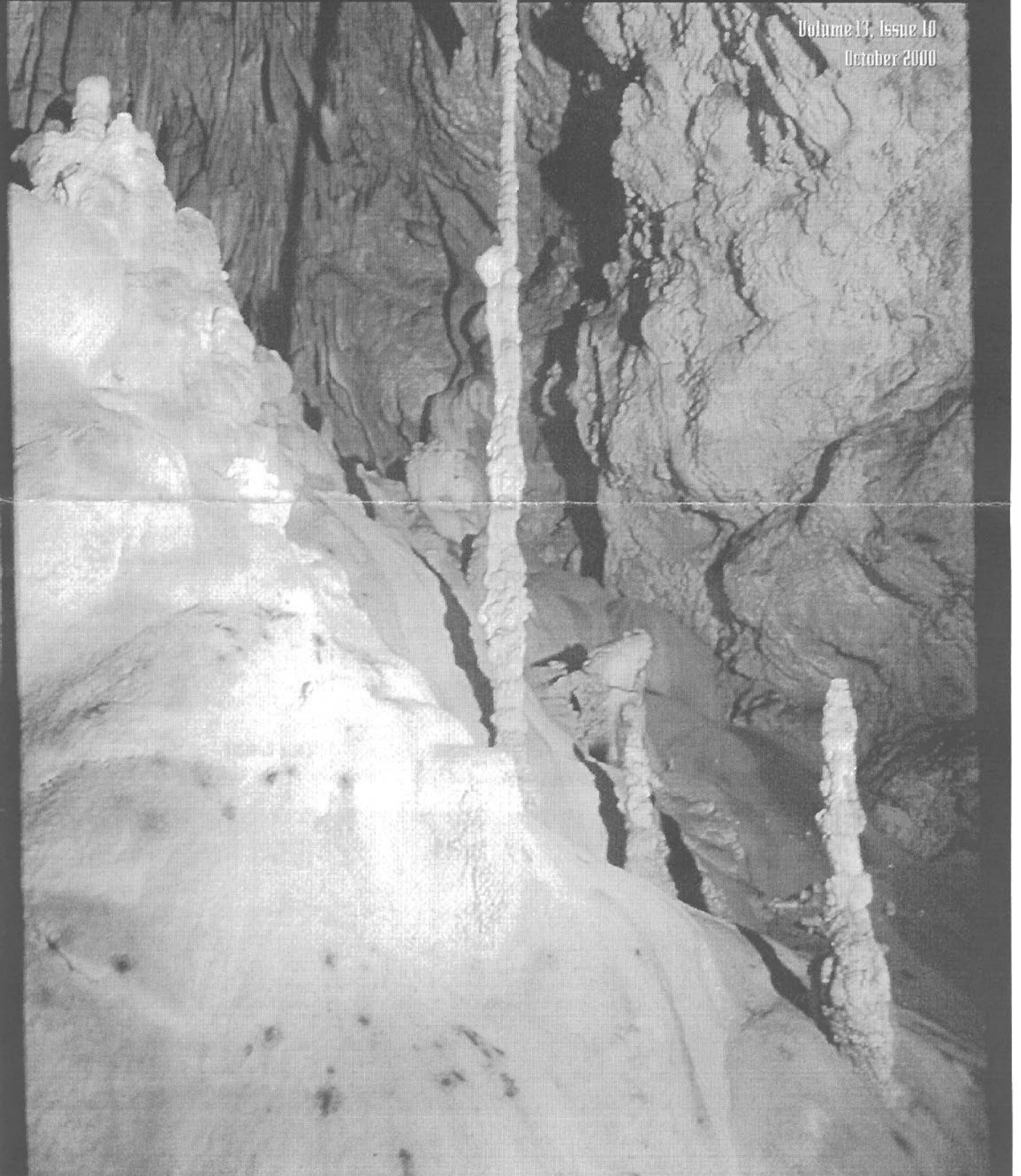


# THE MAVERICK BULL

The Monthly Newsletter Of The Ft. Worth Maverick Grotto

Volume 13, Issue 10  
October 2000



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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, photographs, and other two- and three-dimensional goodies. 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 per year for nonmembers 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 Smokey's Ribs, 5300 E. Lancaster, Fort Worth. It is located less than one mile west of Loop 820. The time is 7 p.m., and the food is good.

**Carbide:** Grotto carbide is available at the meeting if prior arrangements are made. Carbide is free for the asking. Contact Russell Hill at (817) 220-7108

or Butch Fralia at (817) 346-2039 for more information.

**Library:** Support your grotto library. Russell Hill is accepting books, magazines, and videos related to caves and caving for our library. Thanks to Russell for his efforts in transporting the library collection to meetings.

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## Photos and Artwork

This month's cover: Broomstick in La Escalera, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, by Ed Goff  
Page 3: Photos by Brian Pate  
Page 6: Greater Houston Grotto cavers in Little Brehmer Cave  
Page 8: NSS Convention photo by Mike Anderson

## Other Credits

Mailing list: Sharon Mastbrook

## Visit Our Web Site

The Maverick Grotto website is at [www.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto](http://www.fwst.net/np/maverickgrotto)  
Webmaster: [maverickgrotto@fwst.net](mailto:maverickgrotto@fwst.net)  
Space donated by Fort Worth Star-Telegram Online Services.



## Joe Ivy Memorial Fund

We all suffered a terrible loss with the untimely death on September 30 of Joe Ivy, accomplished cave explorer and rescuer, co-owner of Gonzo Guano Gear, and all-around good guy. Linda Palit is collecting for a memorial fund for Joe, dedicated to exploration. Checks can be made out to Linda Palit, 4019 Ramsgate, San Antonio, TX 78230. Linda will be opening an account and letting people know as soon as the management of the fund is formalized. Also watch CaveTex for details.

## October meeting

The next Maverick meeting will be Tuesday, October 10, at Smokey's Ribs, 5300 Lancaster, at 7 p.m.

## Advanced Rappelling Course

This course is open to both beginners and experienced rappellers. Children age 10 and older will be allowed to take the course provided that at least one of the child's parents is present at all times. For safety reasons the class size is limited to a maximum of 20 students.

The course of instruction includes safety, mental aspects of rappelling, theory of rappelling, equipment, care and inspection of equipment, purchasing of equipment, three commonly used methods of rappelling, three basic methods of ascending, anchors, rigging, knots, belaying, self rescue, and partner rescue.

The course is 40 hours long. The class dates are: Oct. 28, Nov. 4 & 5, Nov. 11 & 12.

Class times are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A fee will be charged to offset instructor expenses, with the amount being divided equally among the students. The more students that attend, the less expensive the course will be (up to the limit of 20 students).

If interested, contact Ernie Parker at (817) 295-1722 or e-mail fireater@dfw.net.

## Miscellaneous

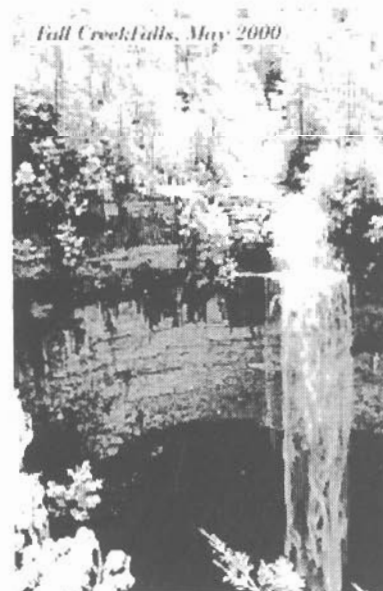
The Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. has its most recent newsletter, *Steward #13*, available for downloading from its website, <http://www.scci.org>.

The DFW Grotto held a Trashoff for its stretch of Adopt-a-Highway highway on Sunday, October 8, at Highway 289 (Preston Road) and CR 134. 🐾



Fall Creek Falls, May 2000

Aloha on rope!  
195 feet up.



Fall Creek Falls, May 2000

# Summer Trip to River Styx

By R. D. Milhollin

(with technical advice from Butch Fralia and Donna Anderson)

It has been a few years since I have had the opportunity to visit River Styx, one of my favorite Texas caves. Located in King County, it is closer to Lubbock than to the Ft. Worth area. I had the day before Labor Day open since a trip to Florida for an underwater hockey tournament fell through, so I contacted two cavers who had not left town for the yearly trek to Bustamante, or for the Maverick Grotto trip to BLM caves in the McKittrick Hill area of New Mexico. Wayne Peplinski was supposed to be tending a garage sale on Sunday, but surprisingly agreed to relinquish that privilege for a day split between road driving and crawling through mud and guano. Aurelio Duque, from San Luis Potosí, is an experienced caver who has relocated to Plano, Texas. The two of us have been trying to hook up for caving trips in Mexico for a few years now, and it just never seemed to work out. When I called up to invite him to join us at River Styx he agreed enthusiastically.

The weather forecast was for no rain and an afternoon high of 106 degrees F (41 degrees C). We decided against camping at the ranch, feeling it would be too miserable trying to sleep at night, and the early morning heat would drive us out of our tents at too rude an hour. Our solution was to rendezvous for an early breakfast in north Ft. Worth and drive out to the cave afterwards. On arrival, we planned to quickly change into caving clothes and then get underground as soon as possible. We intended to enter at the '63 entrance, explore around the crawlways upstream in the system, and traverse the Gypsum Blister Passage to the Junction Room. We would then head downstream through

the rest of the connected passages and rooms to the underground river, and then wade out the river entrance. We hoped to be finished with the traverse trip by late afternoon in order to be back in town at some reasonable time the same evening.

Upon arrival at the ranch we filled out the requisite landowner forms and placed them in the provided mailbox, then proceeded to the campsite located on a cliff high above the cave's river entrance. The heat at 1 p.m. was already stifling, probably 100 degrees F (38 degrees C). We quickly made the change into caving attire and hiked the short distance down to the entrance, where Wayne proceeded to hunt for snakes in the small, squirmy, rock-collapse portal. I was expecting the usual rubber-snake routine from Waynski, and had warned Aurelio to beware of practical jokes. But when the counterfeit serpent was sent flying my way while Wayne was checking for her real-life cousins in the entrance I succumbed to instinct and momentarily lost control. I shouted out, lost my footing on the loose rockpile I was standing on, and fell backward into a pile of driftwood gathered where water deposits it before flowing down the small intake. The result of this "rubber snake-bite" was a nasty-looking pattern of superficial scratches on both wrists, and a badly bruised ego. This, combined with a swollen wrist from a furniture-moving mishap the previous day, made me wonder if I might have problems crawling and stoop-walking in the beginning sections of the cave. These concerns were set aside as we proceeded to enter, and Wayne was sternly warned to pocket the offending faux reptile. I had some children's-size soccer shin and knee pads I use as elbow pads to cover and protect the bleeding wounds from infection in-

side the cave. Wayne made it through the initial "snakey" section without incident, and Aurelio and I followed.

I am always amazed that a cave like River Styx, which is open at both ends and is not very deep under the land's surface, can be so cool, even with 100 degree F temperatures above. Within a short time we were belly-crawling through the muddy section, but we quickly passed through and prepared to explore the passages off to the left before stopping for snacks in the Junction Room. We made the turn, and in an unusually short amount of time stoop-walked into what I thought was the Hatchet Room. Something appeared different however, and as we entered the tunnel that I felt should have led to the '64 entrance I began to feel something was not as it should be. It didn't look right, the ceiling was too unstable and the walls were not solid rock as I remembered. We proceeded cautiously through a fragile-looking restriction, and the passage turned straight down through some large, loose breakdown which I definitely remembered should not be there. A flurry of speculation ensued. Had the passage collapsed catastrophically, and were we were climbing around on what used to be the ceiling? Perhaps my memory had failed me, and the passage we were in was not the one I remembered, or perhaps the recent low-Richter-scale earthquake recorded in Lubbock had radically altered the portion of the cave we were in. I tried another passage, and discovered a small bat colony in the ceiling of a rather large room I did not remember from trips before. We pushed on, and finally got back to a portion of the dried stream passage leading to the '64 entrance. How could it be that everything had changed so much in the relatively short amount of time since I had last visited? I was not satisfied that any of the above scenarios was the true explanation. Backtracking, I decided go up into the Gypsum Blister Passage, but upon climbing up the "obvious" rockpile a seri-

ously unstable slope presented itself, and above that, what appeared to be a freshly collapsed dome. No way onward appeared to be passable, except in one far corner, where some serious digging and shoring-up might have made the attempt possible, though probably not entirely safe.

I was rather disoriented by all this, and decided to lead the troops back to the '64 entrance passage, down to the Junction Room, and then backtrack from there to where we could view the apparent collapse from the other side. We climbed up the slope from the Junction Room, slid through the tight spot, and sat for a few minutes to admire the large blister formations in the ceiling. We then proceeded through the Blister Passage to the end. There it sloped quickly down to the Hatchet Room and there was no collapse at all! Everything there was just as it was "supposed to be." Obviously I had made a mistake, and I was now determined to find out how. We went back into the passage that should have led to the '64 entrance and sure enough my foot prints were in the mud just where I had stopped and turned around; we had been that far. Upon backtracking a second time we realized the Hatchet Room was where we had initially seen the small bat colony, and upon further backtracking toward the '63 entrance found the area where our initial explorations had found the dome collapse. I had mistaken this feature for the Hatchet Room. We were just about 50 feet shy of where it actually was, but I had never before noticed it, or at least never before climbed up the rockpile there. I was now relieved to know that the cave was not seriously altered as it first seemed, but felt a little embarrassed to have gotten lost to the extent I did.

Aurelio and I returned to the Junction Room via the '63 entrance tunnel, while Wayne went back through the Blister Passage to scope out the short pit close to the Junction Room. Aurelio and I turned off our lights and

rested, while we listened to Wayne scraping and crawling through the small passage that would lead him back to where we were waiting. Wayne called out finally, wondering if he was heading in the right direction, or if I had let him head off into a dead end. The direction of our voices reassured him, and he rejoined us after about five minutes of tight crawl. We all took refreshment and laid back to listen to the sounds of the dark cave. Within a few minutes I was sound asleep on a large, smooth slab of rock, and when I awoke Wayne was complaining of being chilled, perhaps for the first time since the previous March. We gathered our packs and headed into the tunnels leading downstream. At this point in the cave we were no longer crawling or stooping. The passages are round in profile, with layers of dark rock capping the rest of the passage formed in white limestone. We enjoyed the natural features along this section of the cave, and paused for a few minutes to search for the tiger salamanders often spotted there, but they were not to be found. As we rounded the corner where the tunnel joins back to the straight passage from the Junction Room, we all paused to listen to a strange sound.

It was coming from straight ahead, and at first was just some intermittent chirping: bats. We proceeded forward, and then suddenly, the chirping grew to a crescendo. Simultaneously, a whoosh of small beating wings descended upon us. The entire passage ahead of us, the only way to the river entrance, was filled with racing, dipping, swirling bats, and the number of disturbed cave residents was rapidly increasing. We crouched down along the side wall of the passage waiting to see what would happen. Perhaps it was just a small colony, and they would either settle down (unlikely once woken up) or they would decide to fly outside to graze (again unlikely considering the time was around 4 p.m. and the tem-

perature was probably at the daily peak). As we carefully observed the disturbed colony it became apparent the number of flying bats was growing. We could see that the restriction ahead of us leading up and through a breakdown pile into the Dome Room was crowded with bats. We reasoned that the Dome Room might have been filled with roosting bats as well. Our lights illuminated a small section of the ceiling immediately in front of us, and no rock could be seen. The squirming bodies of 20,000 or more bats were hanging right there, becoming more agitated at our presence as time went by. I had never seen this many bats in this portion of the cave. There were usually some bats in the Dome Room, and a considerable amount of guano there had indicated a significant seasonal presence, and the rookeries in the last two domes downstream from there usually had considerable colonies as well. This is not to mention the main bat room which I usually avoid as do most cavers I know. After a few minutes observing at close range we retreated from the roost and reconvened in the Junction Room.

Our choices were to continue further into the cave, possibly disturbing large numbers of additional roosting bats and risking exposure to rabies through vaporized urine, or to leave the same way we came in. We decided not to press ahead, to leave the bats sleeping in peace. Wayne was still chilled, so he shot out ahead to the entrance, being the first of us to re-emerge into the toasty temps outside. Aurelio and I took a more casual approach to our return trip. We carried on a conversation all the way back to the surface, each of us enjoying being in a cave for the first time in a while. At the surface no rubber snakes were encountered. We cleaned up with heated water from the outdoor shower bag, shoved muddy cave clothes into bags, and began the drive back to the more ordinary reality we all face from Monday through Friday in the city. ✻

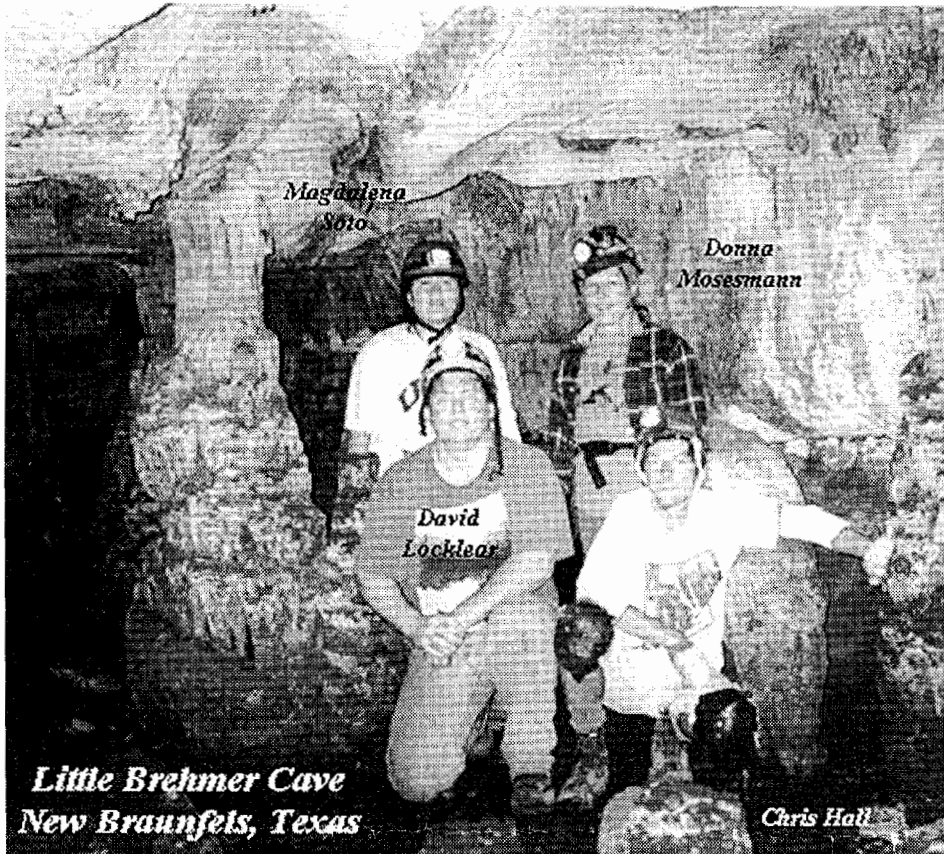
# Colorado Bend State Park

By Ignacio Ruiz

Escuchar pláticas o leer artículos sobre ríos, paisajes y montañas con abundante vegetación no es tan sorprendente como lo era, tal vez, en épocas anteriores. Sin embargo, escuchar pláticas o leer sobre galerías subterráneas, cavitación, lodo, piedras, huecos, profundidad, elevación, hipoventilación, hiperventilación o frecuencia respiratoria al estar en cuartos con características especiales y como común denominador la ausencia de luz, sin faltar, por supuesto, la compañía de los pequeños y fieles amiguitos que reciben con exóticos aromas a todos aquellos que gustan, más allá de la aventura, visitarlos con relativa frecuencia, resulta ser extraño para algunos y sumamente enriquecedor para quienes hoy, compartimos actividades y un vocabulario especial, que otros denominan para „locos.”

La falta de información y la poca difusión, en muchos sentidos, siempre será un obstáculo para cambiar esta idea y al mismo tiempo para rescatar todo lo que en sitios subterráneos se guarda con mucho celo y que parece estar destinado para pocos. Por eso, no dudo en compartir con quienes tienen ojos para leer y oídos para escuchar la experiencia que tuve recientemente, en un lugar llamado „Colorado Bend Park” en el estado de Texas.

Colorado Bend Park, ubicado al centro del estado y dividido por el río Colorado es un parque visitado, principalmente, por exploradores de cuevas. El parque se ha convertido en punto de reunión y los fines de semana desde diversas ciudades del



## Houston Grotto trip report

### The Annual April Fool's Day GHG Caving Trip

By David Locklear

Cavers: David Locklear, Donna Mosesmann, Chris Hall, and Magdalena Soto  
April Fool's Day 2000

This was almost a perfect caving trip. We did get rained on a little, but we slept through most of it. Supposedly, it rained much harder in other parts of the hill country, so we lucked out.

The bats were really booming in Brehmer Cave. The odor was intense. Next time, we need to bring respirators. We entered the cave at dusk, so that wasn't the best time to see the cave, but hey, the bat show was great.

Magdalena had seen bats before in this cave, but this was her first experience at having a large quantity of bats circling about her. She handled it about as good as any new caver would. Hopefully, next time she will be able to open her eyes and see the beauty of a colony of bats rushing out of a cave. I, for one, was spellbound.

The good news is that we are still on good terms with the landowner here and they have welcomed us back for future trips. There is an opportunity here for a group of cavers to build a long-lasting caver-landowner relationship. 🦇

estado y en ocasiones de otros, un ambiente familiar los reúne alrededor de un mismo tema de conversación, el cual, todos disfrutan y comparten.

La calidad del suelo no permite encontrar extraordinarias formaciones como las hay en Nuevo Mexico, por ejemplo, pero conserva más de trescientas cuevas para darse vuelo. Muchas de ellas no han sido exploradas por completo y otras, seguramente, por descubrir. La gran variedad y la cercanía para los que viven en Texas, sin duda alguna, ha contribuido para que el parque sea un lugar ideal en la práctica de técnicas de acceso y en las de uso de equipo según las circunstancias.

El beneficio, por supuesto, se ve reflejado en la constante preparación y en la capacidad para resolver diversas situaciones sin tener que haber recorrido muchos metros en una de las cuevas. Esto permite al intentar movimientos y el traslado de equipos en otros lugares que se hagan con mucha más naturalidad creando las condiciones para disfrutar y explotar mejor cada expedición que se programe.

Una de ellas, la más grande, conserva un número significativo de murciélagos y es la que tiene permitida la visita del público. Las demás están destinadas a los que tienen un estándar en la práctica de técnicas de espeleología y que pertenecen a un Grotto, como el de Fort Worth, Texas, que mantiene constantes reuniones y comparte información no sólo en Estados Unidos sino también con otros países y que actualiza, como mencioné anteriormente, a todos los interesados en la exploración de cuevas.

Colorado Bend Park, más que como satisfacción personal y por insignificante que parezca al estar siendo explorado puede ser de gran importancia si es aprovechado y al mismo tiempo si crea interés en nuevos visitantes. Por ejemplo, en mi primer visita, sin ir muy lejos, tuve la oportunidad, al lado de otros compañeros, de descubrir un túnel tan

estrecho que sólo gracias a que soy talla veintiocho de cintura logré acceder, además de un cuarto completamente virgen en el que encontramos un hueso de vaca y la mitad de una mandíbula de jabalí.

Si los mismos huesos los hubiera encontrado en una de las brechas que comunican los ranchos de Aldama, Tamaulipas, para empezar, no hubieran tenido el mismo significado y definitivamente no hubieran formado parte de mi colección de fotografías. Es decir, la significancia que tuvo el explorar una de las cuevas de Colorado Bend Park no fue porque haya sido mi primer visita sino por el interés que produjo en terminar lo que quedó inconcluso pues después del cuarto descubierto se extendía otro túnel que no recorrimos por razones de seguridad pero que bien vale la pena hacerlo.

Tal vez, mi visita no sea pronto pero la cueva esperará pacientemente sin distinciones y guiará a todo aquél que se interese en recorrerla y eso, sin dudar, justifica el que escriba sobre Colorado Bend Park y una de sus más de trescientas cuevas. \*\*\*

## A Spooky Halloween Cave Story

By Laura Goff

A year ago, on October 31, 1999, I was hiking alone in the Arkansas Ozarks searching for caves when I met a grizzled old woodsman.

I had been slightly lost when I saw movement in the trees ahead. I was a bit frightened, but curious. I cautiously moved forward and spied a figure,

crouched near the ground twisting vines around some sticks. He looked up at me with friendly eyes beneath an old holey hat. He greeted me; I was relieved, it was just a friendly old man. I explained that I had been scouting around for caves and he looked intrigued. He told me about a cave nearby that was beautiful and only known by a few. I asked if he could show it to me. He agreed, saying it was just a short hike from there. The entrance was hidden by a curtain of vines and limbs.

The old man pulled a small lantern from his pack as I donned my trusty headlamp. We entered the cave. I felt a slight draft as the hair on the back of my neck tickled. I was led through some tight corkscrew passages, a few bellycrawls, and a stream passage, when suddenly a room opened up bigger than my light could fill. It was amazing! Glittering flowstone, columns, and soda staws adorned the cavity.

We spent a few hours exploring, discovering more and more beautiful formations. It was unbelievable that such an awesome cave had been right under my feet all that time I hiked on the surface. We took a break to eat lunch and then headed out of the cave. I was exhausted and excited to get back and tell my caving friends about this new find. I turned to ask the old man a question, but he had vanished.

He hadn't said goodbye and I didn't hear him walk off. Where had he gone? This was so strange. Confused, I started the long hike back. When I got back to town I stopped in at a bar. As I related my story to the bartender, I noticed that the room had grown very quiet. Everyone seemed to be staring at me. The long silence was finally broken by a woman who gasped, "That was Ben Stillwell. He was lost in that cave over 50 years ago, buried alive when the ceiling collapsed. His body was never found. They sealed up the entrance after that." \*\*\*

# C A L E N D A R ★ O F ★ E V E N T S

14-15 October 2000, Colorado Bend State Park Project. Contact Terry Holsinger, [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com)

21-22 October 2000, Texas Caver Reunion. Info online at [www.texascavers.com/tsa](http://www.texascavers.com/tsa).

28-30 October 2000, Powell's Cave Survey Project. Contact Terry Holsinger, [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com)

11-12 November 2000, Colorado Bend State Park Project. Contact Terry Holsinger, [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com)

17-26 November 2000, Eat turkey in Mexico.

9-10 December 2000, Colorado Bend State Park Project. Contact Terry Holsinger, [trhli@sprynet.com](mailto:trhli@sprynet.com)

