new passages contained a distinct breeze leading into darkness. Explorers plan to return soon to continue surveying the discovery. The exploration was in the farthest reaches southwest from the cave entrance, according to park spokesman Tom Farrell. "It's not just filling in the map," he said. "It's extending the map." The new area explored in the cave is near a room called Vega. It's under the part of the park known as Bison Flats near U.S. Highway 385, Farrell said. "This is one of the greatest caves in the world, known not only for its massive length but also because of its complexity, diverse cave formations and the large amount of boxwork found in the cave," physical science specialist Rod Horrocks said in the release. Formal exploration of Wind Cave began in 1890 by 16-year-old Alvin McDonald. Since then, more than 1,000 people have surveyed in Wind Cave. In the process, they discovered underground lakes, a half-mile-long room, branching helictite "bushes" and more boxwork — which is a calcite honeycomb formation — than is found in the rest of the world's caves. McDonald wrote in his diary in 1891 that he had "given up the idea of finding the end of Wind Cave." This is a sentiment shared by modern cave explorers. Wind experiments conducted by Herb and Jan Conn of Custer in the 1960s reveal possibly less than 10 percent of the cave has been explored. For more information about exploring Wind Cave, visit <www.nps.gov/wica>.

(Excerpted from: <<http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/articles/2006/02/18/news/local/news02.txt>>)

Karst Waters Institute Honors Ron Kerbo

Every year, the Karst Waters Institute hosts an award dinner which honors a person who has made significant contributions in the field of karst studies. This year's recipient is Ronal Kerbo, National Cave Management Coordinator for the U.S. National Park Service, and the dinner will be held in Denver, CO. on March 11, 2006. After the awards presentation, Ron will give a talk entitled "A speleological notebook, or 40 years of wandering about in the stone wilderness".

Mammoth Cave Getting New Lights

Mammoth Cave, Ky. - Mammoth Cave National Park's \$6 million lighting system is on track to be finished before March 2007, along with a new safety system for visitors, park officials said. More than 900 new lights will be in the cave, reducing the voltage from 7,200 to 480 volts and cutting down on unwanted, unnatural plant growth, said Steve Kovar, the park's chief of maintenance. "That wavelength of light, 592 nanometers, doesn't support growth of algae," Kovar said. Along with better lighting, phones are being put in for safety alerts, Kovar said. A button will light up on a control panel, alerting underground workers of

tornado watches and inclement weather on the surface. "Our infrastructure is old," Kovar said. "We've never had the ability to monitor what's going on down there, now we will." Kovar said citations by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 1998 got the light replacement project started. "OSHA had inspected us and found fault in a number of areas. We were able to work with them to find out how we could correct some problems immediately. In the long run, we just had to install a new electrical system," said Vickie Carson, public affairs officer for the park. <<http://www.kentucky.com/mld/kentucky/news/state/13961786.htm>>

Caving Cinema **Floyd Collins Movie Planned**

Billy Bob Thornton has claimed in the past that he is the reincarnation of Benjamin Franklin. And no, he wasn't kidding around or high as a kite at the time of his declaration. So it makes sense that for his next project, he is visiting another blast from the past. It shouldn't be too tricky for him, since he probably feels he existed during that time in another vessel anyway. According to Hollywood Reporter, Thornton will direct and star in the film *Floyd Collins*, set in the 1920s, for Paramount Pictures. His longtime writing partner Tom Epperson adapted the screenplay from the book *Trapped! The Story of Floyd Collins* by Robert Murray and Roger Brucker. The drama centers on the true story of cave explorer Floyd Collins in 1925. After being trapped in a Kentucky cavern, news teams spent nearly two weeks turning it into a media spectacle. The event is significant because it marks one of the first large-scale media frenzies in documented history.

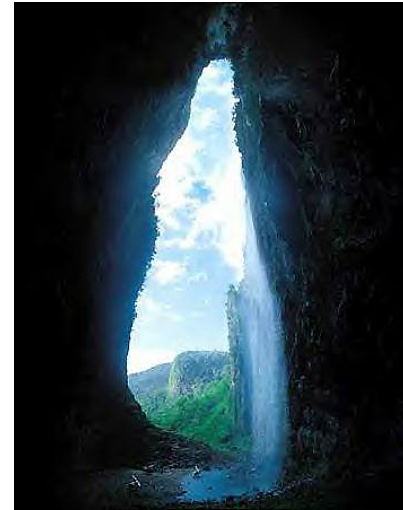
(Excerpted from: Lexi Feinberg. 2006. <<http://www.cinemablend.com/new.php?id=2260>>)

Cave Biology **Explorers Discover Huge Cave and New Poison Frogs in Venezuela**

A cave so huge helicopters can fly into it has just been discovered deep in the hills of a South American jungle paradise. Actually, "Cueva del Fantasma"—Spanish for "Cave of the Ghost", is so vast that two helicopters can comfortably fly into it and land next to a towering waterfall. It was found in the slopes of Aprada tepui in southern Venezuela near the Brazilian and Guyanese borders, one of the most inaccessible and unexplored regions of the world. The area, known as the Venezuelan Guayana, is one of the most biologically rich, geologically ancient and unspoiled parts of the world. This is the first geographic report and photographic evidence of such an immense cave. However, researchers say, it isn't really a cave, but a huge, collapsed, steep gorge. As a bonus, researchers also discovered a new dendrobatid frog species, *Colostethus breweri*, named for the frog's identifier, Charles Brewer-Carías. Dendrobatid frogs make up the group of amphibians commonly known as "poison dart" frogs. This is the second report recently to describe a newfound paradise of sorts containing previously unknown animal species. Scientists distinguished *C. breweri* from its close relatives by its particular skin pattern, absence

of fringes on fingers, moderate toe webbing, tongue characteristics, and yellow and orange coloration on its undersides. It is described as a fast-moving frog that lives along creeks and in quiet pools along small streams along the slopes near the cave. This is the eighteenth described species of *Colostethus* discovered in the Venezuelan Guayana. This discovery, not widely reported, was detailed in the Jan. 17 issue of the journal *Zootaxa*.

(Excerpted from: Bjorn Carey. 2006 <http://www.Livescience.com/animalworld/060221_ghost_cave.html> and <<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,185546,00.html>>)



Cueva del Fantasma. Note the two helicopters on floor of cave for scale. Photo by Charles Brewer-Carías.

Australian Bats Accused of Taking First Bite of Cherry Industry

Yarra Valley, Australia - At first they were accused of spreading disease and tormenting the residents of Kew with their screeching and foul smell. Golfers, taking the law into their own hands, aimed balls at them to scatter them from trees. Now the much-maligned bat colony of Yarra Bend Park has been blamed for damage to the fruit growing industry in the Yarra Valley. Growers say the future of the \$7 million cherry industry in the valley is under threat after swarms of grey-headed flying foxes cut a swathe through their crops this summer.

The animals destroyed more than 50 tons of cherries during the harvest in December and January. Apple growers have also been affected. State Government representatives have agreed to meet orchardists and the Yarra Ranges Shire Council later this month in an attempt to solve the problem. Flying foxes are a protected species and fines of more than \$5000 apply to people who harm them. About 11,000 bats settled in Kew after they were moved from the Royal Botanic Gardens in March 2003 because of the tree damage they caused.

Despite controversy over the move, the Government is spending \$1.7 million to improve vegetation and build artificial roosts, a public viewing platform and ponds for the animals. Steve Chapman, vice-president of the Victorian Cherry Association and an orchardist in Silvan, said the bats first appeared in large numbers two years ago and had

caused at least \$430,000 damage to 20 growers in the valley this summer.

"We've had a \$20,000 loss this season in our orchard, but our neighbour would have lost about \$200,000. Our family has been farming here for over 100 years and we've never had bats till they moved the colony to Yarra Bend." Mr Chapman said he wanted the Government to subsidise the costly nets needed to keep the bats at bay and to reduce spending on bat conservation. Wandin grower Stephen Riseborough said half of his 30-hectare cherry orchard had been damaged by bats, which can fly 50 kilometres in a night. "It's very frustrating because we're not permitted to cull them. We're providing the food source and they just come down and have lunch and dinner."

Ian Temby, the Department of Sustainability and Environment's wildlife damage control officer, said moving the bat colony to Yarra Bend was not the reason for the growers' problems and bats had been in the Yarra Valley before the transfer. He said conservation measures for the grey-headed flying fox were important because it was a threatened species. "There has been significant damage by flying foxes and musk lorikeets; we're not ignoring the farmers by any means." Mr Temby said the department would look at ways to help growers, including the possibility of nectar troughs from which bats could feed without having to attack trees.

Sasha Shtargot. 2006. <<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/news-bats-accused-of-taking-first-bite-of-cherry-industry/2006/02/16/1140064205092.html>>

Endangered Ozark Cave Snail Helps Cash-strapped School

Springfield, Mo. - An endangered Ozark cave snail saved a cash-strapped rural school from near-bankruptcy, allowing the public school to raise funds for repairs that otherwise would have wiped out its entire budget reserve, school and state officials said Thursday. Mark Twain School near the small town of Protem in Taney County was facing a \$90,000 bill to replace an antiquated sewer system that was condemned in October 2004 for leaking into the nearby water supply. "We are a small school without many resources. Our entire reserve is \$90,000," school superintendent Richard Needham said. State conservation officials realized drainage from the school fed into a nearby cavern that is the only habitat of the Tumbling Creek cavesnail (*Antrobia culveri*), designated a federally endangered species in August 2002 because of declining water quality. Department of Conservation staff members Larry Martien and Justin Pepper secured a grant of \$20,000 in federal wildlife funds to replace the sewage system, based on the argument that it would help the recovery of the snail by improving water quality, Martien said. That grant helped mobilize other public and private donations that totaled \$89,000, paving the way for groundbreaking on the new sewer system on Feb. 17, Needham said. "I can't say we would have closed, but we would have lost all flexibility," he said. The reserve funds have paid for such recent items as roof repairs and a new school bus. Mark Twain School has 75 students in classes from preschool through eighth grade

Marcus Kabel. 2006. Associated Press.
<<http://www.belleville.com/mld/belleville/news/state/13832968.htm>>

Cave Archeology **25,000-Year-Old Cave Art Thought to be Older Than in Lascaux**

Vilhonneur, France. - Cave drawings thought to be older than those in the famed caves of Lascaux have been discovered in a grotto in western France, officials from the Charente region said last night. A first analysis suggests the drawings were made 25,000 years ago, said Henri de Marcellus, the mayor of Vilhonneur, the town near which the cave is located. But he stressed that the date could only be confirmed by further investigations. Cavers exploring a part of a grotto in the Vilhonneur forest, which once was used to dispose of animal carcasses, made the discovery in December 2005. Mr Marcellus said human bones also had been found. News was withheld until an initial investigation could be carried out. "If this first expertise is confirmed, the paintings discovered here (change) scientific findings date to Lascaux and Altamira in Spain," Michel Boutant, head of the local government, said on France-Info radio. The famed Lascaux Cave in Montignac, in the Dordogne region of southwest France, has long been considered one of the finest examples of cave paintings. The art dates back 13,000 years, like those in Altamira, in northwest Spain. However, the Chauvet cave, discovered in the mid-1990s in southeast France, features some 300 examples of Paleolithic animal art dating back in some cases 31,000 years.

(Excerpted from: Angus Howarth. 2006.
<<http://news.scotsman.com/international.cfm?id=185842006>> and <<http://www.zeenews.com/znews/articles.asp?aid=273663&sid=FTP>>)



Paleolithic cave paintings in France

Boy Scouts Find Temple Burial Cave in Israel

In a scene out of the Hollywood movie, *Indiana Jones*, three Israeli children stumbled upon an ancient Second Temple cave in the Beit Shemesh area filled with skeletons and ossuaries, Israel's Antiquities Authority announced Monday. The boys, ages 11-13, who discovered the heretofore unknown cave during a scout's cave-hunt, were awarded a

certificate of recognition for reporting their finds to the Antiquities Authority.

The cave was first uncovered last week by sixth grader Or Perel, 12, who came upon the unmarked cave during the scout's search for known caves, and discovered the ancient burial boxes and skeletal remains. "I screamed up to the sky when I saw what I saw," Perel recounted Monday in a telephone interview. Frightened by the gloomy find, he ran to fetch his friends, and together they summoned their instructor, he said. The cave was subsequently sealed by Antiquities Authority inspectors.

(Excerpted from: [Etgar Lefkovits, 2006. The Jerusalem Post](http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1138622510059&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull) <<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1138622510059&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>>)

Cave Conservation

The Nature Conservancy Purchases Bellamy Cave

Nashville, TN, 9 February 2006 - The Nature Conservancy has purchased Bellamy Cave, one of the most critical bat nurseries in the state. The Montgomery County cave serves as a year-round home for the federally endangered gray bats. In the winter, 126,000 bats hibernate in the cave with 50,000 to 100,000 spending their summer months here. Indiana bats, also federally endangered, were also found at the cave. The Conservancy was able to purchase the cave with the help of a private donor and a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The cave and 34 acres will be transferred to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency for ownership and management as an endangered species sanctuary. Bellamy Cave is also home to the blind crayfish and a rare beetle called Coleman Cave Beetle, which has only been found in three caves in Tennessee. Historically, the cave was mined for saltpeter during the Civil War. The gray bat may be on the rebound. The Nature Conservancy is working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and groups like Bat Conservation International to determine if the gray bat population is healthy enough to be removed from the endangered species list.

<<http://nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/tennessee/press/press2263.html>>

Tales of the Sinkhole:

Sinkholes Appear in Spring Hill, Florida

Six sinkholes appeared in a neighborhood near Spring Hill, Florida on Friday, March 3rd. The first sinkhole opened up early Friday afternoon. The other sinkholes began to appear soon after and in one case, efforts to fix the problem made matters worse. A concrete truck full of grout sent to fill in one hole near a house soon found the road giving way. It took a huge crane to lift out the truck. While county crews stabilized a waterline Friday night, they'll probably wait until Monday to fill in the sinkholes. Officials want to make sure the holes have stopped growing before they begin the repairs.

(Excerpted from: <<http://www.tampabay10.com/news/news.aspx?storyid=26859>>)

International News

Indian Subcontinent's Longest Cave Discovered

Shillong, India, March 3, 2006 - The longest cave system in the Indian subcontinent has been discovered in Meghalaya's Jaintia Hills district by an international team of speleologists. Over 22.20 km long, the cave system surpasses the previous 21.55 km record of another system in the same district. "The linking of the Krem Um Im-liat Prah cave system with Tokrem Labbit (Khaidong) creates a single cave system, the longest known to date in the Indian subcontinent," team members said today. The team comprising 17 members from the UK, two each from Switzerland and Denmark, one each from Austria and Ireland, and five from India, spent three and half weeks in the district focusing on the cave areas of Shnongrim Ridge near Nongkhlieh area. Between February 7 to March 1, 2006 the team mapped and photographed 15,498 meters of new cave passage in 39 caves.

(Excerpted from: <http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=88967>)

Grotto Events

Bexar Grotto: A work trip to Bracken Bat Cave is scheduled for March 4th to replace roof on the pole barn. Of note is the fact that the bats have returned early to Bracken Bat Cave.

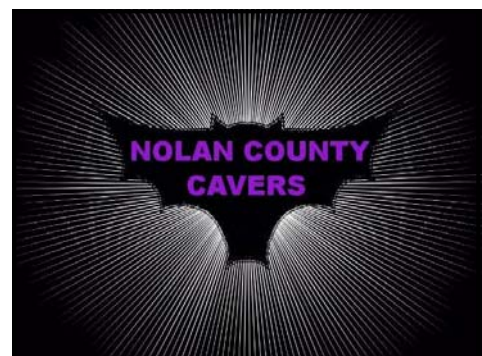
Cowtown Grotto: The grotto is scheduling several restoration projects at Carlsbad Caverns NP during early 2006.

Lubbock Area Grotto: The grotto is hoping to finish the multi-year Endless Cave Survey in late March.

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

New Grotto ?

Chris Ivy of Sweetwater, TX reports that a small group of cavers in the area are forming the **Nolan County Cavers**. They're in the process of writing a constitution and petitioning the NSS for a grotto charter. They've recently been caving in Airman's, Aspermont Bat Cave, and Sutton County. Visit their website at <<http://www.webspawner.com/users/nococavers/index.html>>.



Caving Calendar

March 8, 2006 : TSS Work Session (Austin). See article elsewhere in newsletter. **Contact:** Jim Kennedy <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

March 17-19, 2006 : Deep Cave Survey Trip. Continuing exploration and survey of TCMA-owned Deep Cave in Edwards County. Activities at Punkin Cave will be included if there is adequate interest. **Contact:** Jerry Atkinson, (281)-360-2244 or <jerryatkin@aol.com>.

March 23, 2006 : Deep Down Underground Caving Event (Austin). The Sheffield Education Center will be introducing students to Austin's underground at the Sheffield Education Center's Deep Down Underground Caving Event from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Activities will include a cave obstacle course, knot tying, live bats, and a map activity in a constructed cave crawl. If you are interested in bringing your young elementary students to this free program, contact Margaret Russell at (512)-478-1466 to register.

March 24-26, 2006 : NSS Board of Governor's Meeting (Irving, TX). See article elsewhere in newsletter. **Contact:** Bill Steele <speleosteale@comcast.net>.

April 1, 2006 : Williamson Creek Cleanup (Austin). Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District and City of Sunset Valley sponsored clean up of Williamson Creek, which is one of the six creeks that recharges the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer, on Saturday, April 1st, 9:30 AM – 12:00PM. Drinks, lunch, and t-shirts provided to volunteers. Advanced sign-up is required. To register or for additional details, contact: Jennee Galland (512)-282-8441 <Jennifer@bseacd.org>.

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

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

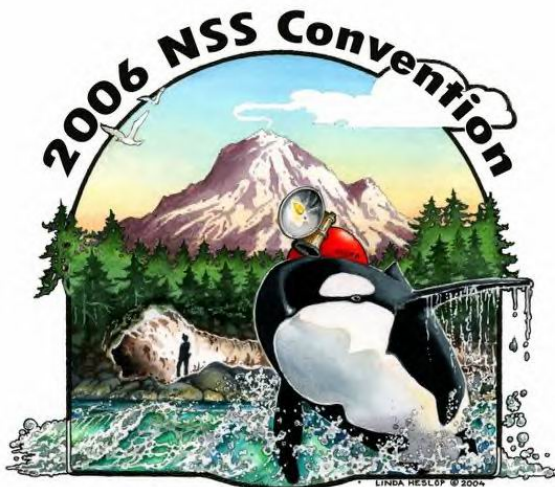
April 15, 2006 : Austin Nature Day (Austin, TX). Get Down, Underground! Join the Texas Cave Management Association and the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District for a trip into southwest Austin's Whirlpool Cave. This two hour easy caving trip gives you a first hand look at one of the many karst features that helps make our aquifer one of the most bountiful and

sensitive in the state. Great for kids and adults. Reservations are required. For reservations and details, contact: Jennee Galland (512)-282-8441 <http://www.austinnatureday.org>.

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

May 20, 2006 : Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Austin). Held at the TSS office in Austin at 10:30 a.m. Open to anyone interested in Texas cave information, its organization and publication. Work session held after the meeting. **Contacts:** George Veni (210)-558-4403 <gveni@satx.rr.com> or Jim Kennedy (512)-663-2287 <jkennedy@batcon.org>.

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



A Whale of a Convention
Bellingham, Washington

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

From the Editor of the TSA Activities Newsletter

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

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

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

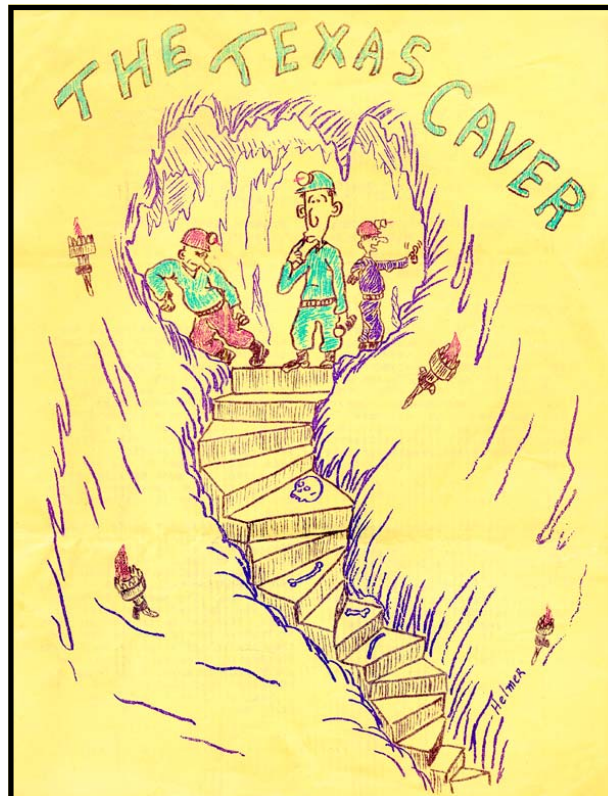
Editor : Jerry Atkinson
Editorial Staff : Carl Kunath

TSA website : <<http://www.cavetexas.org/>>

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Cover from the March 1956 issue of the *Texas Caver*.