



TCR Affairs

29th Annual Texas Caver Reunion

Howdy y'all;

With the cooler weather we've been having in Texas lately it seems like fall may really be getting close. Fall in Texas also means that it is time for the Texas Cavers Reunion. This year, the 29th Annual Texas Cavers Reunion, will be held at Honey Creek Ranch near Bergheim, Texas on the weekend of October 20-22. The ranch is also the home to Honey Creek Cave, the longest cave in Texas. That's right, TCR will actually be held above a cave. For directions and further information, visit <www.oztotl.com/tcr>.

Friday night will be the Bexar Grotto Fish Fry. Please bring money for a donation and have some great fried fish and fixin's. Saturday, the TCMA is celebrating its 20th birthday! TCMA will have cake and other birthday festivities. Saturday night will be the Big Feed with a really great selection of food. Sunday morning, the TCMA is sponsoring a Breakfast Taco Fundraiser. Eat a taco, help buy a cave! TCMA will have a members meeting from 9:30 to 10:30 on Sunday morning. The TSA will have a members meeting from 10:30 to 11:30 A.M.

Please spread the word to other cavers and make sure everyone knows. TCR is a great event for new cavers to attend. You will get to meet cavers, have fun, get some caving gear, enter competitions to win caving gear, and become part of the caving family. You will also have a chance to visit Honey Creek Cave, the longest cave in Texas. Bring or borrow a wetsuit or brave the cold waters without! Campers will be encouraged to recycle aluminum cans and plastic bottles. Recycling containers will be placed at the cook's camp, at Bexar Grotto camp and possibly other locations. Also, please bring trashbags and plan to take your trash with you. We are on a private ranch and there is not trash pick up provided.

We will have competitions, caving vendors, fun, food, good friends, music, hot tubbin', sauna, and even caving available this year. We ask that everyone plan on spending a little time doing some cedar choppin' to keep us in the good graces of the landowners. The next piece of good news is that Comal County lifted the burn ban! If we continue getting rain, the fire danger will be down and we can have fires. As always, it is important to be careful with fire. Last year after TCR, several still smoldering fires were found at the site. Let's make sure that doesn't happen again.

The final piece of good news is that the band for this year will be the Terminal Syphons. Get ready for some good music on Saturday night
See y'all there, Allan Cobb



TCR food line: Best eats in Texas !



Honey Creek Cave (Peter Sprouse)

News & Notes

TSA Affairs

2007 TSA Officer Nominations Update

All,

With less than one week until TCR, here is the list of nominations for 2007 TSA officers, thus far. They are:

Chairman: John Brooks
Kara Dittmer

Vice-Chairman: Jacqui Bills
Rob Bisset

Secretary: Darla Bishop
Mark Alman

Treasurer: Michael Cicherski

As you can see, we have an excellent list of candidates here, but can always use more nominations. Nominations will remain open until TCR, but all paid TSA members will be notified of the final list of candidates in the weeks to come and only paid TSA members will be allowed to vote, per the TSA Constitution.

Thanks, Mark Alman
TSA Nominations Committee Chair
Editor - *The Texas Caver*

New TSA BBS Forum Available Online

Be careful what you ask for, you might get it! From time to time, it's been discussed there should be some sort of TSA Forum (BBS) and Mark Alman even offered to moderate one. Since we changed hosting companies, the TSA can now support it's own forum. Check out: <http://forum.cavetexas.org> it's plain and simple but works. Mark Alman is the moderator but we might add to that list, especially for different forums. At the present, you have to be a TSA member to register and post though anyone can read posts. When you register, an e-mail is sent to Mark and the administrators, Mark will check the TSA membership list and approve your registration.

At the moment it's limited to TSA members because it can be used for the member area that's been discussed in the past. Things like back issues of *The Texas Caver*. I'm working on setting up security groups so if the TSA so desires, there can be member only areas as well as general caver areas.

The disadvantage to a BBS is that the posts don't automatically appear in your mailbox to delete if you're not interested.

That advantage is that discussions can be grouped into topics so it's easier to look for and get involved with discussions you are interested in while ignoring others. Moderators can monitor and move posts to the correct topic is someone posts in the wrong area.

Check it out, if you want to discuss it, register and discuss it over there.

Butch Fralia



TCMA Affairs

Robber Baron Cave Restoration Project

There will be a Robber Baron Cave Restoration work day on Saturday, October 28th. Plans are to work on the steps leading down into the sinkhole, and other grounds work as needed. Contacts: Linda Palit <lkpalit@sbcglobal.net> or Joe Mitchell <joe-evelynn@satx.rr.com>.

TCMA Auction at TCR

The TCMA will be holding a silent auction on Saturday, October 21st at TCR, during which items not auctioned off at the previous TSA Spring Conventions will be up for bid. The event will be held during the day at the TCMA tent. Come on by and check out the neat stuff !

TCC Affairs

Clarification to Last Month's TCC Award Announcement

Just a few clarifications to Gordon Birkheimer's notice in the September *TSA Activities Newsletter* about the award presented to the Texas Cave Conservancy at the NSS convention banquet: The award, the correct name of which is the Group Conservation Award, is not an NSS award. It is chosen and presented by the Conservation and Management Section of the NSS. (Sections are nationwide special-interest groups of NSS members.) It is not the nation's highest cave conservation award. As far as I know, it is the only such award for a group. The highest award is the NSS's Victor A. Schmidt Cave Conservation Award, which is given to one person each year. In 2006, that award went to Texas caver Runi Burnett. This year its recipient was John Vargo, Jr. Nevertheless, the TCC has been honored by being chosen by representatives of many of the NSS members most interested in cave conservation and management to receive their annual group award. -- Bill Mixon

National News

New US Depth Contender

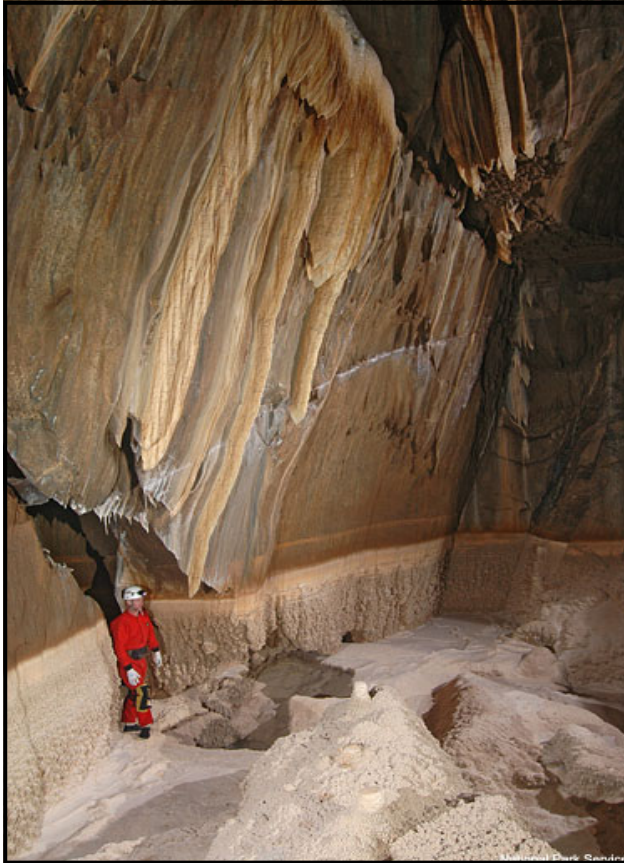
Virgil The Turtle's Greathouse Cave, in Montana, is currently the second deepest cave in the continental US at -1586 feet deep. Located in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, it was explored and surveyed to a length of 5394 feet in August, 2006.

New Cave Found in Sequoia National Park

On August 19 four park volunteers discovered a significant new cave within Sequoia National Park that has been named Ursa Minor for the Little Dipper constellation. The cave features large passages – often more than 50 feet wide – and beautiful cave formations. These include long and graceful cave curtains, some more than 30 feet long, ever fragile soda straws up to 6 feet long, many cave pearls, and large areas of multicolored cave flowstones. Crystals in the flowstone produce a brilliant sparkle when struck by a caver's light. Ursa Minor also has a cave lake that may be as much as 100 feet across and vertical drops that must be traversed using ropes. An ancient animal skeleton was found in the cave that resembles a bear, which influenced the naming of the cave. Cave-adapted invertebrates that may be new or rare species

have also been seen in the cave. It is clear that several of the cave's larger passages continue and the actual length of the cave remains unknown at this time.

Park Cave Specialist, Joel Despain, said, "we are very excited about the discovery of this beautiful new cave. It will add to our knowledge of the parks, park wildlife, and park features. Knowing that the cave exists will help us manage the area around the cave with its protection in mind. It is a fine new addition to the many wonderful caves in the two parks."



Ursa Minor, California (Dave Bunnell)

In keeping with park policies, this new cave is automatically placed in Management Class 4 from the Park Cave Management Plan. Such caves are closed to recreational visits pending evaluation and scientific study. Park cave management staff will be planning a series of trips with subject matter experts to conduct this work. Tasks on these trips will include creating an accurate and detailed map of the cave, conducting an inventory of its features, conducting a biological inventory, photo documenting cave features and formations, and gating the cave entrance to protect access into the cave. At this point, park staff will be on all trips into the new cave.

The new cave was found as part of an on-going park-approved project managed by the Cave Research Foundation that conducts small excavations with hand tools in a search for new caves and cave passages. The discoverers of Ursa Minor cave spent approximately two hours excavating the entrance area before it was possible to enter the cave.

There are no long-term management plans for the cave at

this time. Once we have a better handle on what we have, we will start to answer those questions. Feel free to contact me with questions or comments.

Thanks all, Joel Despain
Cave Specialist for Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP
(Excerpted from: US Cavers Forum <<http://nssmembersforum.proboards28.com/index.cgi?board=Announcements>>)



Ursa Minor, California (Dave Bunnell)

Official US Cave Count

The Cave Files Committee of the NSS reported on 17 July 2006 that the US has 49,061 caves on record.

(Excerpted from: US Cavers Forum <<http://nssmembersforum.proboards28.com/index.cgi?board=Announcements>>)

US Cave Diving Museum and Library

The underwater caverns that make Florida's Crescent Communities "the cave diving capital of the world" have been described in many ways. But to the divers themselves, the caves also represent the evolving history of the sport they love most in a sport that several individuals from the area have decided to document. The Cave Diving Museum and Library, recently opened in High Springs, Florida, has become a mechanism to document the rich history of cave diving. And it's a history that was largely developed right in the heart of the Crescent Communities.

The museum began as an idea between Gainesville resident Cindy Butler and two of her friends. There was no one place that divers could go to get information about cave diving or the history of the sport, Butler said. "It was kind of an evolving process," Butler said of starting the museum. "I noticed most of the cave diving organizations had data here and there and there simply was not one centralized location you could go. We're trying to take all this information and make it centrally accessible for everyone."

And since the sport has become more and more recognized as an important tool to learning about the earth, Butler said, that documentation will become more important in the future. "Cave diving isn't just a sport. People are seeing it more and more as an asset," she said. "It's gone from a couple of people poking their heads in things to really a science."

With these ideas in mind, Butler opened the museum and library in February. Now with a 10-member board and continually growing, the museum is still in the beginning process of taking shape. With a collection of old diving equipment, books and DVDs on the subject, maps of caves, underwater photography and a catalogue file of diving publications and magazines, the museum has come a long way but still has a long way to go, Butler said. "It's a work in progress," she said.

Butler recognized that many of the advancements the sport had made over the past 30 years still had not been well documented, and those divers who had made the accomplishments might die before they could ever tell their stories. Butler said she first realized what could be lost from such stories when long-time cave diver Roderick "Rory" Dickens died in 2000 and his entire collection of historical writings, maps and dive gear was lost. "When (Rory) died, everything that he had was gone," Butler said. "That really pushed me over the edge." Her hope is that she can help document that which may otherwise be lost. "A lot of cave divers are great storytellers," she said. "Their stories are just as important as the equipment." Those stories, along with the innovative equipment that many pioneer cave divers made, are key to preserving the history of the sport, Butler said.

Wayne Kinard, a local cave diver since 1971 and museum board member, said that he witnessed personally just how much cave diving has progressed over the past several decades. "If you had cave gear, you pretty much made it yourself," Kinard said of his early days cave diving as a teenager. Fort White resident Larry Green, a member of two cave diving training panels, said that by having such historical equipment on display, newcomers to the sport can learn about the beginnings of cave diving. "They can come in and see where the sport has come from, especially in the ever changing technology," he said.

And by keeping some of this historical equipment in an interactive display where visitors can actually handle it, Butler said, even veteran cave divers are moved by their memories. "I like people to be able to come in here and revisit their memories by looking at and touching the equipment," Butler said. One woman who visited and saw old equipment from the '70s was so touched by the memories that were evoked that she cried, Butler said. Butler thanks the countless people who have donated such equipment to the museum, she said, because without them her cause would become nearly impossible.

Kinard first got involved with the museum when he heard that old gear was being collected, he said. "Cindy was collecting stuff, and I knew people who had all sorts of goodies to donate," Kinard said. "And I had some stuff myself, so everyone started gathering their old gear and bringing it in. There's a lot of history. We want to preserve that." And equipment isn't the only thing that's been donated, Butler said. Materials to create exhibits, a computer, books, maps, DVDs and photography also have been generously given by those interested in the project, along with their time and labor.

Since the museum is a not-for-profit business, Butler said, she relies heavily on donations to keep the project going

since grants aren't usually given out to such businesses until they have been open for at least two years. Sometimes, someone will hear of the museum and just leave a box full of old equipment outside the back door, she said. "Every once in a while, I'll come up and there will be something just left outside like abandoned kittens," she said. In the future, Butler said, she hopes she can make a museum that would be fun for the whole family and an all-inclusive resource to learn about the sport.

With ideas for a virtual museum online, a kids' area with cave dive-related games and educational programs, future documentaries on various aspects of the sport, better labeling of equipment, outreach programs and numerous future exhibits, Butler has years of work ahead of her, but she is happy to be involved with the process, she said. Green said that since the area draws in cave divers from all over the world, the museum may become a tourist attraction for those visitors, as well. "I think a lot of the visiting people to this museum will probably be from other countries," he said. "It's amazing how many people come here just for the cave diving."

But for now, Butler said she is trying to get the museum more established and local-friendly. She wants the museum and library to become a true asset to the cave diving community, she said. "I want to know that this will continue even if I'm not around," she said.

Cave Diving Museum and Library

910 NW First Ave., High Springs

386-454-3262

<<http://www.overheadtimes.com>>

(Excerpted from: Jenkins-Desrets, Christa . 2006.

<http://www.highspringsherald.com/articles/2006/07/06/heraldftp_070606/text/cj-cavemuseum.txt>)

Cave Biology

Utah Researchers Discover New Type of Cave Cricket

Hurricane, Utah – Researchers say they have discovered a new type of cricket in the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, located in a remote strip of land on the Utah-Arizona border. The cricket was discovered in samples taken from the area last spring by Kyle Voyles, a state of Arizona cave coordinator and a physical science technician with the Bureau of Land Management, and J. Judson Wynne, a Northern Arizona University doctoral candidate. Voyles and Wynne spent time surveying 24 caves and taking samples from 15. "Finding a new species is one thing, but finding a new genus is beyond my wildest dream," Kyle Voyles, a state of Arizona cave coordinator said.

The monument is under joint management of the BLM and the National Park Service and covers more than 1,600 square miles of land on what's known as the Arizona Strip. The area's deep canyons, mountains and red rock buttes are cut off from the rest of Arizona by the Grand Canyon at its south border. "One thing I love about the Arizona Strip is its untouched, untapped natural resources," Voyles said. "It may not be a big tourist draw, but there are a lot of potentially big important discoveries out there."

The new cricket was found in the first sample bottle.

Voyles said Theodore Cohn, an entomologist with San Diego State University, identified the crickets as a new genus. In addition to the possible new genus of cricket, four new species of crickets have been identified from the spring samples. A barklouse also was found in the caves. Though common in South America, this was the first one discovered in North America, Voyles said. Previous cave trips yielded two new species of millipedes within three miles of each other.



New genus of cave cricket from Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

What makes the yet-to-be-named new genus of cricket special is that it has pincers on its hind end. The pincers are functional, but it is not known why they have them nor what purpose they serve. The discovery at the monument, which was dedicated in January, may draw attention to caves that are largely overlooked in an area where the inhabitants have to learn to adapt to harsh living conditions.

Jeff Bradybaugh, superintendent of the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, said the discoveries are very exciting. "It points to some of the uniqueness of the area and the undiscovered natural resources," Bradybaugh said. "This might attract funding from non-government sources and help develop partnerships with universities to continue the research."

(Excerpted from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/25/AR2006072501211.html>)

Cave Archeology

Neanderthal Secrets Inside Spanish Cave

Gibraltar, Spain – Neanderthals survived for thousands of years longer than scientists thought, with small lingering bands finding refuge in a massive cave near the southern tip of Spain, new research suggests. The work contends that Neanderthals were using a cave in Gibraltar at least 2,000 years later than their presence had been firmly documented anywhere before, researchers said. "Maybe these are the last ones," said Clive Finlayson of the Gibraltar Museum, who reported the findings with colleagues on the Web site of the journal *Nature*.

The paper says charcoal samples from fires that Neanderthals set in the cave are about 28,000 years old and maybe just 24,000 years old. Experts are divided on how

strong a case the paper makes. Neanderthals were stocky, muscular hunters in Europe and western Asia who appeared more than 200,000 years ago. They died out after anatomically modern humans arrived in Europe some 35,000 to 40,000 years ago and spread west into Neanderthal territory. Scientists have long been fascinated by the last days of the Neanderthals. Were they doomed because they couldn't compete with the encroaching modern humans for resources, or because they caught new germs from the moderns, or because of climate change? Did the two groups have much contact, and what kind?

They didn't appear to encounter each other in Gibraltar at Gorham's Cave. More than 5,000 years separate the last traces of the Neanderthals from the earliest evidence of modern humans, Finlayson said. He believes the area near the cave contained small bands of Neanderthals and of advancing moderns at the same time, but over a large and varied landscape. So it's not clear if the two groups ever met, he said.

The Neanderthals probably roamed a large area and used the cave periodically as a place to cook, eat and sleep, he said. The cave has yielded butchered bones of such animals as wild goat and deer, and remains of mussels and shellfish. At the time of the Neanderthals, the Mediterranean Sea was about three miles away; rising sea level has since brought the water to within a few dozen yards. Experts said the region is a likely place to find the last vestiges of Neanderthals, because it's the tip of a geographic cul-de-sac that leads away from central Europe.

Eric Delson of Lehman College in the Bronx and the American Museum of Natural History, who did not participate in the research, said the paper's 28,000-year-old date seems secure but that its case for Neanderthal presence after that is shaky. Even the older date is the only clear evidence of Neanderthals anywhere after 30,000 years ago, he said. But there have been prior claims of "the last Neanderthal" that were eventually shot down, and whether this one will hold up remains to be seen, he said.

Other experts are less convinced. Paul Mellars, a professor of prehistory and human evolution at Cambridge University, said he believes the range of radiocarbon dating evidence in the paper suggests ages more like 31,000 or 32,000 years for the charcoal. Contamination by younger material might have skewed some radiocarbon results toward more recent dates, he observed.

Even with the older dates, the paper would be important because it would represent one of the last Neanderthal occupations in Europe, he said. But paleoanthropologist Richard Klein of Stanford University said it's questionable whether the charcoal fragments really date Neanderthal presence. Neanderthal artifacts appear to be sparsely distributed in the deposit, and their spatial relationship to the charcoal needs to be specified more clearly, he said. Finlayson said he's comfortable with the 24,000-year figure and called the 28,000-year estimate conservative. There's no evidence of contamination with younger material and chemical analysis argues against it, he said. As for the Neanderthal artifacts, he said, their location within the excavated site shows they're associated with the dated

charcoal. And there aren't any artifacts from modern humans associated with the charcoal, he said.

(Excerpted from: http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1158145836732&call_pageid=968332188492&col=968793972154&t=TS_Home)

Tales of the Sinkhole:

Florida Sinkhole Free of its Gremlin

Wakulla Springs, FL — Beneath 33 feet of water, logs, leaves and debris sat a Honda Civic. To celebrate National Public Land Day on Saturday, Cal Jamison and the Concerned Citizens of Wakulla pulled it out. Jamison, the Wakulla Springs ambassador, said the sinkhole where the car lay used to be a campground for hippies in Wakulla Springs State Park. The word is that years ago, a Wakulla County Sheriff's diver identified the vehicle as an AMC Gremlin, which is why it's called Gremlin Hole. Lynn Artz of Concerned Citizens of Wakulla said she helped gather volunteers for a walk that started at Crawfordville Road before the viewing of the car's removal. Other sponsors included the Florida Wildlife Federation and The Friends of Wakulla Springs.

"We have lots of field trips, and we decided to make this one of them," she said.

Field trips for Wakulla residents usually involve community service. So on the way to the Gremlin sinkhole, field-trippers picked up thousands of mimosa saplings and all kinds of trash and debris. About 50 volunteers were on hand. "The sinkholes are a part of Wakulla's natural beauty," Artz said. "People are really interested in helping out." Jamison said he has detailed and cataloged 460 sinkholes in the park and plans more trips and projects like this in the future.

In 2003, Jamison teamed up with Jackson Cook Crane Co., the same one he used Saturday, to pull a Thunderbird out of Cherokee Sinkhole.

(Excerpted from: Mitchell, Robbyn. 2006. <http://www.tallahassee.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061002/NEWS01/610020320/1010/NEWS01>)

International News

Longest Nordic Cave

Norway can now lay claim to the longest cave in the Nordic region after spelunkers have mapped out over 20 kilometers (12.4 miles). The cave - Tjoarvekrajgge, a Sami name - in Sørfold in Nordland County in northern Norway, was discovered in 1993. "[In August, 2006], we passed the 20-kilometer mark. We have now mapped exactly 20,047 meters in Tjoarvekrajgge," said Torstein Finnesand of the Norwegian Speleological Society.

The cave was a hole in the ground known to locals, but they had no inkling of its extent. Since exploration began, new passages, waterfalls and decorated caverns have been discovered and the cave's mapped length has steadily grown. "The goal was to pass 20 kilometers during this year's mapping and we have managed it," said Finnesand, who assumes there are still uncharted passages and caves in

Tjoarvekrajgge. Over 60 people from six nations have helped chart the cave over the years.

"The cave has a depth of 500 meters and it winds like a labyrinth in the mountain. We can compare it to a spider web," Finnesand said. "The exciting thing is exploring a cave and discovering passages, caves, stalactites and waterfalls that no one has seen before. That is what keeps us going," Finnesand said.



Tjoarvekrajgge Cave, Norway

Nearly all of Norway's caverns are in the northern counties of North Trøndelag, Nordland and Troms. While some of the caves are roomy enough to walk through comfortably, Tjoarvekrajgge is not for amateurs. "It is difficult to enter. Either you have to force a very tight opening or you have to start by descending on a rope. This requires technical knowledge. There is also a very high risk of becoming lost in the cave," Finnesand said.

(Excerpted from: <http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article1418485.ece>)

Announcements

Government Canyon Karst Project Schedule

The dates for the Government Canyon Karst Project for the rest of the year are as follows:

October 7

November 12

December 3

All dates are Sunday only.

Government Canyon State Natural Area is near San Antonio. Thousands of acres have never been looked at by cavers. There are caves to survey and several promising sinkhole and in-cave digs.

Directions to the gate of GCSNA: Find the intersection of U.S. 16 and Loop 1604 in northwest Bexar County (clearly shown on any state highway map). Drive 2 miles north on U.S. 16 to the third traffic light and turn left onto FM 1560 (there is a Shell station on the corner). Follow 1560 for 3 miles to Galm Road. (Old San Antonio city maps may show another Galm Road less than half a mile past the Shell. This road is now named something else. Ignore and keep on to the real Galm Road.) Turn right on Galm Road and drive 2 miles to the sharp left turn in the road. The gate to GCSNA

is straight ahead. Enter at the gate and then take the first right. There is an unlocked gate that will need to be opened and then closed behind you. Continue to the ranch house, where we will meet. Start time is 9:00 A.M. You won't find us after 9:30! Camping is available. Contact me to set it up.

Marvin Miller (830)-885-5631

5th Annual Austin Cave Day

Howdy Y'all,

TCMA folks in Austin are looking for **8** volunteers to help out with the 5th Annual Austin Cave Day event at the Village of Western Oaks Karst Preserve. This 1 day event, starts at 9 A.M. on Saturday, October 28th and ends at 4p.m. The volunteer duties would include:

1. Cavers would help get visitors of all ages into 2 small caves that will be open for this event only.

2. Cavers would also help out with a vertical activity that would include demonstration of vertical gear and helping to get kids into gear and up in the trees; this will be a totally supervised activity by the caver volunteers.

You won't be expected to stay all day but, in order to schedule times, I'll need a solid commitment so I can make a schedule of times folks will be helping out w/the activities. This is a very successful event, and we get a lot of great cave/karst education out to a population who live on the Recharge Zone of the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. Statistics show that people who are educated about our natural resources are much more prone to protecting and supporting that resource and supporting organizations whose mission is protection of the resource, CAVES.

Your help is much appreciated, and we'd sure love to have lots of TCMA volunteers support this event as well as ALL Texas Cavers. Please let me know if you are interested or willing to help out. If you are, please contact me. Lunch will be provided to volunteers.

Thanks, Jules Jenkins (512)-289-1336

Bracken Bat Cave Karst Survey

Bat Conservation International will be conducting a resource and karst survey at the Bracken Bat Cave property. The project will involve a grid search of designated areas to identify natural resources such as old oak and cedar groves, sinkholes, and caves. Survey dates: Saturday September 30th, Saturday November 4th and Saturday December 9th. Survey will begin at 8:30 A.M. and continue until 2 P.M. Training will be provided on site. Property is located on Hwy 3009 (Natural Bridge Caverns Road) near Garden Ridge, Texas. Camping is available. For additional information, contact Fran Hutchins (512)-848-9404.

Caving in Guatemala 2007

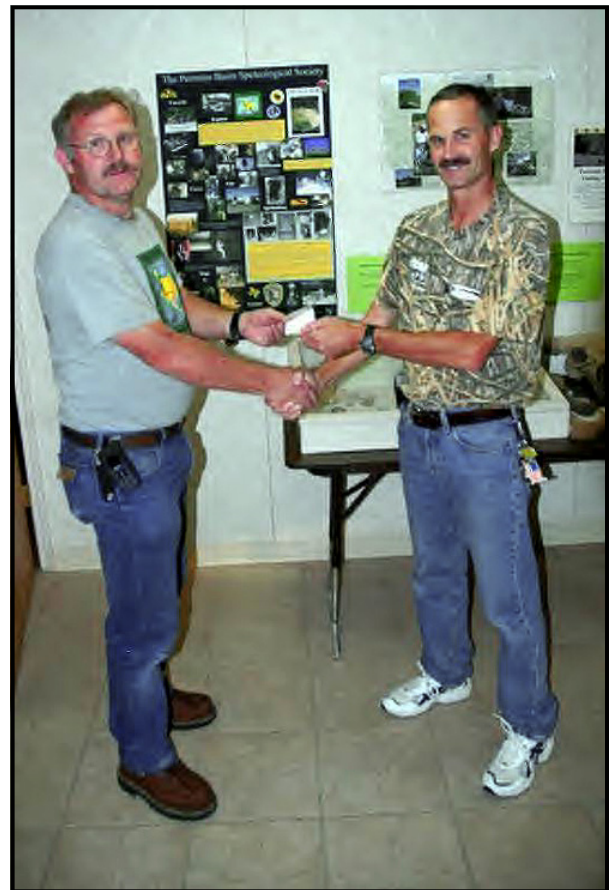
Rutahsa Adventures, in cooperation with the Cincinnati Grotto of the NSS, has organized a special trip for cavers to Guatemala, scheduled for March or April 2007. This excursion will be an amazing mix of caving in some famous caves, exploring spectacular karst terrains for new caves, and cave mapping, topped off with a visit to romantic colonial Antigua Guatemala and a climb up an active

volcano. We will visit six or seven caves (more, depending on what our explorations turn up) most of which are active stream systems-- prepare for wet caving, but in waters that are delightfully warm compared to streams in US caves! We will also spend a half day at one of the world's most amazing karst features, the fabulous Semuc Champey travertine bridge. And all along our way we will enjoy tropical scenery, jungle flora and fauna, and the friendly Maya and Hispanic people of Guatemala. Participation will be limited to approximately 18 cavers, and participants will need to be experienced and properly equipped cavers. For more information and the itinerary: <<http://www.rutahsa.com/gua-cave-07.html>>.

(Excerpted from: US Cavers Forum
<<http://nssmembersforum.proboards28.com/index.cgi?board=Announcements>>)

Grotto News

PBSS Grotto: The Permian Basin Speleological Society recently donated \$100 to the "People for the Park" Friends Group of the Big Spring State Park. The check was presented to Ron Alton, the park manager of Big Spring State Park, during a ceremony at the Sibley Nature Center in Midland, Texas. The park contains Ant Bite Cave, a small cave located near the park headquarters.



Bill Bentley (left) presenting check to Ron Alton.

Caving Calendar

October 20-22, 2006 : 29th Annual Texas Cavers' Reunion (Gass Ranch – Honey Creek Cave). We are returning to Honey Creek Ranch for all of our fun and festivities. There will be some trips into Honey Creek Cave for those who feel the need to get underground as well as many fun and exciting things above ground. For the latest information about TCR 2006, visit the website at www.oztotl.com/tcr.

October 22, 2006 : TCMA Fall Member's Meeting (TCR). To be held Sunday morning from 9:30—10:30 A.M. at the 2006 TCR, Gass – Honey Creek Cave Ranch. For more information, contact Linda Palit lkpalit@sbcglobal.net.

October 22, 2006 : TSA Fall Business Meeting (TCR). To be held Sunday morning from 10:30—11:30 A.M. at the 2006 TCR, Gass – Honey Creek Cave Ranch. For more information, check the TSA website <http://www.cavetexas.org> or contact John Brooks jpbrooks01@sbcglobal.net.

October 28, 2006 : Robber Baron Cave Restoration project (San Antonio). Plans are to work on the steps leading down into the sinkhole and other grounds work as needed. Caving will be later in day. Contacts: Linda Palit lkpalit@sbcglobal.net or Joe Mitchell joe-evelynn@satx.rr.com.

October 28-29, 2006 : 5th Annual Austin Cave Day (Western Oaks Karst Preserve, Austin, TX). See announcement elsewhere in this newsletter for details.

October 28-29, 2006 : High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM). On-going work amidst spectacular scenery in the beautiful caves of the Lincoln National Forest. Last weekend of the month, permits often include Three Fingers, Virgin, Pink Dragon, Pink Panther, Hidden, Wonderland, and Black Cave. Activities vary from month to month. **Contacts:** Susan Herpin or Jennifer Foote highguads@yahoo.com.

November 4, 2006 : Bracken Bat Cave Karst Survey. For details, see announcement elsewhere in this newsletter.

November 10-12, 2006 : Colorado Bend State Park TSA Volunteer Project. Survey, ridgewalking, and digging activities. Beginners and experienced cavers welcome. For more information, e-mail: cbasp@maverickgrotto.org.

November 12, 2006 : Government Canyon Karst Survey Project (San Antonio). Government Canyon State Natural Area is located near San Antonio. Thousands of acres have never been looked at by cavers. There are caves to survey and several promising sinkhole and in-cave digs. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830)-885-5631 mlmiller@gvtc.com.

November 18-26, 2006 : Proyecto Espeleologico Sierra Oxmolon (Aquismon, Mexico). Ongoing project to explore and map the caves in the mountains near S. de Golondrinas. **Contacts:** Ron Rutherford rcrutherford@gmail.com, Jerry Fant jerryfant@verizon.net. For information on the project, see: www.pesoproject.esotericvision.com.

December 2, 2006 : SWR Winter Tech Meeting (Socorro, New Mexico). The Southwestern Region of the NSS will be meeting on December 2, 2006, at the Material Science and Engineering Complex (MSEC), New Mexico Tech, Socorro, New Mexico. For additional information, contact Kevin Stafford (505)-418-8266 kwstafford@juno.com.

December 3, 2006 : Government Canyon Karst Survey Project (San Antonio). Government Canyon State Natural Area is located near San Antonio. Thousands of acres have never been looked at by cavers. There are caves to survey and several promising sinkhole and in-cave digs. **Contact:** Marvin Miller (830)-885-5631 mlmiller@gvtc.com.

December 9, 2006 : Bracken Bat Cave Karst Survey. For details, see announcement elsewhere in this newsletter.

2007

August 13-19, 2007 : International Conference on Karst Hydrogeology and Ecosystems (Bowling Green, KY). The conference will be held at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, August 13-15, followed by a four-day field trip (August 16-19) to the karst of the Cumberland Plateau and southern Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee. For details see: <http://hoffman.wku.edu/karst2007/k2007.html>.

October 8-12, 2007 : National Cave & Karst Management Symposium (St. Louis, MO). For details and additional information, see http://www.utexas.edu/tmn/sponsored_sites/bio_speleology/ or contact Bill Elliott Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov.

A Message From the Editor

Well folks, it's time for me to lay the quill down and pass the editorship of the *TSA Activities Newsletter* to another volunteer. I've completed a year of duty, and upon reflection, it may be time to consider whether a newsletter is really needed or desirable at this point. The *Texas Caver* is on a regular publication schedule now thanks to Mark Alman, and Butch Fralia is doing a great job of providing a timely schedule of Texas and out-of-state caving events on the TSA website at <http://www.cavetexas.org/events/index.html>. Many of the news items I present in the *TSA Activities Newsletter* appear in one form or another on various internet caving forums and could easily be published in the *Texas Caver*. That said, if cavers feel that the *Activities Newsletter* should continue in some form or fashion, please make your opinions known to the officers of the TSA either by email or at the upcoming TSA Business meeting at TCR. It's been fun!

Jerry Atkinson.

Parting Shots

Here are two photos from our recent trip into the downstream borehole in Mystic Cave, Oklahoma. These are the first pictures to be taken in the downstream section of the cave. The downstream borehole was discovered and mapped in the early 90's after diving the downstream sump. The initial sump dive was made by RD Milhollin supported by cavers from the DFW grotto and the Mystic Cave survey project. A follow up dive, push, and partial survey was made by John Brooks, RD Milhollin and Greg Mooty a few months later. The survey was cut short when a lightening strike alerted them to the presence of a thunderstorm outside. The group exited the cave safely, but had most of their dive gear washed away when the water in the cave rose close to ten feet overnight. Most of the gear was rescued later that week when John Brooks and Greg Mooty returned before the next forecasted rainstorm hit. On other occasions, team members have seen the water in the cave rise more than 40 feet above normal. Several much more cautious survey and exploration trips were made by John Brooks and Greg Mooty over the next year which extended the survey into a side passage with several rooms and bad air to a small muddy sump, and downstream to a large sump. The cave has been dye traced to a large spring and several smaller springs to the south.

John Brooks



Woodrow Thomas in the downstream sump of Mystic Cave, Oklahoma (*John Brooks*)



Woodrow Thomas in the downstream section of Mystic Cave, Oklahoma (*John Brooks*)

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.

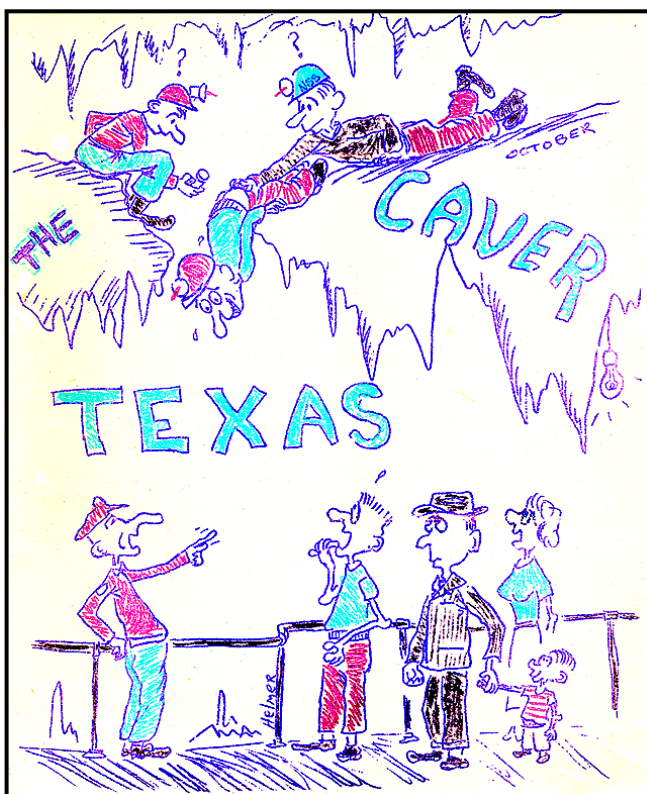
Editor : Jerry Atkinson
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