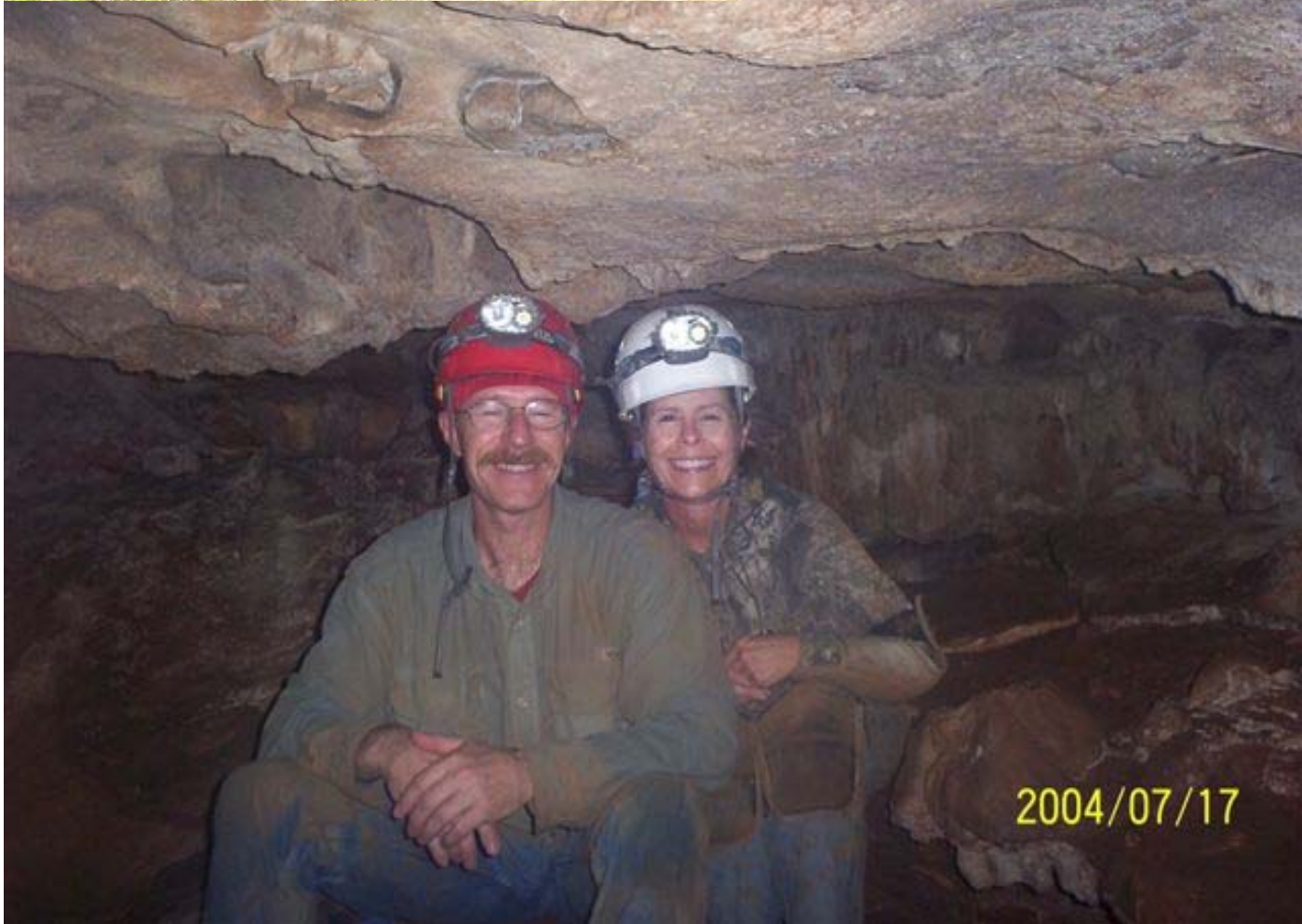


THE MAVERICK BULL

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE MAVERICK GROTTO

Volume 17 Issue 9

September, 2004



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The Maverick Bull is the monthly newsletter of The Maverick Grotto, an internal organization of The National Speleological Society (NSS G-322). The editor invites all individuals and other grottos to submit articles, news, maps, cartoons, art and photographs. If the material is to be returned, a self-addressed stamped envelope should accompany it.

Reprinting Articles: Internal organizations of The National Speleological Society may reprint any item (unless copyrights belong to the author as stated in the byline) first appearing in *The Maverick Bull* if proper credit is given and a complete copy of the publication is delivered to the editor at the time of publication. Other organizations should contact the editor of *The Maverick Bull* at the address herein.

Exchanges: The Maverick Grotto will exchange newsletters with other grottos. Contact the editor.

Complementary Newsletters: The Maverick Grotto will provide complementary newsletters to persons or organizations that provide cave access (i.e. landowners) or otherwise provide assistance to cavers. The Maverick Grotto will provide one free issue to persons interested in becoming members.

Subscription Rates: Subscription rates are \$15.00 per year for non- members and free for members.

Membership Policy: Any individual with interests, beliefs and actions consistent with the purposes of The Maverick Grotto and The National Speleological Society is eligible for membership. Acceptance of new members is based on payment of dues and a mandatory three trip requirement with at least three different grotto members. These three members shall act as sponsors. At least one sponsor must attend the meeting at which the membership vote is taken. A two-thirds majority vote of the members present will be required for acceptance.

Meetings: Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at Bodacious BBQ, 1206 E. Division St., Arlington. The time is 7 p.m., and the food is good.

Carbide: Currently carbide is unavailable.

Library: Support your Grotto Library. Russell Hill will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library.

We wish to thank Russell for his efforts each month to bring and set up the Grotto Library.

Visit Our NSS Award-Winning Web Site!

Butch has done an excellent job at constructing the grotto web site and keeping it up-to-date. You'll find information about getting into caving, trip photos and the PDF version of this newsletter (with color photos!):

[Http://www.maverickgrotto.org](http://www.maverickgrotto.org)

Cave Rescue: Call collect: (512) 686-0234

Photo and Map Credits

Front Cover: Austin Caves by Dennis Welch

Pages 4 & 5 Dennis Welch

Back Cover: Pete Lindsley

**Next meeting, September 14th, 7pm
Bodacious BBQ
1206 E Division St.
Arlington, Tx. 76011
(817) 860-4248**

Program:

Chad Fenner will talk about his recent trip to Belize with his son's Boy Scout troupe.

Be sure to show up at 7 p.m., as we will start the program before the business meeting.

Chair

Ed Goff
737 Bizerte Ave.
Dallas, TX 75224
(214)942-6024
egoff@rice.edu

Secretary

Scott Boyd
3792 Kearby St.
Fort Worth, TX 76111
(817) 838-3900
sdboyd56@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editors

Diana R. Tomchick
10106 Technology Blvd. #826
Dallas, Tx. 75220
(214) 418-5827
Diana.Tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu

Vice-Chair

Mark Gee
12515 Meadowcrest Lane
Balch Springs, TX 75180
(972) 557-1503
andre.swinson@andrew.com

Treasurer

Sharon Mastbrook
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

Webmaster

Butch Fralia
3412 Walton Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76133
(817) 346-2039
cavedba@charter.net

August 2004 Meeting Minutes Submitted by Scott Boyd

The Maverick Grotto met August 10th at Bodacious BBQ, on E. Division St. in Arlington. Eighteen members and two visitors attended the meeting.

Program: Video titled "Dirty Jobs". One segment was of Jim Kennedy checking on the bat population in Bracken Bat Cave(?). The second segment was of a woman that runs a bat rehabilitation center in her home.

Reports from Officers:

Treasurer: Sharon Mastbrook reported that the grotto has \$919.83 in the checking account and \$455 in petty cash, for a total of \$1374.83.

Newsletter Editor: Diana Tomchick announced that she will be taking over editorship of the TSA's newsletter. Due to that, and her travels, she will no longer be able to be editor of the grotto newsletter, so she asked for a volunteer to take over the duty. Lex Cox III volunteered to be the guest editor for the September newsletter, and Diana will help with the transition.

Old Business:

Dennis Welch is going to take over the grotto library from Russell Hill. There has been no progress on setting up joint projects with NTSS and/or COG.

New Business: No new business

Trip reports:

* Butch Fralia & Ernie Parker went to look at a sink hole in Parker County last weekend. (Butch was contacted by the land owner.) It was a dirt sink in a karst area that was caused by water action/erosion. They took measurements and a GPS reading. The sink measured 5 1/2 ft. across and 10 ft. deep. It was located on the edge of a dry creek.

Caving Events Calendar

Until October Devil's Sinkhole Bat Tours (Rocksprings):

Tours are offered Wednesday through Sunday evenings. The tour bus leaves the Rocksprings Visitor's Center between 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Tours return to the Visitor's Center between 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Evening tour fee is \$12 per person.

Second Saturday of every month Hilltop Project (Capitan, NM):

Ridge walking and digging in windy blowholes on USFS and BLM lands, about 5 miles south of Fort Stanton Cave, NM. Meet for Cave Diggers Breakfast on Saturday between 7:30 to 8 a.m. at the Smokey Bear Restaurant in Capitan. **Contacts:** Lee Skinner (505) 293-5723 skinner@thuntek.net or Dick Venters (505) 437-3712 cavedigger@msn.com

Sept 17-19 Texas Cave Conservancy 10th Anniversary Celebration (Austin):

A weekend of caving, cave preserve visitation, camping, food, beverages, slides and great times, held at the TCC Westside Cave Preserve in Cedar Park. See notice on page 4 of this newsletter for directions and more information. **Contact:** Mike Walsh (512) 249-2283 TCCaus@cs.com

Sept 18 Parida Cave Restoration Project, NPS (Amistad National Recreational Area):

Volunteers are needed to help rehab this significant archaeological/historical rock shelter with Native American rock art. **Contact:** Annmarie Mikelski (830) 775-7491 ext 212 Annmarie_Mikelski@nps.gov

Sept 25-26 High Guads Restoration Project (New Mexico):

On-going work amid spectacular scenery in 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

Sept 25-26 GypKaP (Carlsbad region, NM):

Long-running cave survey project in the gypsum plain of southern New Mexico. **Contact:** Blake Jordan (505) 260-1096 blandevoid@comcast.net

Oct 02 Texas Cave Conservancy CAVE DAY (Austin):

A public education event to be held in the TCC Westside Cave Preserve in Cedar Park. **Contact:** Mike Walsh (512) 249-2283 TCCaus@cs.com

Oct 04-09 Carlsbad Caverns Lint Camp (New Mexico):

Annual restoration project at Carlsbad Caverns. **Contact:** Pat Jablonsky (307) 467-5404 patjabo@trib.com

Oct 08-10 Colorado Bend State Park Project:

ong-time favorite of Mavericks, pretty close to home, semi-regular schedule, second weekend of the month. This is a terrific project for beginning cavers. **Contacts:** Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 trhli@sprynet.com or Dale Barnard Barnarddale@yahoo.com

Oct 09 Government Canyon State Natural Area Karst Survey (San Antonio)

Oct 15-17 Texas Cavers' Reunion (Flat Creek Ranch):

The annual get-together/party returns to this popular Blanco County site. Speleocontests and vendors, swimming, hot tubs, live music, food and more will be available. A great chance to meet and greet old and new friends, and to fill your caving calendar for the next year. TCMA will hold their business meeting on Sunday morning at 9 a.m.; the TSA Business meeting will be held following, at approximately 10 a.m. **Contacts:** Allan Cobb ac@kihikihi.com www.oztotl.com/tcr

Oct 30-31 Powell's Cave (Powell's Ranch, Menard, TX):

Come see the second longest cave in Texas! Cavers of all skill and experience levels welcome. A cave sketching workshop co-sponsored by the Texas Speleological Survey and the Texas Speleological Association will take place in Powell's Cave this weekend, stay tuned for details. **Contacts:** Jerry Atkinson (281) 360-2244 JerryAtkin@aol.com Terry Holsinger (512) 443-4241 trhli@sprynet.com

Nov 21-27 **Proyecto Espeleologico Sierra Oxmolon (Mexico):** Survey and mapping project over Thanksgiving week. **Contact:** Jerry Fant jerryfant@worldnet.att.net

Dec 04 **Winter Technical Regional, Southwest Region NSS (New Mexico):** Sandia Grotto hosting (tentative).

Feb 02-06, 2005 **7th Mexican Congress of Speleology & 5th Congress of FEALC (The Speleological Federation of Latin American and the Caribbean) (Monterrey, Nuevo León, México):** "Legislation and Protection of the Subterranean Environment." Cost: US\$50 until October 1, 2004, US \$100 later. **Contacts:** Rodolfo Gonzalez rogonzalez@cydsa.com

2005 Grotto Officer Nominations

It's that time of year again! Time to shanghai...no, **nominate** suckers...that is, **volunteers** for grotto offices. These are the folks who give a little of their time and effort to make things happen: programs, newsletters, meetings, finances--the stuff that makes us a caving club and not just a group of weirdos who like to get together for barbecue and beer. Hmm, wait, maybe we don't really need these officers.... No, we surely do, and September and October are your chance to **nominate** candidates for **2005** Grotto offices. Nominations will be accepted at the September and October meetings, and the election will be held at the November meeting. If you like the job a current office-holder is doing, re-nominate him or her, or if you'd like to run yourself or know someone who would, then let's see some democracy in action and have an election with more than one candidate for each office!

The grotto offices are:

- Chairperson** - presides at meetings, appoints committees, 3 year term limit
- Vice Chairperson** - manages programs, fills in for chairperson
- Editor** - publishes the Maverick Bull
- Treasurer** - keeps track of grotto account, dues, membership, and annual NSS reports
- Secretary** - takes meeting minutes



Texas Cave Conservancy 10th Anniversary Celebration

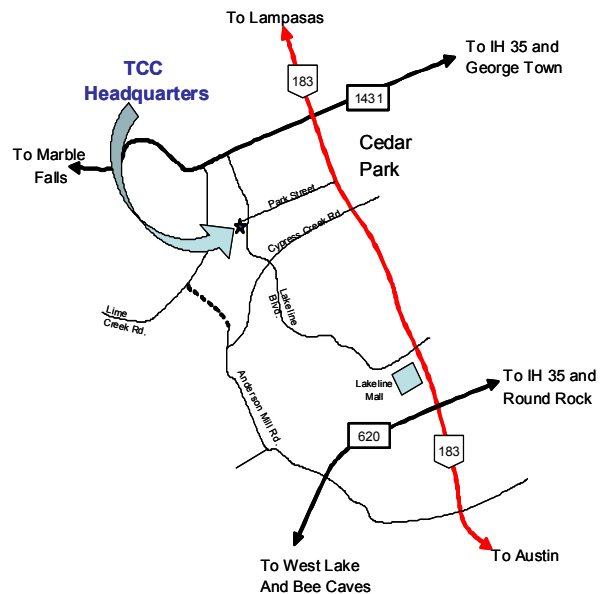
Join us on the weekend of September 17-19 at the Texas Cave Conservancy headquarters in Cedar Park, Texas for a weekend of caving, cave preserve visitation, visits to our new educational show cave, access to our great new library, camping, food, beverages, slides and great times. We have camping for our out of town visitors at two TCC campgrounds located near the headquarters.

The caves difficulty range from easy to the near impossible. Both horizontal and vertical caves are available. Most of the caving will start Saturday and run through the weekend. We plan on having a wide range of Mexican coffees for you to taste and choose your favorite. Both beer and soft drinks will be available for the Saturday night party. We will have a great meal starting around six.

The slides will feature a few of the cavers that helped the Texas Cave Conservancy get off the ground. There may even be a couple of cave acquisition announcements that evening. Everyone is welcome. Contact us if you want to assist in the party arrangements. On October 2, 2004, we will host our next public education event, **CAVE DAY**. This will be held at the Westside Preserve here in Cedar Park.

Texas Cave Conservancy
1800 West Park
Cedar Park, Texas 512 249-2283

TCCaus@cs.com



Trip Report Austin Area Caves

Maverick Grotto Members Visit T.C.M.A. and A.P.R.D. Caves

OOPS Cave, Airman's Cave, Whirlpool Cave, Goat Cave & Maple Run Cave –
July 16th – 18th, 2004 By Dennis Welch

Dennis & Sharon Welch had a free weekend in mid-July and wanted to spend it caving.

Members of the Maverick Grotto suggested a number of caving-related options including suggestions to SCUBA dive a pit, visit a museum, and watch some bats. These suggestions sounded like good, clean fun, but the Welch's wanted to get down and dirty. Another suggestion was to visit Texas Cave Management Association and Austin Parks and Recreation Department Caves in the Austin, Texas area. Bill Steele forwarded this suggestion through Diana Tomchick and she provided the necessary contact information. Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) manages the caves they own and the caves owned by the City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department (APRD). Therefore, access to the caves is controlled and approved by Julie Jenkins, Vice-President, TCMA and an Austin resident/caver. Julie, or Jules as she is sometimes called, was incredibly personable and accommodating to Dennis' request to cave in Austin. Mark Sanders, Biologist, APRD, is the city's cave contact.. Mark was also very helpful and delightful to coordinate with. From this point forward, Julie handled everything else. She was going out of town for the weekend and asked William Russell to meet the Maverick cavers at Whirlpool Cave on Saturday morning.

The first cave to explore was Airman's Cave in the Barton Springs Greenbelt in south Austin. The Greenbelt is popular for rock climbing among the locals. The city allows public access to the cave due to a feature encountered just past the entrance. This tight squeeze is called the "Keyhole Passage" which, as the name suggests, limits access to the cave to only those willing to squееeeze through. The cave map shows the cave as 10,800 feet long, but Bill Russell advises more cave has been discovered since the map was drawn in 1974 (TSS length 12,901 feet, depth 30 feet). To reach the cave, a hike through the Greenbelt is required. As the Welch's followed instructions for the route to the cave, the beauty of their surroundings entranced them. Within the city limits, they had expected the Barton Springs Greenbelt to be a typical well-groomed city park. To their delight, they hiked along a crystal clear creek surrounded by an all-natural setting. The areas where organic debris has accumulated from recent heavy rains has very little trash entangled within. Austin residents are to be commended for how well they treat this beautiful natural retreat. Traveling along the trail, the Welch's finally came to a karst feature 20 to 25 feet up the bank. Investigating further, they discovered a cave with a small entrance. They had finally reached Airman's Cave. They geared up and headed inside. The cave is littered with trash and the remnants from a multitude of tea light candles. The entrance area of this cave is deeply affected by human abuse. Dennis and Sharon explored all possible leads within this cave and became frustrated as every lead terminated or shrank down too small for human passage, even a youngster. Remembering a trip report on the web written by a local adventurer, they recalled him telling of making a

similar mistake and that the real Airman's was farther down the trail. Therefore, they named this OOPS Cave, reflecting the mistaken identity. Factoring in the trash and insects, OOPS Cave is definitely worth skipping.

A bit of a hike along the trail led to Airman's Cave only ten to fifteen feet above the creek. This cave has at least a three to four-foot entrance. Just inside the entrance are thousands and thousands of harvestmen spiders, mostly in bunches on the ceiling. The passage shrinks down to a hands-and-knees crawl almost immediately, then to a belly crawl into a very narrow squeeze. Sharon, leading the way, progressed until the passage became so tight she could no longer move forward comfortably. At the time, she did not consider removing her helmet for more maneuverability, a thought that later occurred to her. She had seen enough for the day and it was getting late. Airman's would have to wait for another day. They now knew specifically where the cave was located and what to expect. They anticipate returning soon with other cavers to spend a full day in this cave.

Before leaving DFW, Kris, a cave diver, had called Dennis and invited the Welch's to join he and Melissa for an early morning dive at the Lake Travis Dam. Dennis and Sharon arose at 4:30 a.m. to meet them for a 5:30 dive. Kris & Melissa rushed back to their hotel in Round Rock while the Welch's zoomed back to the park to store their dive gear, change, break camp, gather up the Cox's and head for a 10:00 a.m. rendezvous with Bill Russell at Whirlpool Cave. They arrived at 10:03.

Bill Russell directed everyone to park underneath the bridge then showed them the entrance to the cave. He also showed them the location of the ground safe and its combination. Next, he offered maps and keys to the other caves on the agenda. The Barton Underground Research Project surveyed Whirlpool Cave in July of 1979. The passages are mostly hands-and-knees crawls, with a surveyed length of 1440 feet and a depth of 52 feet. Bill suggested the cave was discovered when the property owner informed local cavers of a whirlpool that formed every time the normally dry creek bed filled with run off. Thus the name, Whirlpool Cave. From the entrance to the first larger cavity involved climbing down a ladder before an easy crawl. This cavity has two possible routes to reach the next section of the cave. The Cox's took the longer, tighter, more interesting route, while the others took the recently dug short crawl to the largest area in the cave. This central junction, called the Travis County Room, has two continuing passages.



Most of the group elected to try the longer South Caverns to the Surprise Room. The Welch's chose the East Caverns through the Red Room and the Pit Room. Ever alert for trash in caves, along the route,

Sharon found an empty Gatorade bottle. She stowed it in her pack as Dennis lamented that he hoped it wasn't someone's intentionally left behind emergency "pee" bottle. Beyond the Pit Room, they found a maze of low crawls with virtually no formations. Returning to the Travis County Room an hour later, they found the others resting. It seems not everyone could squeeze through some of the tighter passages in the South Caverns. They all made it as far as the Ant Lion Room, but only Tammy ventured ahead to the Solvent Chamber. When she determined they were no longer behind her, she backtracked and the all returned. The Surprise Room would have to wait for another trip. All enjoyed this fun and delightful cave, but the favorite cave of the trip was yet to be explored.

After Whirlpool, the group drove the short distance to Goat Cave Nature Preserve. They did a surface examination of Wade and Hideout Sinks, before continuing along the trail to Goat Cave. A tall security fence with a locked gate surrounds the cave's pit entrance. Once inside the fence, Sharon and Kris analyzed the area for suitable rigging points. Kris graciously allowed Sharon to take the most obvious tree. The second best point, another tree would have placed Kris' rope precariously close to Sharon's in the pit, so he chose a different tree on the opposite side of the entrance. Sharon's rigging also placed her rope at the best location to negotiate the lip of the pit. All but one had their turn on the ropes. None of these cavers has a significant amount of vertical experience. Therefore, nearly everyone who tried to enter at the northwest edge of the pit on Kris' rope had some kind of difficulty transitioning from standing at the edge to hanging freely below the lip. Amber watched several of them struggle and decided to wait for some other opportunity to practice her vertical skills. Even Sharon's entry point on the southwest edge created a challenge or two.



One caver made repeated trips up and down the two ropes practicing changeovers, however, nearly everyone else made only one trip into and out of the cave. When off rope on the floor of the pit, the cavers stood atop a huge breakdown pile of large boulders and formations descending to the south into a drain. To the north, a drop-off of approximately 20 feet to another possible drain covered by breakdown can be found. The floor continues north another 40 feet or so. The cave has abundant active formations and is quite beautiful. Cave critters included cave crickets, another of those curious toad/frogs, and a salamander, not surprising since the cave is so wet. No bats were observed. The entrance area, above and just below the lip has a multitude of mosquitoes. Despite constant swatting of mosquitoes on the surface, everyone had a good time at this fun little pit/cave.

Next, the cavers headed farther down the trail to Maple Run Cave, hidden amongst a clump of trees and overgrowth. This cave is gated, secured by a lock. They unlocked the gate and peered inside to determine what to expect. The cave began in a low, wide crawl for several feet, sloping gently downhill into a roomy pit. Tammy ventured deeper to check out the passage at the bottom of the pit. Soon, she returned relating that to continue on required a lot more crawling. Hungry, hot and tired, they called it quits for the day and headed out of the cave.

Later Saturday evening, the Welch's received a call from Kris informing them that he and Melissa would not be joining them for Maple Run the next day. When morning arrived, Lex and Amber decided to sit this one out too, so Dennis, Sharon and Tammy loaded up and headed back to Maple Run Cave.

They negotiated the entrance crawl, observing cave crickets, another of the little frogs and two separate specimens of feces. It appeared to be freshly deposited from a cat-sized animal. Tammy led the way as she chimneyed down the pit into the next crawl. This cave descends at a nearly forty-five-degree angle punctuated by an occasional pit or a mostly level tight crawl. Along the route, there are very few leads to stray into, but the cavers explored most of them.

It is apparent from the amount of water and mud in the cave, that any formations they might later encounter would be active and growing. The next significant feature they encountered was the Rainbow Room. Although the name alludes to the beauty to be observed within, the room probably received its name from its shape. The cave then continues steeply downhill through a crawl past a short lead to the right, before starting an uphill switchback climb into the Copal Room. For such a small cave, the cavers were awed by the vastness of this room. It has a massive breakdown pile on the floor with a ridge that runs perpendicular to the cave route. The dome must be at least 30 feet above the crest of the ridge and appears to have an unexplored lead off to the north near the ceiling. There are numerous speleothems within the room upon which to marvel. Dennis led the way, as the route continued on at the bottom of the opposite side of the breakdown into a small steep passage to Tombstone Pit, so named for the shape of breakdown blocks along the route. Past Tombstone, the cave makes several turns in route to the Garden Of Earthly Delights (GOED). The cavers were stunned upon entering this area. Nearly every square inch of the GOED is covered with "pretties". Most of the walls and floor are flowstone. Other areas have draperies, stalagmites and columns.

From the ceiling hang stalactites, soda straws and helectites. And all of these are in a myriad of colors. Although the dimensions of this area are not vast, its intimate beauty is breathtaking. To call the GOED a room would be misleading in that it more like an inter-



connecting maze of speleothem defined crawls. They were truly amazed to find this wonderful treat at the end of the known cave. It had taken the three of them nearly three hours to reach the point where they were ready to leave, having taken a lunch break in the Copal Room and other breaks to marvel at the wonders to be enjoyed. They spent about a half hour in the GOED alone, but now it was time to head back. Fortunately, Tammy had brought flagging tape along and marked their route at each intersection, significantly reducing the number of wrong turns. Even though the trek is nearly all climbing and crawling, they managed to get out in about an hour with one short break along the way. It's unfortunate that so many others in the group did not get to share this fantastic little cave with Tammy, Sharon & Dennis. For a cave that only measures 250 feet long and 76 feet deep, it definitely was the treat of the trip. They each committed to returning again to share in its splendor.

TSS Business Meeting

August 28, 2004

By Butch Fralia

The Texas Speleological Survey (TSS) held its quarterly business meeting Saturday, August 28, 2004 at the Pickle Research Center, Austin, Texas. Items that might be of general interest discussed at the meeting were the status of "Fifty Years of Texas Caving," and status of upgrades to the office computer equipment.

Ok, why is "Fifty Years of Texas Caving" of general interest. If you're really interested in caving, you'll be interested in owning this book when it comes out. It's a historical document talking about the various Grottos that have existed over the last fifty years. It will discuss a lot of Texas cavers over the period and their contributions to caving. At the moment, it looks like the book may be available for sale at the TSA spring convention next year. This will be a masterpiece with a lot of history and color photographs. A must own for all cavers.

Now you can see why you might want the book but why should you care about the office computers? A lot of newer cavers probably don't even know what the TSS is other than they may own a few publications by now. A lot of the older cavers will remember the TSS has held some pretty in-depth technical sessions both in the office and at cave locations on cave photography and cave cartography. The TSS is planning a cartography workshop using graphics software to create finished cave maps. To be able to host the session, it's necessary to have at least six working, fairly high power computers. This will be a hands on training session. If anyone has a functional Pentium computer they'd like to donate that has a 400MHZ or faster computer they'd like to donate, the TSS could sure use it. If its network ready with a large hard drive that would be wonderful! The TSS is non-profit so you can deduct your donation and save a few bucks on your taxes.

So who are these people and this organization called the TSS? The TSS is made up of volunteer (non-paid) elected directors and from those directors officers are chosen. The TSS is a non-profit corporation so it's not just another caving club. We actually have offices provided by the Texas Memorial Museum, located at the Pickle Research Center in north Austin. We maintain an up to date website <http://www.txspeleologicalsurvey.org> that is hosted by the TMM and the University of Texas computers. Regular business meetings are held quarterly at the office. These meetings are open to the public and provide a chance to browse the physical TSS files.

What do we do? Most cavers know we sell books, a lot of county reports on Texas caves. Monographs that are usually a graduate thesis that has some bearing on caves. The latest publication is "The Caves of East Texas," that was available at last years TCR (Texas Cavers Reunion). Rather than cover a specific county, this publication covers mostly sandstone caves in East Texas from the Houston area to near the Oklahoma border.

Where does that information come from? We're the record keepers; we maintain files of maps descriptions, pictures, survey notes and whatever else we can gather from the caving

population. I specifically am the electronic data manager. I maintain a computer database of Karst related records that can be used to generate reports and statistics on the known and reported Karst features in Texas. I also have a large collection of electronic cave maps and pictures. I'll give you some statistics on the amount of data we now have at the end of this article. Of course you can always visit our website and view the cave stats page that is updated as frequently as there are significant changes to report.

By the way, our own Mark Gee has made significant contributions on caves he's visited in the form of reports, maps and locations. All contributions are welcome and desirable. It's time for a lot of the old secrecy practiced by cavers of yore.

My own pet project is to try and get location data on all the caves and Karst features in Texas. That's because cavers have been known to frequent an area for a time then some area of greater interest opens up and they move on to greener pastures. Twenty years later, other cavers gain access to the area and if we're not careful, they "rediscover" a known cave and report it again under another name. Now there are duplicate records in the database, inflating the number of caves in an area. Accuracy is one of our more important goals.

Ok, you're looking for data. Can you just ask for it or do you have to buy a book? The TSS maintains data for the cavers of Texas. If you're going to a specific cave or area and you'd like to know what to expect, you can do an informal data request. Start with me, send me an e-mail asking for information on the cave or area. I'll research and provide you with the information and get back to you. If I don't have the information you're looking for, I'll check with other TSS directors who might be working on specific projects in that area. I don't know of any caver who has been turned down when asking for data. There have been a couple of instances where the TSS has been accused of hoarding data and not sharing. In all cases so far, it's because the data was never reported to us and thusly we just don't have it! There are limits on the amount of data you can ask for. In the event you ask for the data say on an entire county then you'll have to file a formal request stating your intentions for the use of the data. Usually formal requests are required for consultants and outside entities seeking information.

There are occasions where the data is proprietary. The owner has requested that data for his/her property not be given out without specific permission. There is usually a proprietary contact and you'll be referred to that person for information.

OK, so you're interested in being a data whore and getting involved with the TSS. If you're familiar with the TSS you know those of us who are involved aren't exactly spring chickens so we'd like to see some younger folks get involved. Approach us and express your interest and what you'd like to contribute to the TSS. We're open and would really like to see some younger cavers get involved. You can always start with me and move on to the whole group. The current directors are focused and dedicated to what they do. However they would welcome additional involvement. There's plenty to do so don't be bashful.

I promised you some stats so here they are. You can by the way see these same stats on the TSS website as mentioned before in this article.

Database Records: 6283
 Caves: 3711
 Sinks and Features: 985
 Shelters: 198
 Springs: 141
 Undefined: 1069
 Rumored: 217
 Aesthetic: 64
 Archeologically Significant: 85
 Bad Air Caves: 75
 Biologically Significant: 149
 Geologically Significant: 56
 Historically Significant: 51
 Paleontologically Significant: 69
 Number of Texas Counties with recorded Karst data:
 117
 Number of records with location data: 3470
 Number of records without location data - Topographic
 Map defined: 1224
 Lost Caves - no location or Topographic Map: 1587

Definitions:

Database records: The number of database records (rows) representing all caves, karst features, sinkholes, and shelters.

The numbers in the right hand column won't add up to the total number of TSS database records because some records have multiple designations such as cave and spring.

Cave: A feature with a minimum of five meters of humanly traversable passage. This can be a combination of horizontal and vertical, all horizontal or all vertical.

Sinks/Features: Anything representing cave activity that doesn't meet the minimum definition of a cave.

Shelter: A rock overhang.

Spring: Can also be a cave.

Undefined: Records that haven't been defined as a cave, Sink/feature, spring, shelter, or rumored.

Rumored: A record entered on the basis of a reported rumor that hasn't been verified.

Archeologically Significant: A record flagged due to known archeological activity or observed material. Typically a sensitive location for visitation.

Biologically Significant: A record flagged due to presence of biological species of endangered status, or unusual diversity and/or uniqueness.

Geologically Significant: A record flagged due to presence of unusual or unique mineralogical, structural, and/or lithological features.

Historically Significant: A record flagged due to presence of artifacts, signatures, and/or other material older than 50 years that has historical importance, yet is not prehistoric. May be site of historic event.

Paleontologically Significant: A record flagged due to presence of paleontological material that is recognized or inferred to be of importance.

Number of Texas Counties with recorded karst data: The number of counties in the State of Texas with at least on record in the database.

Number of records with location data: The number of records in the database having a recorded location in both UTM and LAT/LON. The TSS currently records location data using the NAD27 CONUS datum.

Number of records without location data - Topographic Map defined: The number of TSS records without a UTM or LAT/LON location but with a Topographic Map Defined.

Lost Caves - no location or Topographic Map: The number of caves without any location data, i.e., UTM or Lat/Lon and no topographic map. Some of these have very thorough maps and reports.

TCR 2004

By Butch Fralia

Oh come all ye cavers young and old. It's time again for the Texas Cavers Reunion known as TCR. It will be held this year at the Flat Creek Ranch, October 14 – 17, 2004. Oh my God we're back at Flat Creek Ranch with all the camaraderie that only cavers can know. If you've never been to TCR then this is the year. Pack it all up an go.

I'll be down there early to set up camp and reserve an area acceptable to the grotto for camping and the ultimate party. This is the chance to meet some of our founders and have a great time. Come one come all. Fill out our caving calendar for the next year with all the contacts you make.

Sharon and I will be going down at least by Thursday and establishing a camp site that will accommodate both the Maverick and probably the DFW grotto as well. It the situation permits we'll be down on Wednesday but what the heck, we'll take whatever we can get.

If all goes as usual we'll be close to the big TSA TCR feed, the San Antonio fish fry and all the vendors. Come one and come all, it's time for a new experience if you haven't been before. TCR is the place to be.

Exploration of Texas's Longest Cave Resumes

by Bill Steele

Honey Creek Cave is the longest cave in the state of Texas. It's located along the county line of Kendall and Comal counties, about 25 miles northwest of San Antonio. From roughly 1980 to 1996 20 miles of passage were explored and mapped. Very little has been explored or mapped since then, and in fact, few trips go there at all anymore, to this, one of the handful of truly "world-class" caves in the Lone Star State. I was in on a lot of trips to Honey Creek when it was happening for those 16 years. I've seen almost all of the cave. George Veni, the PhD. consulting geologist who studied Honey Creek as part of his dissertation, teaches an annual course on karst aquifers, and every other year teaches it around San Antonio and includes a swim in the cave.

This year he asked me to help guide his students in the cave. During his lecture on the speleo-genesis of the cave he mentioned that there are 176 leads left to be further checked, and mapping to be done. At that moment I decided to take that project on. I got the list of leads from George and set up a trip for July 31st. The lead was described like this:

QL Survey (passage off QA152)

*QL11 Small sump heading downstream. Station not flagged (or at least the notes don't indicate a flag). This passage was the original downstream route of the QA and should lead about 450 m straight-line until it is truncated by the surface Honey Creek.

Worth diving and trying to notch a downstream dam to open the sump. Another option is to use a pump to drain the sump, but 100 m of hose would be needed to dump the water to the main QA stream. I like the QA passage. It's the first major tributary side-passage in the cave, located about 1,000 feet inside the spring entrance. Going up the QA necessitates using the spring (natural) entrance, and it's a better place to camp. I've been on the lookout for a cave diver who could join me in checking out promising sumps, or passages with water to the ceiling, and through a caver who was active at Honey Creek the years I was, Jim Bowden, I found out about a young, gung-ho cave diver woman named Liz Hunt, of Austin (see: <http://www.mexicoprofundo.org/teammembers-lizhunt.html>).

Besides Liz Hunt, on the trip were Jim Bowden of Burnet, Ted Lee of San Antonio, Faith Watkins, Tom Haile and Chris Kreja of Austin, Maverick Grotto members Dennis and Sharon Welch, and me. Diana Tomchick camped with us, but is still recuperating from her back surgery so didn't get underground beyond where you put on fins to swim the deep water of the entrance area of the cave.

I wanted to see the QL11 sump and assess the trip to it for a tank haul and the nature of the sump itself for a later cave dive that Liz would do, but I also wanted to refresh my memory of the QA passage. Decked out in wetsuits, fins, and with kickboards at the end of outstretched arms, our group swam upstream to Whistler's Mother, which had a couple of inches of air space through its three feet of length. I demonstrated how to take off your helmet, float face up on the surface, and slowly pucker and breath all the way through a low airspace. It is far more dangerous to hold your breath, diving underwater through a sump, with the rule of thumb being to never, never dive underwater if you can breathe and do a low airspace instead. I stated that rule, and demonstrated how to do it, but to my dismay more than one

accompanying caver chose not to listen and dove underwater anyway. We climbed up into the QA side passage and changed from fins to caving boots. Regrouping at the mushroom dome just 50 feet or so up the QA, we discussed how we noticed the less-than-perfect quality of the air. I happened to have a Bic lighter with me, so I got it out of a Nalgene bottle and tested the air quality. Before my wet fingers got the flint wet, I got flame once and it puffed upwards and went out. That told us that the air wasn't so good, but my recommendation was to continue the trip, move slower, and see if the air was "do-able." It was, and in fact seemed better the farther we went.

We "salamandered" and waded upstream. Salamandering is a technique for moving in water that is deep enough to suspend your body in, buoyant due to wearing a wetsuit, and forward motion comes from digging fingers into the mud on the bottom and pulling yourself forward. When the water is too shallow to suspend you body and you can't salamander, then the "Hemperly Technique" works well. I demonstrated it, but it takes some getting used to. With the Hemperly Technique (named for former Texas caver Robert Hemperly, who is now in the U.S. Navy, having joined in his late 40s) you turn over on your back; bring your buoyant cave pack up under your head like a pillow, the push the mud with your heels, moving your legs like pedaling a bike. The only problem is you can't see where you're going.

Next we came to a sad note written on a piece of cave survey paper and stuck to a muddy ledge about 1,000 feet up the QA. It was from Joe Ivy and Jim Bowden, from about 20 years ago. Joe Ivy died in a caving accident in 2000, in 09 Well, a cave in West Texas.

Eventually we came to a sign hanging from the ceiling which says State Park Boundary. Twenty or so years ago someone acquired it and hung it in the cave at the approximate spot where you do cross under the state park above. Just beyond that we turned left and entered 40-foot high Birthday Cake Dome. Back in the 80s a birthday cake was surreptitiously taken on a trip and brought out in this dome with candles blazing and Happy Birthday to You being sung. At the dome Sharon told me she was too cold to continue, so Dennis and she turned around to enjoy a leisurely trip out. The rest of us continued on, but did not reach our destination. I was in the lead and took a wrong turn at a "T" where the larger way to the left is not the main way, and you'd never guess it. We got into one very low airspace after another; most of them hammered open, until we reached one that was tight and real low. That's where we turned around. I know where to go next time: right at that "T".

That night we sat up late to a starry sky, and managed to get Jim Bowden to tell us his story of setting the standing world record for the deepest cave dive. Look around on that URL for Liz Hunt above and you'll find the story. Out of the darkness walked my daughter Audrey and her boyfriend Mark. They camped with us and went in the cave with Liz Hunt and me on Sunday. We went up the QA passage again to Birthday Cake Dome, and Mark did his first cave. He's says he's hooked, yet Audrey says that trip isn't like "most of Dad's caving trips."

The next Honey Creek Cave trip is scheduled for January 15, 2005. It's going to be a tough "tank haul," meaning taking scuba tanks and all the assorted fins, weights, lights, etc. to a sump five hours travel time from the shaft entrance. Suckers, uh, volunteers are needed, so come, learn the cave.



Here is a picture of a worm found on the wall of a stream passage of an Ozark Cave (Fitton Cave) The little critter was actually adjacent to running water about 800 feet from the entrance where a surface stream disappears and enters the cave below. It appeared that it had washed in and was trying to get out of the water by climbing up the wall.

Pete Lindsley

**Maverick Grotto
c/o Diana Tomchick
10106 Technology Blvd. W. #826
Dallas, TX 75220**