



Texas Cave Conservancy News

Number 6

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Inside this issue:

Upcoming TCC Events	2
Austin Day trip	3
The 3 rd TCC Winter	4
Wooden Lettuce, Chili Peppers and the Speleo-education of an Oil Field Roust-a-Bout	5
TCC Summer Event	6
New Cave Management Contract	6
TCC Cave Day	7
Urban Cave Monitoring & Management	8
TCC International	9

Adios, 2008

The year 2008 has brought a number of changes to the Texas Cave Conservancy, most of them good. This TCC-News will have information on 2008 activities and will outline some TCC events next year. We currently have over two hundred cavers on the TCC-News list. We now have access to almost 200 caves throughout the state and with

the activity in West Texas more are added each month. Throughout the year we have a number of cavers visit the TCC Headquarters resulting in caving trips, parties and work sessions. Gather a few of you caver friends and join us in making these “the good old days” for you and your friends.

Mike Walsh, PRESIDENT

The TCC Lone Eagle Project

Florida caver Jim Thompson is working with NASA on a thermal imaging project to develop the ability to locate caves from his hot air balloon. Information obtained may be of benefit in the location of caves suitable for habitation on the planet Mars. Toward that end, Jim and his crew will be in the Mojave Desert in Arizona in late March 2009.

Following the official NASA project, Jim will be working with the TCC in the Camp Wood, Texas area. The TCC has access to a 4000+-acre ranch that

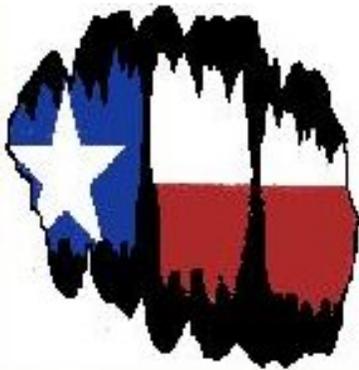
is known to have a number of caves. TCC Associates have been visiting and digging on the caves for the past

few months.

We plan to make several weekend trips to Camp Wood prior to the big extended weekend of March 27-31, 2009. In addition to digging and exploring new caves on the ranch, preparations will be made to better identify the locations of thermal image potential cave locations seen from the balloon. Following the Lone Eagle project weekend, TCC Associates will need to visit each site located from the air. We must limit the number of cavers on the ranch so contact TCC Caver Liaison -Alexia Ewing if you are available to assist in this long- term project. We have access to a large number of caves not previously known so we need cavers that like digging and exploring caves.



Upcoming TCC Events



TCC Winter Conference

February 27-28-March 1, 2009

This special event directed toward new cavers, is in its third year and has proved to be of interest to Texas cavers. Approximately 75-100 cavers attended each of the two events in the past. In addition to camping, caving, tours, workshops, meals and parties we have a special guest speaker each year. This year we will have the infamous caver, Ron Kerbo as the Saturday night speaker.

TCC Lone Eagle Project

March 29-31, 2009

We have access to a 4000-acre ranch in West Texas that has a number of caves. Jim Thomapson will have his hot air balloon and crew to conduct a thermal image search for cave entrances.

TCC CAVE DAY

April 18, 2009

Two times per year the Texas Cave Conservancy hosts an open house for visitors in the Cedar Park, Texas area. Over 500 visitors attend each event. This year, they will be able to enter two caves and one great shelter cave.

TCC Summer Event

July 17-19, 2009

This year the TCC is inviting all cavers on their way to the International Congress of Speleology to stay at the TCC Headquarters for camping, caving, swimming and a Saturday night party.

TCC CAVE DAY

September 12, 2009

We plan on expanding the event to include other conservation groups this year. With the new Discovery Well Cave Preserve site, we could easily handle a thousand or more visitors.

We never know who will call requesting access to caves for scientific studies. We work with cavers throughout Texas, the rest of the country and even cavers from other nations. Caving groups from around the state stay at the TCC campground while caving and site seeing in the Austin area. In addition to caving, cavers are welcome to stay here while seeing other great Austin area attractions. Sections of this newsletter will be used for other purposes so bear with me.

Austin Day Trip

The following is a suggestion for a great Austin day. Starting at the TCC Headquarters, drive out Ranch Road 2222, turn onto Mount Bonnell Road and stop to see the great views.



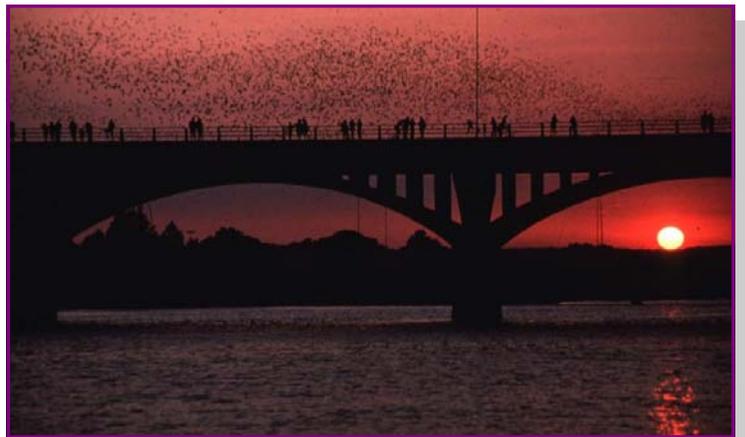
Continue down Mount Bonnell Road, turn left on West 35th and then turn right onto Exposition. Follow it through Tarrytown and turn left onto Lake Austin Boulevard. Deep Eddy pool is on the right along the river. Stop by, you may want to swim here rather than the more heavily visited Barton Spring's pool.



Following a swim continue on Lake Austin Boulevard; turn left onto Lamar to cross the river. Turn right on Barton Springs road to reach the pool and the great cave exhibit located in the Barton Springs pool house. There are several great places to eat along the way. Barton Springs even has it's own beer.



After the swim, return to Barton Springs Road, turn right and bear left onto Riverside then drive to the Ann Richards Bridge (Congress Street). Park in the parking lot on the right just before the bridge and watch the great bat flight. Call BCI at 512-327-9721 for the bat flight times.



The 3rd TCC Winter Conference

The TCC Winter Conference is a special event for new cavers, however Old-timer's are welcome as well. Take this opportunity to round up your new people and get them caving and learning about caves. The TCC asks for a donation to assist in the costs, however, for new cavers (less than five years) everything is free. There is really no good reason not to take part. We may even have the new NSS President, Gordon Birkhimer running Dave Cave's Saloon! Our special guest is Ron Kerbo. For a number of years Ron was with the National Parks Service. They actually paid him to oversee the management of all of their caves. Ron's Power Point presentation will be "Wooden Lettuce, Chili Peppers and the Speleo-education of an Oil Field Roust-a-Bout". He even wrote a summery (see below). Perhaps the easiest way to tell you what is going on is the tentative schedule.



TCC Winter Conference Activities

Friday

Camping & caving

Saturday

Breakfast

Tours & Workshop - 10:00 AM

- Geology-Caving tour-Bill Larson
- Twin Creeks tour-John Worsfold
- Basic Caving Workshop –Steve Gutting
- Introduction-Land Owner Relations-
- Cave Biology, Survey, Photography
- Cave Restoration (Visits several caves).

Urban Cave Monitoring & Management Workshop- This will be conducted at the TCC Headquarters at 5:00 PM

Avery Ranch Cave- All Day

Avery Ranch Cave Special Event- 4:00 PM
(Good music & beer with Gordon)

Dies Ranch Treasure Cave-All Day

Dies Ranch Shelter Cave-All Day

Caving-All Day



Bob Finger Napping
(making arrowheads) at
the TCC Headquarters
5:00 PM

Dinner - Mexican Food 6:30 PM

Special guest presentation by Ron Kerbo
"Wooden Lettuce, Chili Peppers and the Speleo-
education of an Oil Field Roust-a-Bout" After
Dinner.

Hall of Texas Cavers slides & Party

Dave Cave's Salon-Gordon Birkhimer
Strawberry Margaritas & more

Sunday

Breakfast

Caving

“Wooden Lettuce, Chili Peppers and the Speleo-education of an Oil Field Roust-a-Bout “

From February 29, 1976 to January 5, 1990 I was the cave specialist for Carlsbad Caverns National Park, where my wife and I lived, raised our children, and I had an office in a building closer to the entrance of Carlsbad Cavern than any other building in the world. The caves of that park, the desert country that overlay them, the National Park Service mandate to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations", was for those (almost) 15 years, my one burning passion and commitment.

How I ended up working for the Park Service was a long strange trip in itself because in 1968, I had received a letter signed by the superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, informing me that all of the backcountry caves of Carlsbad Caverns National Park were closed to entry and that it was unlikely that I or any of my companions were or would ever be qualified to enter those caves! Well as time went on, my qualifications may not have improved but he was wrong about the entry part, because we did enter them and we did it as fast as we could find them because we quickly perceived that while the park service may have had “authority” to keep us out of the caves they had no “plan”

to enforce that authority except a few lines in a booklet stuck in the back drawer of a desk. They had no real plan for the management of the caves, they didn't even know as much about them as we did, and they had no one out there to stop us.

However after going to work at the Park and as time went by thanks to the efforts of cavers from all over the nation and world, a few people within the Carlsbad Caverns staff, the local U.S. Forest Service office and the area Bureau of Land Management offices a new way of approaching cave protection, conservation, research and interpretation was being born. I was fortunate to be involved with those people and those efforts during my years at Carlsbad Caverns and see the birth of modern day federal cave management practices being born beneath the Guadalupe Mountains of Southeastern New Mexico. Without those people and those efforts our understanding of those great caves would have been hindered by a perpetuation of unbridled ignorance by stale bureaucracies. And for all those years I always had an unobstructed view of Far West Texas into which I could escape when things got bad, and from time to time I almost didn't come back from wandering the desert plains.

Ronal Kerbo -

NSS 11539 FE HM



TCC Summer Event

In years past, the Texas Cave Conservancy had summer weekend activities in the Camp Wood area. We look forward to this again, however, this year the TCC Summer Event will be held in Cedar Park. We will invite all cavers going to the International Congress of Speleology to stop by the TCC Headquarters for camping, swimming and caving and a Saturday night party. If cavers are coming in on IH 35 they can take Highway 1431 to Cedar Park. After crossing Hwy 183, a left turn onto Lakeline Boulevard will lead directly to the TCC Headquarters after a four -block drive. Since Hwy 1431 leads on to Marble Falls and then on to Kerrville, the TCC Headquarter is only eight blocks out of the way. There is even an REI at the Highway 1431 turnoff!

We have a party area, 25 tent pads, two showers, parking for forty-fifty autos and even a bathroom outside the TCC Headquarters (The Bubble Cave facility). We will be ready for visitors on Friday July 17, 2009. Each evening we will show Texas & Mexico slides. On Saturday evening July 18, 2009 there will be a party. Mexican food with a Day of the Dead theme is



must for an international crowd of cavers. Camping, caving, swimming and Austin attractions are available. We will have information on Austin area attractions including the West Cave Preserve, Hamilton Pool, Deep Eddy Pool, Barton Springs Pool and cave exhibit, Mount Bonnell, and the Ann Richards Bridge Bat Flight (Congress Street Bridge). This could be the first large Texas cave party of the International Congress.

Join the staff of the Texas Cave Conservancy and the new NSS President Gordon Birkhimer in welcoming cavers to Texas.

New Cave Management Contract in South Austin!

Following the gating of Brodie Sink, the Texas Cave Conservancy obtained the contract to manage this sink. In addition to Brodie Sink, we also take care of Kentucky Sink and Nieman Cave. The Brodie Sink cave gate is one of the largest cave gates in Texas. TCC Associate Mike Warton built it. Warton is the caver in the photo. Brodie Sink takes huge quantities of water following local storms. Once the pit is filled, water has been seen to go over the entrance and flow upstream. When the water level in the sink goes down, the water returns downstream to enter the pit. Brodie Sink has been described a



(Continued on page 7)

(Brodie Sink - Continued from page 6)

large glass twenty-five foot across and at least ninety foot deep. Unfortunately, it is filled with huge boulders. At times in the past it has been

possible to work downward as far as ninety feet. No one has been able to dig into the large stream conduit that has to be there in order to drain the large amounts of water .

TCC CAVE DAY

This will be the first TCC CAVE DAY that starts in its new home, the 110+ Acre Discovery Well Cave Preserve. The public will receive information on caves and cave tours when they arrive. Bill Larson will lead a tour of the Discovery Well Cave Preserve followed by a tour of the Buttercup Creek Cave Preserve. The public will be able to visit these cave preserves on their own all day long. Later that afternoon, Bill will lead a tour of the City of Cedar Park owned Twin Creeks Historical Area. Bill will discuss the local geology; visit the 150+-year-old log cabin and the Die's Ranch Shelter Cave. This site will also be open to the public during the day.

The TCC owned Die's Ranch Treasure Cave is also open for public visitation during the day. Recently, the TCC installed stairs and a deck to allow the public easier entry. These improvements also assist in the use of the cave as the TCC vertical training site.

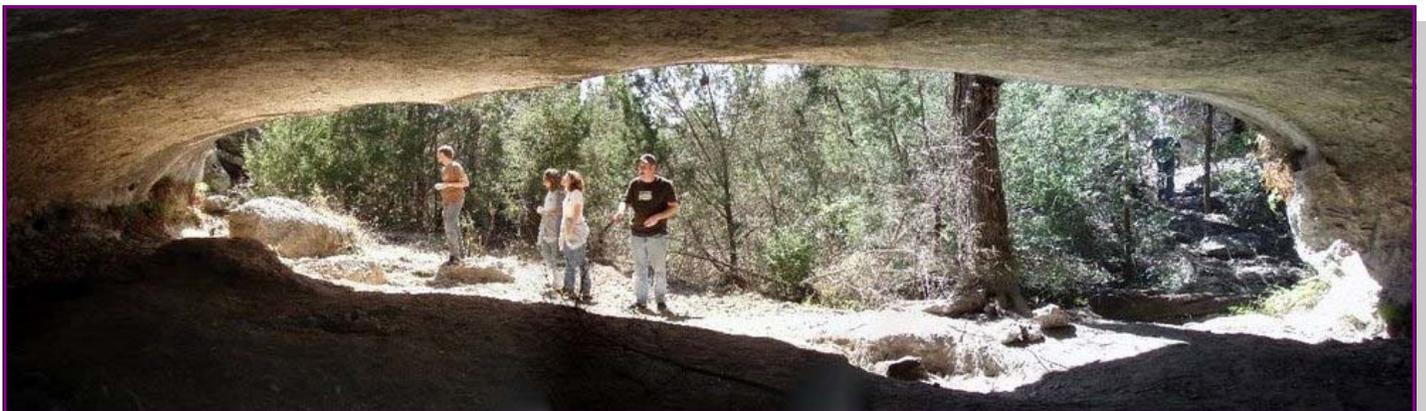
Members of the Maverick Grotto have offered to work with visitors at this site. The

TCC owned Avery Ranch Cave is open for public visitation during the day. Members of the Cowtown Grotto will continue to work with visitors. In the past members of both groups were able to take over 500 visitors Avery Ranch Cave on CAVE DAY. With the lights and the deck, the cave was able to handle the large number of visitors.

In addition, members of the Greater Houston Grotto have greatly assisted in the CAVE DAY activities. Donna Anderson was in charge of the CAVE DAY activities. We look forward to working once again with all three Grottos. All cavers are welcome to join us to help educate the public about the value of caves, cave life and the relationship of caves to the protection of our water supply.

If you are able to assist us please call 512-249-2283 or e-mail the TCC at TCC-caves@austin.rr.com

Austin cavers, come on out. We have cave projects going on here in the Cedar Park area throughout the year.



Urban Cave Monitoring & Management Workshop

The Texas Cave Conservancy has cave management contracts that require us to work toward the protection of the caves, the cave life and the critical habitat areas. Toward that end, we have wherever possible gone beyond the minimum requirements required by the contracts. We consulted with James Reddell and Mike Warton to establish what actually needed to be done to protect the caves and the cave species.

One example would be that the government requested that the developers have someone treat the fire ant mounds through non-chemical activities around the endangered species caves one time per year. They now have gone to two times per year. James Reddell, Mike Warton and the Texas Cave Conservancy take the very obvious position that if the fire ants are a potential hazard to the cave life in the spring and in the fall, they are a hazard year round. Toward that end several years ago, we started treating the fire ant mounds at Sun City, Georgetown two times per year at no extra charge. The number of mounds dropped from thirty -forty per site to ten -twelve per site each visit.

Recently, we made arrangements with James Reddell and Sun City to treat the fire ant mounds at the endangered species sites year-round, once again at no extra charge. In addition, we will assist James in other activities such as the accurate location of all of the caves; cave gate maintenance and some general land management activities. We will need caver assistance.

How does this affect the average caver? A United States Fish & Wildlife Permit holder must conduct the annual surveys. We currently work with several cavers that are authorized to conduct these studies. Texas caves often tend to be potentially hazardous. With

drops, snakes, bad air, isolated locations and other problems in the field, the caver safety rules of three or more on each trip are often ignored. The Texas Cave Conservancy will be establishing Urban Cave Management –Cave Monitoring Course open to any caver that wants to obtain training. These cavers will be of assistance to a Permit Holder working in the field. There is no charge for the training.

When a caver completes the classroom training they may go out into the field to assist in the cave monitoring. When they have completed 25 hours in the field, they will receive a certificate. Urban and suburban caving presents a wide range of potential problems that does not occur in the rural areas. The first Texas Cave Conservancy Cave Monitoring & Cave Management workshop will be held at the TCC Winter Conference on Saturday February 28, 2009. Several caver experts in the cave monitoring and cave management field will teach this workshop. Contact us at TCC-caves@austin.rr.com if you want to take the workshop. It will be held at 5:00 PM at the TCC Headquarters so you will be able to take part in other activities that day.

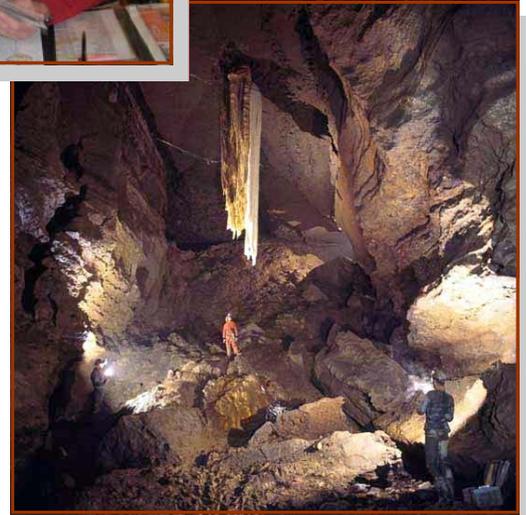


TCC International

Ireland

In October, I went to Ireland to celebrate my birthday in the land of my ancestors. They left Ireland by ship around 1750 and I returned by air in 2008. I celebrated my birthday on the seventh floor of the Guinness Brewery in Dublin with a nice Guinness barmaid that had attended UT in Austin. While in Ireland I also visited Doolin Cave. Doolin Cave, also known as 'Poll an Ionain', is located in the Burren region of County Clare. Discovered in 1952 it consists of about 6 miles (roughly 10.5km) of passage. The main feature of the cave is "The Great Stalactite". This measures almost 7 meters in length. While at the cave office I left a few Texas gifts before putting on a hardhat to visit the cave.

Mike Walsh



Australia

During 2006, Ross and Jan Anderson, Australian speleologists visited the USA to research and consider models of Cave Conservancies. They were really impressed by the Texas Cave Conservancy model and spent over a week in the area, visiting preserves and seeing how management operated. These cavers went back to Australia and are in the process of setting up Australia's first cave and karst conservancy. They say that TCC was instrumental in their decision to set up a Conservancy in Australia - that the style of management of TCC and the co-operation with land developers is a key component of the model. They said they cannot wait to come back to Texas to visit the TCC and see what progress has been made since we last met. The information above is from their e-mail to the TCC. We are looking forward to seeing them next year.



Australian Bats