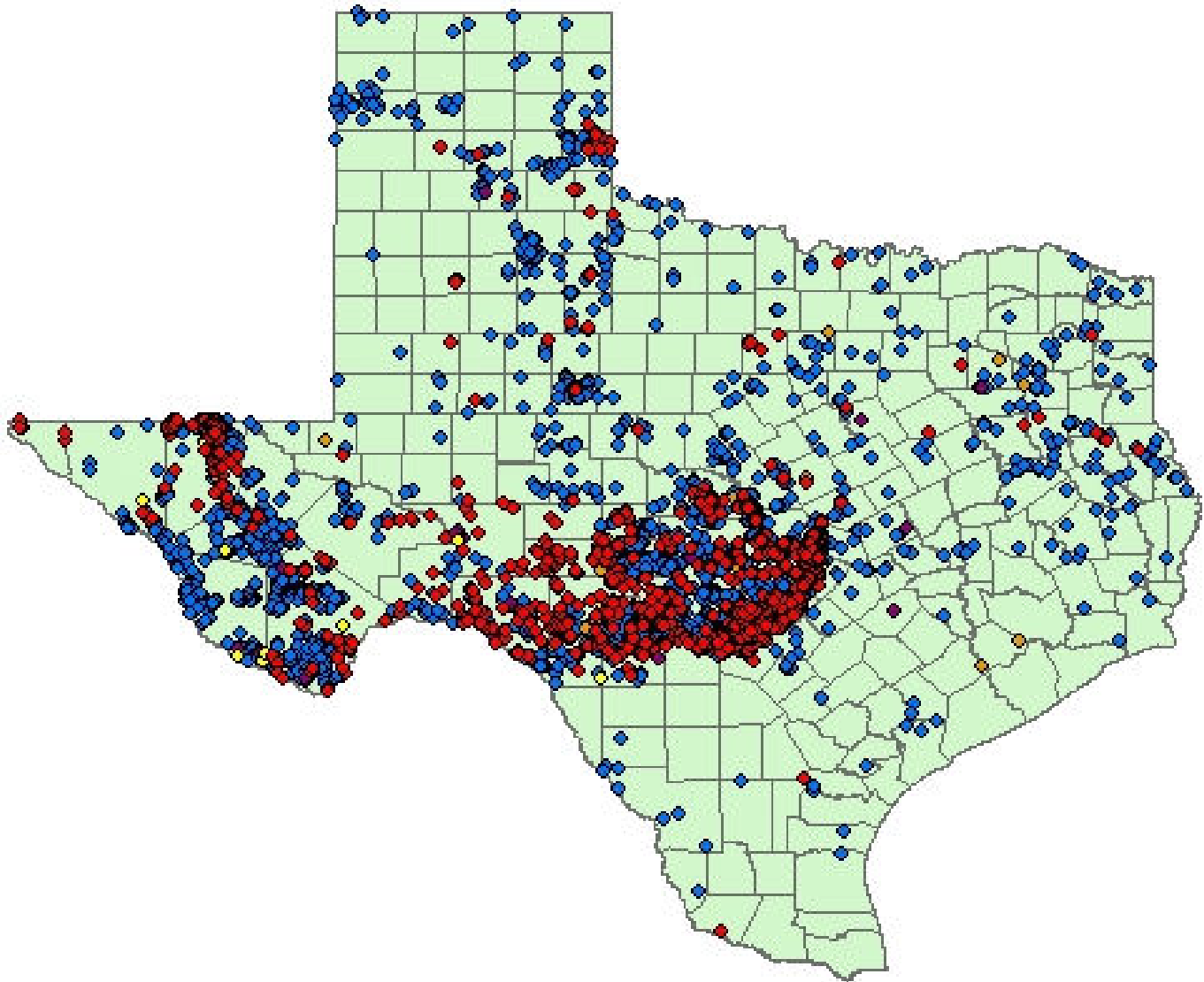


The Maverick Bull



Texas Karst Feature Distribution

- Red = Cave
- Blue = Spring
- Orange = Sink/Feature
- Yellow = Other (Mine/Shelter/)

Maverick Grotto Information

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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 7:00 p.m. The location will be announced prior to each meeting.

Library: Support your Grotto Library. Diana Tomchick or Bill Steele will be accepting books and magazines on cave-related topics, copies of homemade cave videos, etc. for our library.

Photos & Map Credits

Cover Photo: Butch Fralia—TSS Files, ArcMap 8.2

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

Cave Emergency:

FOR A LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCY IN TEXAS
DIAL 911. FOR CAVE ASSISTANCE START BY CALLING
THE CLOSEST NUMBER:

BEXAR: 210-326-1576

COLLIN: 214-202-6611

HAYS: 512-393-9054

KENDALL: 830-537-6111

SUTTON: 315-387-3424

TRAVIS: 512-663-2287

PARKER: 817 657-5780

Next meeting: April 10, 2007 7:00 pm

Swinford's Pit BBQ & Grill, 1101 Terminal Rd., Fort Worth, TX 76106

We should have the place all to ourselves this meeting.

Program:

John Langevin will present a program called "Using Coordinate Scales with Topographic Maps and GPS." This will be particularly information to persons new to using GPS.

Chair Diana Tomchick 500 Kingston Dr. Irving, TX 75227 (214) 418-5827 Diana.tomchick@utsouthwestern.edu	Secretary Butch Fralia 3412 Walton Ave. Fort Worth, TX 76133 (817) 346-2039 cavedba@charter.net	Newsletter Editor Butch Fralia 3412 Walton Ave. Fort Worth, TX 76133 (817) 346-2039 cavedba@charter.net
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Caving Calendar

Apr 6-8 Colorado Bend State Park Project: Usually the second weekend of the month, the date was changed to avoid conflict with the TSA Convention. This is a terrific project for beginning and experienced cavers, and the project is under new leadership this year. Come help locate, survey and produce maps of the approximately 380 caves and karst features in the park. Work assignments are handed out by 9 a.m. on Saturday, so don't be late. Overnight camping and recreational caving on Sunday will be available. This will probably be the last project weekend until the fall. **Contacts:** Rafal Kedzierski rafal_13@hotmail.com Mark Gee markageetxcaver@yahoo.com Butch Fralia (817) 346-2039 cavedba@charter.net Keith Heuss caverkeith@yahoo.com
Info: CBSP@maverickgrotto.com **Directions:** www.maverickgrotto.org/maps/cbsp.html

Apr 13-15 Texas Speleological Association Convention (Albert, TX): Albert is just south of Stonewall, which is on 290 between Johnson City and Fredericksburg. Saturday April 14th is reserved for talks, presentations and salons (Map and Photo), Saturday evening there will be a dinner and the TCMA auction. We may have some caving Sunday. If you are interesting in giving a presentation please contact Kel Thomas at kthomas@sonoratx.net **Contact:** Jacqui Thomas jrbills@sonoratx.net **Info:** <http://www.cavetexas.org/events/TSASC/tsasc2007.html>

Apr 14-15 San Saba ranch trip (west of CBSP): Surveying, ridge-walking and general cave exploration on a private ranch near CBSP. Lots of caves and hundreds of acres to explore! Access to the ranch is limited, so contact Milo for instructions on how to get there. **Contact:** Milo Marks 254-688-0077 2milomarks@htcomp.net

Apr 14-15 Manhole Dig (Carlsbad region, NM): Cave-diggers welcome, come see if this will be the next big one. If you plan to come, contact Steve as they need a minimum of eight people now to run the dig. Located on BLM land not far from Lechuguilla Cave. **Contact:** Steve Peerman gypcaver@comcast.net

Apr 20-21 Government Canyon State Natural Area Project: 20 miles northwest of San Antonio, activities include survey, exploration, ridge walking, and digging. Participants must enter by 9 a.m., contact in advance if you want directions. **Contacts:** Marvin and Lisa Miller (830) 885-5631 mlmiller@gvtc.com

Apr 28-May 6 Fort Stanton Cave Project (Ruidoso, NM): Join the folks working on extending the length of this cave on BLM lands. Weekends will be devoted to installing the new entrance into the Mud Turtle Passage, weekday trips will be scientific surveys. You can attend during the whole project week, or either weekend. **Contact:** John Corcoran III john_j_corcoran_III@msn.com

Apr 28-29 High Guads Restoration Project (Carlsbad, NM): 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. **Contact:** Jennifer Foote highguads@yahoo.com

Apr 28 Robber Baron Cave Work Day: TCMA-owned Robber Baron Cave work project will start at 8:30 a.m. and continue all day. Let Linda know you are coming and they will provide water and lunch for you. Work includes finishing projects from the March 24th Work Day, then landscaping plantings and trails. Caving is open and available after the work is finished. **Contact:** Linda Palit (210) 699-1388 lkpalit@sbcglobal.net

May 5 Texas Speleological Survey Board Meeting (Austin, TX): Held at the TSS office in Austin at 10:30 a.m., at the Pickle Research Center on the University of Texas campus. Open to anyone interested in Texas cave information, its organization and publication. Due to security at the Pickle Research Center, all those planning to attend the meeting need to verify with Jim Kennedy at least one week in advance. **Contacts:** Jim Kennedy (512) 663-2287 jkennedy@batcon.org Ron Ralph ronralph@austin.rr.com **Info:** <http://www.txspeleologicalsurvey.org/>

May 19 Honey Creek Water Cave (Spring Branch, TX): The longest surveyed cave in Texas will be open to trips of various kinds, but each trip will require an approved trip leader. Bill Steele is organizing an upstream tank haul from the shaft entrance for cave diver James Brown. One-way travel is estimated at 6 hours, so the trip length will be 16+ hours. Other possible trips are the classic through-trip from the shaft entrance to the natural entrance, a trip that should last 4-6 hours; a round-trip from the shaft entrance to Clamshell Dome, about 4 hours; and a round-trip up the natural entrance to Birthday Cake Dome, about 3 hours. Wetsuit required, if you don't own one then rent one from a dive shop. Overnight camping at the ranch will be available. Contact Bill if you're interested in the tank haul, as spots on the trip will be limited. Contact Kurt Menking about other trips. **Contacts:** Bill Steele (214) 770-4712 speleosteele@tx.rr.com Kurt Menking (210) 325-5598 kmenking@bcad.org

May 26-28 Southwest Region Memorial Day Regional (Ft. Stanton Cave, NM): Cave trips and conservation projects in Ft. Stanton Cave will be available. Hosted by the Sandia Grotto. **Info:** <http://www.caves.org/region/swrf>

May 26-28 High Guads Restoration Project

May 25-28 Kentucky Speleofest (Upton, KY): The 36th annual Speleofest is billed as "Underground Heaven" and takes place on the 67-acre Lone Star Preserve, acquired by the Louisville Grotto as a caving preserve. Typical events

include lots of caving trips (including special beginner's trips), food, speleovendors, karaoke and more. Camping and hot showers will be available. Proximity to such attractions as Mammoth Cave National Park, the Jim Beam distillery, and Fort Knox should provide enough fun for non-caving friends and relatives. **Contacts:** Sue Milburn 270-300-8800 (d) 270-737-1868 (e) Sherry Gowens 256-310-4522 **Info:** <http://www.caves.org/grotto/louisvillegrotto/>

Early June Pozo de Montemayor (near Bustamante, Nuevo León, México): Ed Goff is organizing a grotto trip to Pozo de Montemayor, a couple of hours south of the border in Mexico, the 478th deepest cave in the world at approximately -483 m. The initial plan is to make it a 4-day weekend in early June. If you're interested, please contact Ed and let him know which weekends would be possibilities for you, then he'll get started working to make the trip happen. This trip will be open to members of the DFW, Maverick, and Cowtown Grottos. Montemayor is located on a mountain ranch that is an eco-tourist resort of sorts. They have great cabins and also allow camping. We can split the cost of a cabin or arrange to camp. Anyone is welcome to come along on the trip and hang out, visit the extensive mines on the ranch, etc. If you want to come into the cave with Ed, you will need to demonstrate to him before the trip that you have sufficient vertical proficiency; there are multiple long drops up to 400+ ft. and rebelayes. The lower part of the cave may be sumped shut in June, but the upper half is well worth the drive to see, with two of the most spectacular pits anywhere. **Contact:** Ed Goff egoff@rice.edu

June 9-10 Manhole Dig

June 23-24 High Guads Restoration Project

Jun 30-Jul 8 Fort Stanton Cave Project

July 23-27 NSS Convention (Marengo, IN). Held in the heart of Indiana caving country, this should be a fun one. **Contacts:** Dave Haun (812) 829-4077 Kathy Welling (765) 653-6352 **Info:** <http://www.nss2007.com/>

July 29-Aug 4 Speleocongreso 2007 (Aquadilla, Puerto Rico): Fifth FEALC (Federation of Latin America and the Caribbean) Congress will include talks, speleovendors, salons, all the activities you might find at an NSS Convention, but the focus is on caving in the FEALC countries. **Info:** www.speleocongreso2007.org

Oct 8-12 National Cave & Karst Management Symposium (St. Louis, MO). Held at the Holiday Inn Southwest/Viking Conference Center and Powder Valley Nature Center. Co-sponsored by Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy. **Contacts:** Bill Elliott Bill.Elliott@mdc.mo.gov Jim Kaufmann president@mocavesandkarst.org

Oct 16-21 Cave Research Foundation 50th Anniversary Celebration (Hamilton Valley, KY). Come celebrate

50 years of exploration of Mammoth Cave (and other caves around the U.S.) at the CRF Hamilton Valley Field Station. Caving, guided tours, camaraderie, food, song, camping and general good fun. Field trips will be conducted from Oct. 16-18th in the Mammoth Cave System, general celebration will occur from Oct. 19-21st. **Contact:** Pat Kambe-sis pnkambesis@juno.com

March Meeting Minutes

By Butch Fralia

Diana Tomchick called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00pm at Swinford's BBQ and Grill. There no visitors so the program started immediately after deciding the best place to set up the equipment.

The program, titled "Expedicion Soplo de los Toros," a slide show by Diana Tomchick. Diana reviewed her end-of-2006 two-week exploration caving trip to the Purificación region of Mexico. As well as having lots of pictures in the caves, it covered the culture of the area. An excellent program enjoyed by all.

During the reports from officers, Diana Announced that she and Bill Steele would be out of town during the April meeting. Sharon Mastbrook agreed to chair the meeting in Diana's place. Bill will try to get someone to put on a program.

Sharon Mastbrook reported the grotto has money, she has checks to deposit from dues. She owes Butch Fralia about \$250.00 for the annual web-hosting fees and newsletter expenses.

Butch Fralia asked for Newsletter articles.

New Business:

Charles Goldsmith made a motion to suggest a committee to review a possible merging of four local grottos. The would include Cowtown, DFW, Maverick and NET Cavers. The benefit would be pooled resources for newsletters and websites.

In the ensuing discussion, there would have be one newsletter and editor, one website, one constitution but two monthly meetings. One in Dallas and one in Fort Worth. Obviously not everyone would or could attend both meetings. The name Metroplex Cavers was put fort since it's been used for joint parties and activities in the past.

After stating the committee findings would not be binding and investigate how the logistics of such a group could work, Butch Fralia seconded the motion.

A vote was taken with 8 voting yea and 1 abstaining.

Old Business:

The March 31 Metroplex Cavers Rites of Spring party was discussed. Russell Hill will be able to attend and bring his trailer mounted smoker. He cannot come down before Saturday afternoon meaning there would not be enough time to cook brisket using the smoker. Pre-cooked meat

may have to be obtained from another source.

Butch Fralia reported on the condition of the site during his visit to check availability and condition. No place to put a hot tub out of public view but otherwise plenty of room and freshly mowed.

Trip Reports:

Bill and Diana reported on their trip to Jester Cave. Landowner relations are great and the landowner has a house nearby that he'd be willing to let cavers use for a weekend (probably for a price).

The discussion moved on to other caves and River Styx in particular. The question was raised about the possibility that Milo Marks might get the property back open since he's done such a great job in San Saba County.

BAD AIR DETECTION

by Butch Fralia

Editors Note: This is an old article retrieved from the archives. It's being republished due to some recent questions about "bad air." The information is as valid today as when originally published.

"Bad air" is often the greatest danger that cavers expose themselves to during normal cave exploration. It is the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the cave atmosphere and is predominately in vertical caves or pits where there is little airflow to flush the carbon dioxide and keep oxygen levels in normal proportion. Carbon dioxide is a heavy gas which displaces oxygen, causing it to rise to some level above the carbon dioxide.

At the surface, oxygen represents 21% of atmospheric gas, OSHA has defined 19.5% oxygen as the point where oxygen content is sub-normal and a possible detriment to human health. Cavers have determined they can function quite well in oxygen levels of 17% though some cavers tend to experience headaches at this level. It should be also pointed out that oxygen deprivation is the primary cause of headaches in the first place. At levels below 17%, cavers experience blackouts. Some cavers may function in oxygen levels as low as 14% but this is greatly dependent upon the physiology of the person and the attempt to do so is highly discouraged.

For cavers frequenting bad air areas, Oxygen meters are expensive with the less expensive models costing in excess of \$300.00, where the a lowly butane lighter can be purchased for 69 cents. Cavers frequenting the hill country of Texas and Arbuckle Mountain regions of Oklahoma, have long considered a butane lighter part of normal caving gear, and anytime a caver starts to pant, they start flicking their Bic. It is also known that carbide lamps tend to burn quite well when the human brain ceases to function.

During a Colorado Bend State Park volunteer work trip, the opportunity arose to study the butane lighter as a bad air detector and determine the oxygen levels required to cause it to exhibit an erratic flame and be completely extinguished. With the assistance of a state owned oxygen meter, and a cave with oxygen levels which dropped to 14%, research was conducted.

An area was located in which there was a degradation of oxygen levels over a distance of approximately 5'. The oxygen levels ranged from 20% down to 14% in this area. Using the oxygen meter, a profile of the oxygen level was determined and test begun. At 18.5%, the butane lighter began to flicker and a noticeable gap occurred between the jet and the flame. At 17.5%, there was a gap of approximately one inch between the jet and the flame but the lighter could be extinguished and relit. At 17% oxygen the lighter extinguished and could not be relit.

The measurements described were performed by Keith Heuss, who in another life is a professional technician who's livelihood depends on his ability to make precision measurements with a variety of precision (and not so precision) instruments. The test satisfied all present as to the viability of using a butane lighter for a simple oxygen meter for cave atmosphere evaluation. It is suggested that the butane lighter be included in the normal cave gear, especially when caving in known bad air areas.

Buffalo National River, March 2007

by Charles Goldsmith

Tony Roper, Vice Chair for NET Cavers (<http://netcavers.org>) showed up at my house Thursday evening and stayed the night. We left Friday morning after traffic in the metroplex died down and headed to Commerce, TX to pick up Glen Goldsmith, Chairman of NET Cavers. From there, we headed to Texarkana, TX to pick up our last participate of the trip, Nate Hale, another founding member of NET Cavers. The four of us had a great time on the road trip heading to our destination for the day, Jasper, AR. Jasper is home of several great places to eat, reasonably priced places to sleep, and lots of great Arkansas friendly folk. The Ozark Cafe is an excellent place for a great meal, and it fits almost every budget, very nicely priced food.



- Photo Charles Goldsmith

Since we sadly didn't have the turn out that was expected for the trip, we changed plans around. Two of our group were novices for vertical work in caves, so we elected to start Saturday off with some vertical practice. The Buffalo National River Park has

an abundance of caves, karst features, and plenty of cliffs to practice on. We located a small cliff that was suitable for variable surfaces for practice and easy to get from top to bottom off rope.

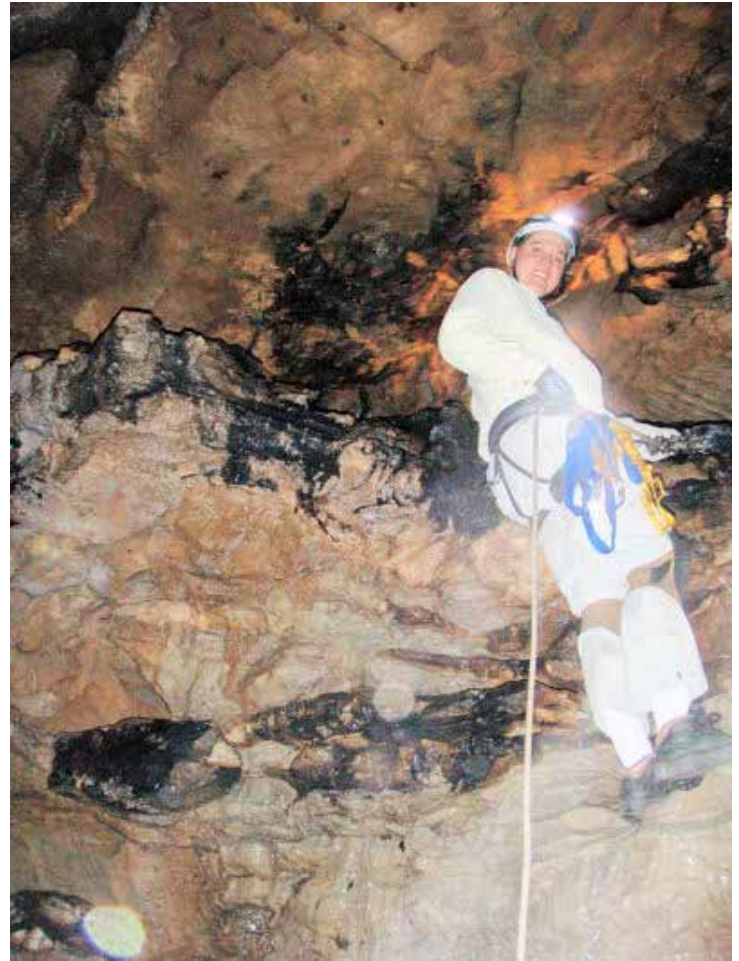


- Photo Charles Goldsmith

We had too much fun playing on the ropes, that we really spent too much time practicing, and didn't get as much caving in as we had planned. However, the more practice you get, the better off you are, so no one complained. For our first pit into a real cave after practice, we chose Little Devil's Den Pit. I'm told that this cave has multiple names, depending on who you talk to, but its close to Devil's Den Pit that is on the upper trail to Fitton, and I'm also told that it does have air passages connecting the two. This cave has about a 10 to 12 foot drop into the entrance, easily negotiable. The cave was a bit wet, which is the first time I've seen any water into this cave. Wasn't a lot, but just enough to get everyone damp.

After photographing everything and everyone a bit too much, we climbed out. This cave can be a bit tricky, since the rope has a tendency to slide down into a crack that is about 10" wide, and your body has a tendency to ascend into this narrow crevice. Our novices had a bit of trouble with it, but with a bit of assistance with foot placement and technique, everyone ascended out with only a few scrapes.

Overall, everyone learned a bit on this excursion and we had a blast. After the fun on the ropes, we only had about an hour of light left and I didn't want to look for our second cave for the day



- Photo Charles Goldsmith

in the dark, which was supposed to be Ice Box cave. I didn't feel comfortable taking the novices into Devil's Den Pit, but we plan to tackle that one on a future trip.

We called it an evening and headed back into Jasper for the evening meal. Since Tony had to drive through Texarkana, Commerce and Fort Worth on his trip back to Abilene, we left early Sunday morning and headed back.

Remember, quality caving is always better than quantity caving.

Arkansas Trip Report

By: Tammy Cox

March 16th, 2007

Participants: Lex and Tammy Cox,
Danny Johnson, Milo Marks,
Danny Malcom and Ed Malcom

My brother, Lex and I left around 8:00 Thursday morning to make the drive to Compton Arkansas. We met up with Milo in Denton and Lex decided to ride along with him the rest of the way.

The trip was pretty uneventful except for when I locked the keys in my truck at a gas station some where in Oklahoma. Lex came to the rescue and was able to get the door unlocked with a

piece of wire Milo had in his truck. It seemed a little too easy for him, hmmm. We were soon on our way and we made it to Mountain Springs Cabins about 5:00 that evening.



Mountain Springs Cabin

- Photo Ed Malcom

The cabin was nice and it was a good change of pace from the usual tent camping. It slept eight people and there were seven of us to split the cost. The best thing was the location. The cabin was about 6 miles from the turn off to the Fitton parking area.

We made it to the entrance of Fitton Cave about 10:30 Friday morning and took a picture in front of the gate for fun. After everyone was in and the gate was locked we took our time in the first big room taking pictures of the formations.

After doing the Monorail Crawl we came to the Missile Silo. The Missile Silo is a very unique looking column that is very well named.



Entrance to Fitton: top left; Ed Malcom, Danny Malcom, Tammy Cox, bottom left; Lex Cox, Milo Marks, Danny Johnson.

- Photo Tammy Cox

We took a rope ladder to rig the drop at what is called the manhole. It worked great and some of us went down the ladder and some went to look for the crawl down we had been told about. Danny, Milo and I went down the manhole and headed out on the east passage. Lex, Ed and Danny Malcom stayed at the top to try to find a way down. As they worked their way down we yelled out to guide them in the correct direction. It only took

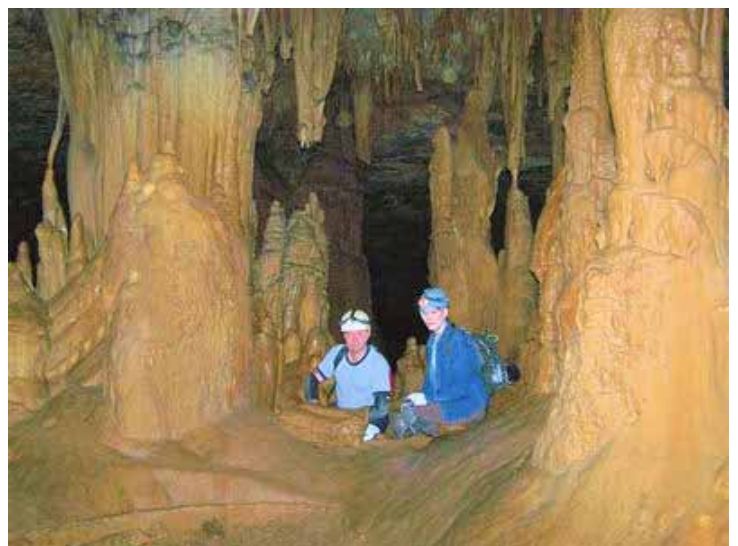


Tammy Cox on rope ladder in The Manhole.

- Photo Lex Cox III

them about 10 minutes to find us and then we were all at the bottom. We decided to all crawl back up and explore the west passage since we had previously explored the east passage with John Langevin on a different trip.

We pushed a lot of holes and had fun in a large break down area for several hours. After we had lunch or dinner we realized it was 9:00pm and decided to start making our way back out.



Tammy Cox with her brother Danny Johnson in Fitton Cave.

- Photo Lex Cox

Our mission was to find the Crystal Passage and the crawl down to bypass the manhole. We found the bypass with no problem but didn't find the maze around to the Crystal Room. I guess it is always fun to leave something for the next time and in Fitton we will probably never see it all.

We went back to the cabin for hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, hot showers and sleep for the next day's adventure.

Saturday we went to Little Bear Cave with members of the C.R.A.G. It was a highly decorated cave with lots of fun passages. We went through a downhill corkscrew that was fairly tight. We did what they called the gator crawl through an uphill tight passage and came out into a large room. We spent about six hours in the cave and had a great time. It was a very nice cave with very little impact.



At the Entrance to Little Bear Cave with CRAG—Camera on timer.

- Photo Tammy Cox

On Sunday we explored Lynn's Cave in Ponca and Picnic Cave in the WMA near Huntsville.

We had a fun weekend, everyone made it home safely and we are looking forward to the next trip.

Big Growth in the NSS Projected!

by Bill Steele

Maverick cavers, I just received the following letter on official NSS letterhead and it's a big deal for us! You will see that major changes are underway in the NSS, sparked by things that happened right here in Tarrant County. We have started something that's now going nationwide!

The letter is from Keith D. Wheeland, chairman of the NSS Internal Organizations Committee. It reads:

April 1, 2007

Bill Steele
P.O. Box 166332
Irving, Texas 75016

Dear Bill,

As you may already heard, the NSS, at our Board of Governors meeting last month in Tucson, Arizona, has decided to make a major change in its grotto philosophy. For 65 years, since the founding of the NSS in 1941, we have remained strict in not allowing new grottos where there was already an existing grotto. When the Cowtown Grotto in Ft. Worth applied to become a grotto that happened to be at the exact time when we were considering changing this philosophy and going the other way with it.

Here's what that means. For several years now our membership numbers have been in decline. That appears to be due to there being fewer caves to be explored, more people buying wide-screen TVs and then feeling like they should stay home and get their money's worth, computers and the Internet, a growing laziness of Americans, the rising cost of gasoline, obesity, etc. Through these years the leadership of the NSS has felt like we were failing due to this loss of membership. We have wrestled with a solution. We need something else to count in order to show success. So, we have now decided that if we can't show growth in membership, we can show growth in grottos!

So, the new campaign, and we want to hit the ground running, is to have a grotto in every town. Anywhere there is an existing grotto there must be cavers, so there should be a grotto in every town where cavers live. If you build it, they will come.

We notice that in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex there are about 50 NSS members, and co-incidentally, there are about 50 incorporated cities. Since you go way back with the NSS, are a former director, and have been a grotto chairman several times, we would like you to head up the drive to eventually have a grotto in every city in the D/FW Metroplex. Perhaps you could spearhead this immediately and report your success at this summer's NSS convention. By then we envision the following grottos in your area, with these suggested names:

Arlington Ellison Grotto
Azle Hoghunting' Grotto
Benbrook Dogshowing Grotto
Burlson Sunshine Only Grotto
Celina Fiero Grotto
Crowley Ponytail Grotto
Dallas Dork's Grotto
Grand Prairie Scuba Grotto
Ft. Worth Yahoo Grotto
Haltom City Politico Grotto
Heard It Through the Grapevine Grotto
Irving Dogtown Grotto
Lucas Caving Sages Grotto
McAllen TCR Cook Grotto
Meridian Cowpoke Grotto
Mesquite Mapper Grotto
North Richland Hills Never Go Underground Grotto
Richardson Ninja Grotto
Springtown Carbide Caver Grotto
Waxahacie Diver Grotto

Good luck with this. Bill Tozer, NSS president (who thanks you again for giving him his own room in your home during last year's Irving BOG meeting) and the other members of the BOG, feel that you are the right person to kick-start this new direction for the NSS. We feel very confident that we can show impressive growth in the NSS immediately. If you are successful in causing the growth in the number of grottos in your area from four to the above listed 20 by the convention, an astounding 500% growth, then the ball will be rolling and the NSS will be seen as one of the fastest growing non-profit organizations in the country! That will no doubt mean more money from foundations, a better delivery system for our message of cave conservation, and a win-win situation in all respects!

Please run with it,

Keith

Keith Wheeland, Chairman
Internal Organizations Committee
National Speleological Society

Gear Review

Petzl "Omni" Locking Carabiner

By Diana Tomchick

If you buy one item to upgrade your frog climbing system, this should be the one to get. The Omni is a half-round carabiner, marketed specifically by Petzl to use as a harness closure, and is designed to be loaded on its three axes.

Specs: strength of at least 15 kN in any direction, weight is 3 ounces, gate opening is a generous 23 mm (0.9").

Why You Want It: the screwgate on the ordinary maillon rapide half-moon harness closure is a pain to open and close under muddy and/or wet conditions. Get a little grit in the threads of the screwgate and you know what I mean—it's almost impossible to open or close without a wrench. This beauty opens and closes easily every time, and the red paint on the gate is a handy and easily visible reminder to close the gate. I especially appreciate the ease with which it opens, as my fingers are not so strong.

How Much It Costs: \$29.95 from Karst Sports (www.karstsports.com), \$33 from Inner Mountain Outfitters (www.innermountainoutfitters.net)

What This Is Not: this is not a regular locking carabiner! Regular locking carabiners are pear or oval-shaped and designed to be loaded only on their long axis, and should never be used to close a seat harness.

Which Omni To Buy: Petzl sells two varieties that it claims are suitable for climbing and caving, the screw-lock shown here,



and the triact-lock automatic locking version. I personally would not own the triact-locking version because I don't trust anything to close "automatically" in an extremely muddy and/or gritty cave environment.

Vertical Practice Session

March 25, 2007: Trinity Park, Fort Worth

By Butch Fralia

Sunday, March 25, Cavers from all over the Metroplex gathered at the Lancaster Street Bridge, located near the Duck Pond in Trinity Park, Fort Worth.

On special note, Milo Marks came up from Meridian and Pete Chomak came down from Dennison.

Since it's only a few miles from home, I arrived about 12:30 to take pictures of the duck pond, miniature train bridge and other "stuff" while there wasn't a crowd blocking the shot.

When the vertical practice started, it drew a lot of attention from the park visitors and a few even stopped by to ask questions and talk. Tammy Cox and I decided we need to revive the Grotto Brochure and have it available for such events.

Below and on the back cover are a few photos from the event.



Milo Marks On Rope!

- Photo Butch Fralia



Pete Chomak on rope while Diana Tomchick gives a few pointers.—Photo Butch Fralia



This platform which is 24'8" from the ground makes a great rigging point for vertical practice.

- Photo Butch Fralia

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