

The

The Kansas City Area Grotto

# GUANO

Volume 21

Issue 1

February 2007

## **Kiesewetter Cave**

plus TAG caves, Corskscrew Cave, Ozark Underground Laboratory,  
Tumbling Creek Cave, Smallin Cave, and Rollins Cave

# Table of Contents

---



## Kiesewetter Cave

trip report by Bill Gee • photos by Bill Gee, Ken Long, and Jonathan Beard

page **4**



## Trash Clean Up at Ozark Underground Lab

trip report by Gary Johnson • photos by Ben McCall, Jay Kennedy, and Bill Gee

page **10**



## Looking for Crayfish at Smallin Cave

trip report by Gary Johnson • photos by Jonathan Beard and Dr. David Ashley

page **17**



## Skull Cave and Remnant Cave

trip report by Bill Gee • photos by Jay Kennedy and Bill Gee

page **20**



## Corkscrew Cave

trip report and photos by Jerry Cindric

page **21**



## TAG Caves

trip report by Jerry Cindric • photos by Ben Boling

page **22**



## Rollins Cave Captured on Video

article by Gary Johnson

page **26**

## Cover photo

A small cache of helectites in Kiesewetter Cave. See the article on page four for more photos of Kiesewetter Cave. Photo by Ken Long.

# Events

## February 23-25

Speleo Weekend — This year's theme is "Journey to the Center of the Earth." The group will be staying on private property near Jasper, Arkansas. For more info, contact Pedggie Heinz.

## March 10

CRF Trip. Crevice Cave biosurvey — contact Mick Sutton

## March 14

KCAG monthly meeting — 7:00 p.m. at the Arthur Mag Conference Center at Midwest Research Institute (MRI), near the UMKC campus, at the corner of Volker and Cherry.

## March 24-25

CRF Trip. Mark Twain National Forest, Taney County or Barry County — contact Mick Sutton or Scott House

## April 7

CRF Trip. Crevice Cave biosurvey — contact Mick Sutton

## April 11

KCAG monthly meeting — 7:00 p.m. at the Arthur Mag Conference Center at Midwest Research Institute (MRI), near the UMKC campus, at the corner of Volker and Cherry.

## April 20-22

CRF Trip. North Fork float trip — Pigeon Falls, Ledge Cave, etc. Canoes and camping provided — contact Mick Sutton or Scott House

## April 28 (tentative)

CRF Trip. Fitton Cave survey — contact Bill Steele

## May 5

CRF Trip. Crevice Cave biosurvey — contact Mick Sutton

## May 6-7

Spring 2007 MVOR — Cow Creek Boy Scout Camp, Stone County, Missouri. Hosted by Ozark Highlands Grotto. The Cow Creek Boy Scout Camp is located on Table Rock Lake. For more information, including a list of cave trips, go to the following web page:

<http://www.ozarkhighlandsgrotto.org/mvor.htm>

# The Guano

February 2007, Vol. 21, Issue 1

The Guano is published on an irregular schedule as dictated by the trip reports submitted to the editor.

Submit articles via e-mail to the editor:  
editor@kcgrotto.org. Preferred file format for trip report attachments: Microsoft Word. Multiple photos are typically required for each trip report.

Guano subscription rate for nonmembers: \$6.00 annually. Electronic: FREE.

**President:** Bill Gee (president@kcgrotto.org)

**V.P./Treasurer:** Pam Rader

**Secretary:** Jerry Cindric

**Web Master:** Sam Clippinger (samc@kcgrotto.org)

**Editor:** Gary Johnson (editor@kcgrotto.org)

**Copy editors:** Bill Gee & Pam Rader

The Kansas City Area Grotto is affiliated with the National Speleological Society and the Missouri Speleological Survey. In addition, KCAG is a founding member of the Missouri Caves & Karst Conservancy.

Meetings are held monthly. Check [www.kcgrotto.org](http://www.kcgrotto.org) to determine the dates.

**Annual Dues:** \$15 for full members (three caving trips with KCAG, nomination, and vote of membership required.)

**NCRC Callout number – Emergency use only:** Central Region (502) 564-7815. This number may be used for cave rescue emergencies in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

## A Message *From* the President

The election of KCAG officers is over and I won. Or lost, depending on how you look at it! I don't have much idea of how to do this job of grotto president. Please be patient as I learn.

Attendance at the monthly grotto meetings has been very low for the last year. Our January meeting had a lot of people and many of them were new faces. It seems to me that one of the challenges facing the grotto is how to make people want to join.

I have been involved in other clubs in the past. Then and now it is apparent to me that the grotto needs members more than members need the grotto. Anyone who is serious about caving can find a way to get underground without belonging to any grotto or even the NSS.

There were 17 dues-paying members of KCAG in 2006. What was their incentive for paying dues? What value did they receive? I will be thinking about and discussing this question during my term. Please share your thoughts with me.

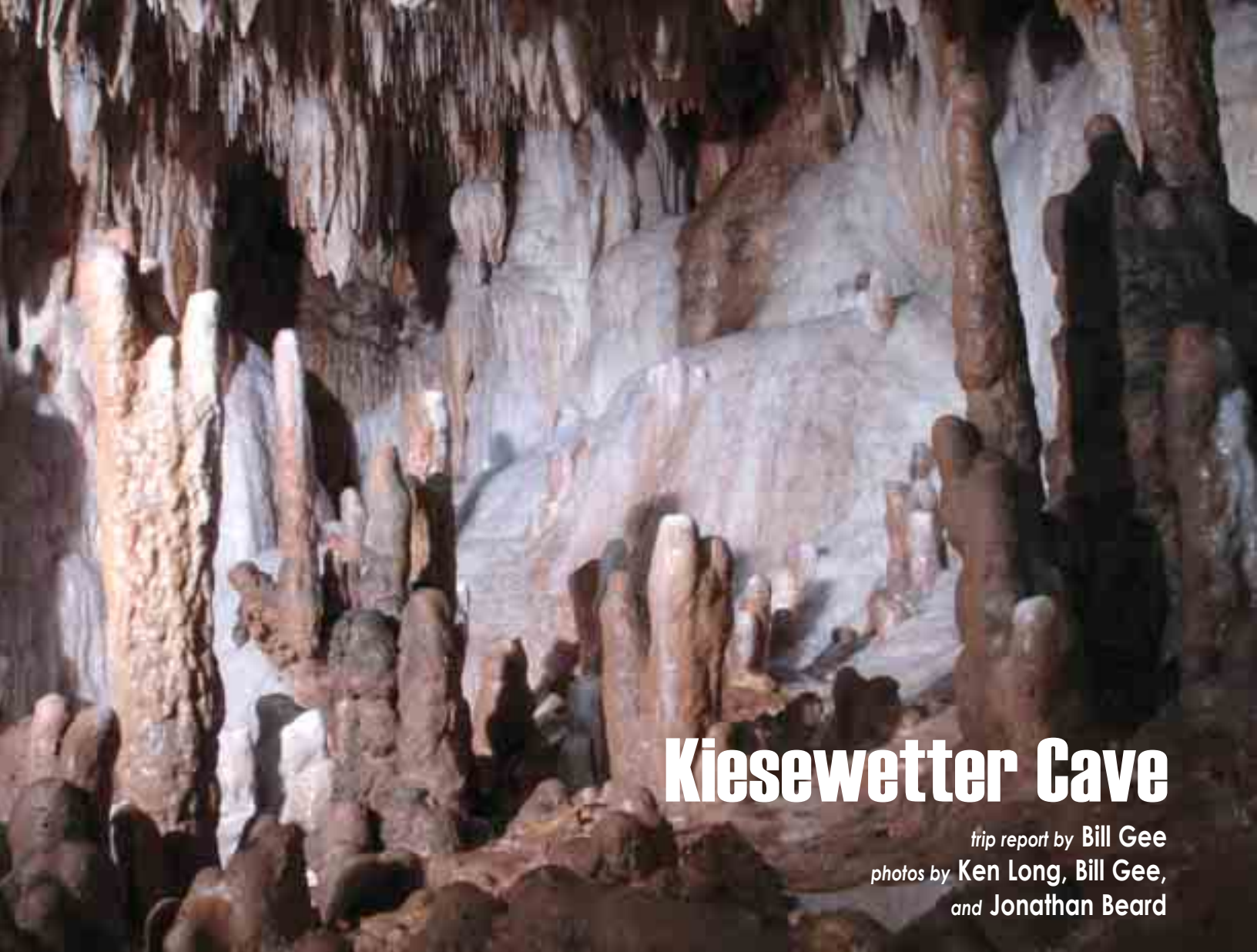
Cave safely!

*Bill Gee*

KCAG President



Bill Gee in Skull Cave  
(photo by Jay Kennedy).



# Kiewewetter Cave

*trip report by* **Bill Gee**  
*photos by* **Ken Long, Bill Gee,**  
**and Jonathan Beard**

In early 2006 Eric Hertzler and Ken Long started a project to survey Kiewewetter Cave and produce a proper map. The cave has never been thoroughly surveyed even though it has been well known for many years. During 2006 I participated in at least five survey weekends. There were several others I could not make. The survey is now up to a couple thousand feet, which is about half of the known cave.

Kiewewetter Cave is located on a 500 acre property near Richland, Missouri. The property contains several other small caves in bluffs along the Gasconade River plus a few blowing holes that might be diggable. The surrounding area contains several dozen caves, many of which have not yet been mapped. There are two excellent camping areas on the property. One is just

inside the main gate and the other is up near the farm house.

A modern cave gate was installed several years ago by LOG and Missouri Department of Conservation. The entrance to Kiewewetter Cave is about a 10 minute hike from the parking area just inside the property gate. It is perhaps 70 feet above the level of the Gasconade river. The entrance is small enough that you have to crawl on hands and knees to get to the gate.

Once through the gate, there is about 50 feet of hands/knees crawl to a stream crossing. The stream almost does not flow and is just a few inches deep; the ceiling is only 14 to 18 inches high. The result is that most people have to do a short belly crawl in the water. We have seen salamanders and

**Above:** Hartwig's Paradise in Kiewewetter Cave (photo by Ken Long).

pickerel frogs in the entrance near the stream area.

About five feet past the stream, you come to the first room. This room is a cold trap and is usually colder than anywhere else in the cave. There are almost always a dozen or so bats roosting here. Two passages lead out of the room. One is a shortcut crawl over to the Formation Passage and the other heads to a junction room. A third passage leads off the ceiling; it is not human passable, but we think the other end is in the Formation Passage.

The junction room is about 40 feet from the cold trap room. It has some nice flowstone formations along the ceiling. If you take a sharp right out of this room, you are



in the Formation Passage. Every inch of the Formation Passage is covered in formations. There is one section where you can drop down into a hole in the floor and belly-crawl under the passage for 30 or 40 feet.

Past the floor hole, the passage takes a sharp right turn. If you know where to look, there are some nice little holes with very nice formations in them. The flowstone is hollow underneath, so there are some lower rooms to look at. None are very big. The passage at this point is 10 or 12 feet high and maybe 15 feet wide.

About 30 feet after the right turn is the Formation Crawl. This is a hands/knees crawl through a section densely populated with soda straws and columns. It is maybe 30 inches high and 30 feet wide. Off to one side is a nice rimstone cascade. The trail through here has been heavily used

and is very obvious. About 20 or 30 feet of crawling brings you to a room about 20 feet wide and 30 feet long. The ceiling is 10 to 12 feet high. Off to one side is a drain that we think is the connection back to the cold trap room at the entrance. I have crawled into this drain about 20 feet, but it gets too small.

A short crawlway passage past a very nice column leads to another room. This room has a flowstone formation I call The Alligator. If you look at it right, it looks



sort of like the head, eyes, and nostrils of an alligator.

Continuing on, there is a duck-walk section and yet another room. This room contains some interesting graffiti made of soda straws. People would break off soda

**Top:** The main passage near Hartwig's Paradise (photo by Ken Long). **Above left:** Looking down on stalagmites at Hartwig's Paradise (photo by Ken Long). **Above center:** An Eastern pipistrelle in Kiesewetter Cave (photo by Ken Long). **Above right:** Ken Long at the entrance of Kiesewetter Cave (photo courtesy of Ken Long). **Right:** Many covers camp near the old farm house on the Kiesewetter property (photo by Bill Gee).

straws and then stick the pieces to the mud on the side of the passage just below the ceiling.

The passage goes another 50 or 70 feet past the graffiti to a wide and low area where it terminates. There is an outside entrance here, but it is possum-sized. We've seen a live skunk and evidence of packrats at the terminus. Eric Hertzler found the hole on the outside about 100 feet to the right of the main entrance. Altogether the Formation Passage tapes out at around 400 feet. Although it has been taped, the sketching is not done.

Back at the junction room, you climb up a short mud bank to find the front side of Hartwig's Paradise. This is a large flowstone formation against one wall of the room. It has been trampled on by muddy boots and needs serious cleaning. This room usually has some bats roosting.

The way on is through a small hole under a canopy just to the right of Hartwig's Paradise. About 10 feet of belly crawl brings you to standing passage again. Just to the left of this crawl is more of the Hartwig's Paradise formation. There is a stream meander, but the direct route is another short belly crawl of maybe 20 feet.

From here you can climb up a rock hanging over a slot in the floor, take a left, and see the backside of Hartwig's Paradise. This is the most beautiful part of the cave. It is profusely decorated with soda straws, flowstone, and small drip pools. For the most part, this section is pristine. It has not been walked on much at all.

There are two parallel passages from here. If you stay on the left side of the floor slot, you go through some crawling and a couple of moderately tight holes. In about 100 or 130 feet, you come to the 87 Room. The current survey has reached within about 50 feet of this room.

The other route goes down into the slot to the stream level. Climbing over a mud bank brings you to several crawlways going



**Top:** Another view of Hartwig's Paradise (photo by Jonathan Beard). **Right center:** A small cache of helectites (photo by Bill Gee). **Right bottom:** Bill Gee refers to this greyish flowstone formation as "The Alligator" (photo by Bill Gee). **Left center:** Stalactites at Hartwig's Paradise (photo by Ken Long). **Left bottom:** An unusual combination of a formation and a perforated rock (photo by Bill Gee).



off to the left. There is also a belly crawl in the stream that we need to push sometime. It would be a miserable crawl and do serious damage to anything living in the stream.

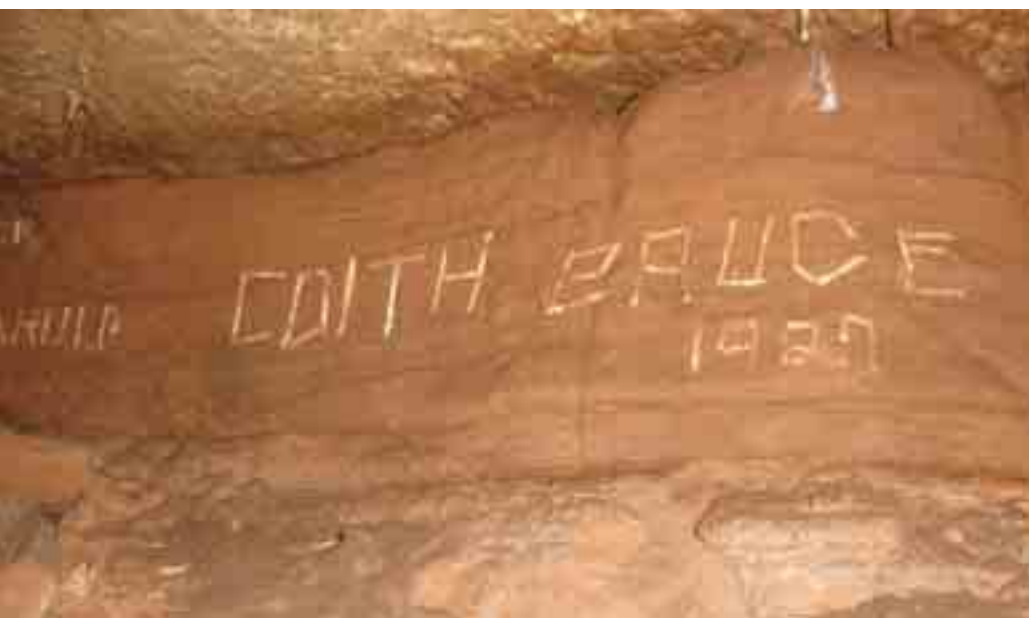
Ducking under a ceiling ledge brings you to a T-junction. There is a mud sculpture of a devil's face on the side of the room. Taking a right goes 50 feet to a breakdown room where the passage terminates. This room has one side of a sinkhole debris pile in it.

If you go left, there is a tight little hole that leads up to another breakdown room which is about 20 by 40 feet and 20 feet high. One end of this room is a debris pile, probably the same one that chokes off the right-hand fork from the T-junction. There is a slot at the top big enough for a very small person to get about a body length into, but then it gets too tight.

The far end of this room goes through a crawl-under into a crawling passage about 30 feet long, which ends up in the 87 Room. Just into this crawlway on the right is an interesting formation. A flat piece of ceiling breakdown apparently fell on a stalagmite and got a hole punctured in it. Both pieces are now laying sideways with the stalagmite still poking through the hole. There is another survey end where this passage comes into the 87 Room.

The 87 Room is the largest room in the cave. It takes its name from a date smoked on the ceiling. The floor is breakdown but still fairly flat. The room is roughly round, perhaps 30 or 40 feet in diameter. The ceiling ranges from 6 to 12 feet high. On one side is another debris pile from a sinkhole. We usually see a dozen or so bats roosting in this room.

The way on is a hole on the left side of the 87 Room opposite from where the surveyed crawlway comes in. After dropping 10 feet, you come to stream level. This passage goes along the stream, sometimes taking a shortcut across a meander. In about 300 feet, you come to the Birth



**Top:** Flowstone in Kiesewetter Cave (photo by Ken Long). **Center:** Past cavers used broken soda straws to spell their names in Kiesewetter Cave (photo by Ken Long). **Bottom:** A cave salamander in Kiesewetter Cave (photo by Ken Long).

Canal. This section of passage usually has several salamanders in the stream.

For most people, this is the end of the cave. I cannot get through the tight hole. Scott Wright (who weighs under 130 pounds) has been through and reports another 500 to 600 feet of cave on the other side.

Some microblasting has been tried on the Birth Canal with (so far) limited success. The tightest spot is only a couple of feet long, but that's enough to block any but the smallest cavers. The stream flows through clay on the left side, but the ceiling height is only 6 inches or so. A few half-hearted attempts have been made to dig a channel. For now, a stream dig is on hold. It would seriously mess up the stream flow. Because the stream volume is about what you'd get out of a garden hose, it would not take much to choke it with silt.

The area just before the Birth Canal is the muddiest section of the cave other than the low spot at the entrance. There are a number of mud sculptures, including a carbide lamp and a helmet with a carbide lamp.

The survey continues on an irregular schedule. Ken Long is managing the cave and scheduling trips. If you are interested in participating, contact Ken. ●



**Above:** Scott Wright squeezes through the Birth Canal (photo by Bill Gee).

## Caves Near Kiesewetter by Bill Gee

**E**arly in 2006 Eric Hetzler, Ken Long, and I hiked along the bluffs above the Gasconade near Kiesewetter. We mapped out two small caves that we called Coon Trap (about 60 feet long) and Broken Knife (about 90 feet long). Eric and Jonathan Beard have done some digging on a blowing hole that comes out from under a rock outcropping. They report they dug about 12 feet in and it is still blowing strong.

Red Bluff Cave is just across the Gasconade River from the Kiesewetter property. In early 2006, the property owner let us take a trip to see what the cave was like.

Red Bluff Cave starts as a slot in the rock about 4 or 5 feet wide and 10 feet high with a substantial stream flowing out of it. About 150 feet in, you come to a waterfall. The landowner's black lab accompanied us all the way to the waterfall.

The waterfall is about 10 feet high. The climb-up spot is 20 or 30 feet before the actual fall. It can be free climbed but is much easier with an etrier. The first person up fashioned

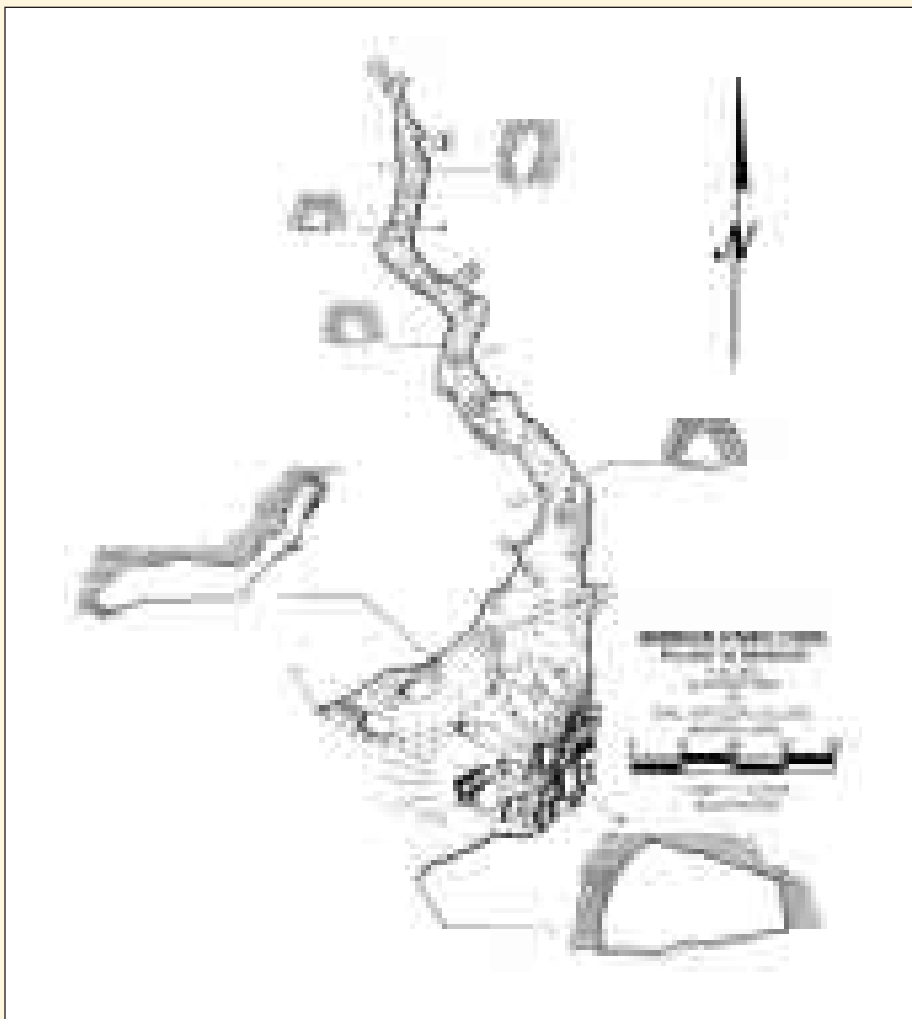
an etrier out of webbing and the rest of the group used that.

Upstream from the waterfall, the passage is 10 to 30 feet wide and 4 to 8 feet high. We covered perhaps 1000 feet or more of cave before turning around. It was still going. This cave seriously needs to be surveyed. The owner claims over a mile of passage. ●

**Below:** Coon Trap Cave. **Next page, upper left:** Broken Knife Cave. **Top right:** Red Bluff Cave. **Right center:** Dissolved flowstone reveals fantastic contours in Red Bluff Cave. **Right center:** Flowstone and a small pool in Red Bluff Cave. (All photos by Bill Gee).



map courtesy of Eric Hetzler



map courtesy of Eric Hertzler

# Trash Clean Up at Ozark *Underground* Laboratory

report by *Gary Johnson*

photos by *Ben McCall, Jay Kennedy, and Bill Gee*

Formed in 1973 by Tom and Cathy Aley, Ozark Underground Laboratory isn't a stereotypical laboratory. It's not about tiled rooms that smell of disinfectant. It's not about Bunsen burners and test tubes (although you might find these things here). Instead, it's a sort of living laboratory, in which a lengthy cave system—Tumbling Creek Cave—and its recharge area on the surface are the subject of investigations.

While most cave systems are relatively poor in food sources, Tumbling Creek Cave is host to a large summer colony of gray bats (estimated at 150,000), and because of their presence, the cave is rich in nutrients that help sustain a relatively large group of cave fauna. Most notable of this group is the Tumbling Creek snail, which lives nowhere else in the world.

Scientists, such as Dr. David Ashley of Missouri Western State College and Dr. Paul Johnson of Tennessee Aquarium Research Institute, come to Ozark Underground Laboratory to study the cave's unique species and to learn how activities on the surface can affect fauna far below.

While there are several buildings on the grounds of Ozark Underground Laboratory, the real laboratory is the land, its springs and hollows, its sinkholes and caves. In addition to research, OUL also encourages education and to this aim offers field trips for college students that stress the relationship between the surface and the underlying cave system.

I friend of mine, Eric Hertzler, started working at Ozark Underground Laboratory in June 2006, so it was only a matter of time before Eric brought up the subject of a KCAG work trip. And I'm certainly glad that he did. Eric didn't come right out and say the work trip would probably involve working on the surface, cleaning a dump—not exactly glamorous work—but I sort of knew that's what we'd likely end up doing, and that was okay with me.

On the weekend of our trip (in mid November 2006) the weather was perfect, with daytime highs in the 60s and no rain in the forecast. That meant we'd definitely be doing surface work. If it had rained, or had turned cold, maybe we'd have done work in

**Above:** The Big Room in Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Ben McCall).

the cave. But there was no shortage of small dumps scattered across the property that needed to be removed. So that would be the focus of our trip.

The Tumbling Creek snail was at risk because of groundwater pollution. The pollution was largely the result of surface runoff contaminated by numerous small dumps scattered throughout the cave's watershed. Tom Aley pushed to purchase large tracts of land in the watershed area and then conducted cleanup efforts so that the water entering the cave system could be better managed. The results have provided much cleaner water in the cave's stream system, which has had a positive influence on the populations of critters that live in the cave's waters.

Springfield Plateau Grotto (SPG) has been participating in bi-monthly clean-up/restoration trips to OUL, so we would be joining them for a Saturday work trip. I



put together a small group from Kansas City, and we drove down on a Friday. I arrived late in the afternoon. Bill Gee and Jay Kennedy of KCAG were already there. Two new cavers from Kansas City, Danny Stark and Miranda Smith, would also be joining us. We would be joining Jonathan Beard and Ben McCall of SPG. In addition, Melvin Johnson of the Springfield-Green County Parks system was also participating this weekend, and he was bringing two employees, Kara Warren and Waylon Cavinder. So we'd have a good-sized group for the cleanup project.

To make a busy weekend even more busy, Dr. David Ashley would be arriving on a research trip with several students, and he had dibs on the bunkhouse. That meant the rest of rest of us would be using a cabin located on the east side of the property, near Big Creek. When I arrived, Eric decided I should park my small 2WD truck on the ridge. This was probably a good move. The road was a little muddy after heavy rains from earlier in the week. Eric drove me to the cabin, and even Eric's 4WD truck was sliding around a little bit.

The cabin was very nice. It appeared to have been built within the past 10 years. It had a large wood-burning stove, a modern kitchen (minus a refrigerator), and a large bathroom that included a whirlpool bath and a shower. I met Bill Gee and Jay Kennedy, and we joined Eric for a campfire near the field house. Ben McCall soon arrived. After a couple hours of conversation, we retired for the evening.

The morning was frosty and definitely a bit chilly, but the forecast looked good. Once the sun got high in the sky, things would warm up considerably. We returned to the field house to await everyone's arrival. Soon Jonathan Beard arrived. Danny Stark and Miranda Smith from KC had opted to stay at a motel in Branson, but they found the way to OUL and joined the crew. We were joined by several other friends of Tom Aley, including a neighbor recently transplanted from the east coast (with a strong New Yawk accent).

Eric explained we'd be spending the day cleaning up a dump. This same dump has received many hours of work in the past. It was one of the worst on the property. With



**Top:** The field house at Ozark Underground Lab (photo by Bill Gee). **Middle:** One of many dumpsites at OUL (photo by Ben McCall). **Bottom:** The crew made gradual progress at reducing this dump site (photo by Ben McCall).



any luck, with the large crew, we'd be able to make a strong dent in the mess.

Good progress has been made on cleaning up the 28 dumps scattered across the nine square miles of recharge area. In addition, an area dubbed "Afghanistan" (just across the road to the west) had been acquired by OUL. The previous landowner had mismanaged the land horribly, allowing overgrazing by an impoverished herd of cattle. The result was a network of deep, eroded channels, in addition to a near-charnel house atmosphere of cattle carcasses. Thanks to hundreds of hours of volunteer work, the property was cleaned and on the road to recovery.

Our destination was a little draw that emptied into Hampton Hollow. When first walking up to the gully, I was a little depressed. The dump was large and no

doubt would provide a seemingly inexhaustible supply of trash. But we dug in, separating trash into various buckets: glass, tin, aluminum, plastic, hazardous waste, and general trash (which included all the miscellaneous junk that didn't fit into one of the previous categories).

After a couple hours, it was obvious the dump site was quickly shrinking. We were definitely making a difference.

At lunch time, Cathy Aley arrived with several helpers in tow and a large selection of lunch foods. It was quite a spread! And just as importantly, a cooler full of warm water for washing our hands—the importance of which cannot be underestimated, for as we dug into the trash, toxic gunk/liquid ran down our hands and forearms, eventually soaking our gloves. So I was very glad to get the opportunity to soap my hands and forearms and restore some semblance of cleanliness.

After filling our stomachs and resting, we once again resumed our work in the dump, and the dump continued to shrink. Eric brought out a heavy-duty weed whacker to

clear some of the shrubs and branches, allowing us to reach additional trash. At first, each bag of trash that we pulled from the dump had another bag under it, now we were occasionally finding dirt—the bottom. Sometimes it was just an illusion. Dirt had either been pushed over some of the bags, or maybe it had washed over the bags after a rain. So occasionally our excitement over reaching the bottom of the trash would be undercut after new depths were discovered.

**Top left:** Bags of trash quickly piled up during trash pickup at OUL (photo by Ben McCall). **Top right:** The cleaning crew: (top row) Eric Hertzler, Ben McCall, Kara Warren, Waylon Cavinder, Melvin Johnson, Miranda Smith, Danny Stark, (front row) Cathy Brannon, Charley, Bill Gee, Gary Johnson, Jay Kennedy, and Jonathan Beard. **Middle left:** Plaque on the front of the shaft entrance of Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Jay Kennedy). **Middle right:** This building houses the shaft entrance (photo by Bill Gee). **Bottom right:** This stairway leads to the bottom of the shaft entrance (photo by Jay Kennedy).



But overall, the dump was disappearing. We were raking up smaller and smaller pieces. And eventually all that was left were tiny bits. We'd pretty much cleaned the dump. Much debris had been washed down the gully, so work still remains to be done following the dry stream bed, picking up soda cans and plastic bottles.

You learn lots of things picking up trash. For example, shoes made up a surprisingly large part of the trash. While many types of apparel decompose over time, shoes are apparently here for eternity. In addition, the family that used this dump must have had a lot of cats because we kept finding heaps of food tins. The labels were long gone, but the tins were almost certainly once full of cat food. Yeah, you learn lots of useless stuff like this.

Now sitting above the gully was a huge collection of full trash bags, all arranged according to debris type. I hadn't thought it was possible, but the dump was pretty much gone. And with any luck, this would mean less toxic runoff would be created, and thus the watershed of Tumbling Creek Cave would be a little cleaner, which might have an impact on the wildlife—principally snails—that depend on the cave stream.

Now that we'd done the work, it was time for the payoff. That meant heading to Tumbling Creek Cave for a tour. We headed back to the field house and geared up for a cave trip. In this case, that only meant putting on a helmet and headlamp. An established trail runs through those parts of the cave that are open for visitation. So this is more like walking through a commercial cave than a wild cave, although there is plenty of wild cave here. Of the cave's 1.8 miles of passageway, only about 1,500 feet is available on tours, so the vast majority of the cave remains largely free from the impact of human visitation.

We walked down the trail from the field house to the small building that houses the new entrance. Eric asked if anyone wanted to see the natural entrance. It was just a half mile away. The sun was starting to get a little low in the sky, but there was still over an hour of daylight. I said, "Yes, I'd like to see the old Bear Cave entrance." Nobody else spoke, so Eric led the way. It was a pleasant, short hike through woods, along a dry stream.



**Top:** Miranda Smith kneels beside the stream flowing from the natural entrance of Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Ben McCall). **Bottom:** The bottom of the gate at Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Bill Gee).



Soon we stood in front of the gated natural entrance of Tumbling Creek Cave (once known as Bear Cave, which is how it still appears on some USGS topo maps). Due to heavy rains early in the week, the cave stream was now running well above normal. Eric said there were times the flow from the cave mouth had gone dry. But now the flow was wide and strong. I peered through the angle iron gate and saw wall-to-wall water. The water funneled toward the gate and poured over a small ledge at the base.

A huge chute was installed at the entrance to allow bats to easily negotiate the gate. Here the entrance is about four feet high and 40 feet wide. The ceiling is a flat layer of limestone. The cave mouth is level with the bottom of Bear Cave Hollow. At this point the hollow is fairly wide as it approaches Big Creek to the east. We spent several minutes at the natural entrance, appreciating the work done on the chute, and then we retraced our steps back to the shaft entrance.

A small building houses the top of the shaft, which drops about 20 feet and provides easy access to a largely dry section of the cave. A plaque on the shaft house announces the cave's status as a National Natural Landmark. Eric unlocked the door and we stepped inside. A spiral staircase, much like the one in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* descends to the cave floor.

Our trip in the cave would be completely on the developed trail. This is a cement trail, not concrete. Cement has been sprinkled onto the cave's dirt/rock floor to form a well-marked path. This part of the cave feels much like a developed commercial cave. Of course, there are no installed electric lights. However, on this trip, with over 10 cavers all sporting headlamps, it felt like the cave was lit up like a commercial cave.

The first room in the cave is separated from the rest of the cave by a solid wooden door to help restrict the flow of air toward the shaft entrance. I was last in the group so I pulled the door shut. From here, the passage roughly parallels the Lower Stream Passage (which contains Tumbling Creek),

**Above:** Eric Hertzler explaining the purpose of the snail propagation station in Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Ben McCall).

about 100-150 feet to the east. Some stretches of the trail have been cut into clay banks to allow for walking height. Occasional stretches require ducking and stoopwalking, but as we neared The Cataract, the ceiling height soared to 35 feet. The Cataract is a cavity high in the left wall from which water occasionally pours after recent rainfall. Not far after this stretch, the trail splits with one trail heading higher. According to the map, this trail then heads east into the Breakdown Chamber and provides access to an upper passage called Hibernation Hall. We stayed low and took the trail north toward an intersection with Tumbling Creek.

At the intersection of the trail and Tumbling Creek is a large room with a 30 foot high ceiling. The creek comes in from the left and pours under the trail, which is elevated by way of a modest bridge. At



**Top left:** Eric Hertzler leading a tour through the East Passage (photo by Jay Kennedy). **Above:** The East Passage contains many formations (photo by Ben McCall). **Top right:** Dr. David Ashley (right) and his students collecting data on crawfish (photo by Jay Kennedy). **Middle right:** A dark-sided salamander in Tumbling Creek Cave (photo by Jay Kennedy). **Bottom right:** A column near the beginning of the East Passage (photo by Jay Kennedy).

about this point, I started to feel the effects of all the camera flashes around me. Every second or two a flash lit up the cave. I was disoriented and somewhat blinded. That's just the state of my eyes. I wear trifocals and have trouble watching fast action

movies because the pyrotechnic flashes wear me down and make my eyes tired.

As we continued north, we entered the Big Room. Here, the creek runs on the left side of the passage, which is about 80 feet wide with the ceiling height first at 20 feet and then climbing to 50 feet. Cutting perpendicular across the Big Room is a dry upper passage. The trail curls to the east and enters the East Passage, but a corresponding section of high passage also sits on the west side of the creek, 40 feet up a very steep bank. A rope hangs down to help people climb into this passage, but this is not part of the tourist trail and is typically off limits.

We found Dr. David Ashley and his students sitting at a portable picnic table in

the Big Room. They had captured over a dozen surface crayfish deep in the cave. Surprisingly, these crayfish were not only surviving but breeding in the cave. Dr. Ashley and his crew measured the crayfish before releasing them back in the stream. At this point, the trail enters a cul-de-sac, which is the furthest up the creek passage that the trail goes. According to the map, the creek passage looks like it gets sort of nasty, becoming two to three feet deep with three to four feet of air above the water.

We retraced our steps a few feet and followed Eric up into the East Passage. This is one of the best decorated areas of the cave. We climbed up a couple dozen steps that had been cut into the clay bank. Immediately, we began seeing large formations, the first being on the north wall as we entered the passage. Then the trail cut

underneath a rock and flowstone blockade that nearly choked the passage. A passage has been cut through rock to allow further penetration by the tourist trail.

The East Passage represents about half of the cave's tourist trail. As its name indicates, this passage heads east, typically straight as an arrow, until the trail end, where the passage curls to the south. Soon after we entered the East Passage, Jonathan Beard pointed out to me Hibernation Hall, which leads diagonally to the southwest and eventually intersects the main passage near the Breakdown Room.

The trail in the East Passage curves past profuse displays of formations. These include large stalagmites and columns. Flowstone frequently covers the clay banks on the right side of the trail. Ceiling heights are modest, averaging 6 to 10 feet, and the passage width is a fairly constant 20 to 30 feet. As we progressed down the passage, Jonathan Beard pointed out some of his restoration work. The passage had unfortunately been the victim of some destructive visitors who quite willfully attacked and shattered some of the formations. But thanks to Jonathan's work, these formations have been pieced back together. Some of these formations have been pieced back together so artfully that you have to look very closely to see any cracks.

Near the end of the passage, we encountered large deposits of bat guano on the left, so bats must use this passage heavily in the summer. At the turnaround point, the trail starts to curve to the right. Jonathan Beard told us about doing restoration work beyond, where there is a large, high area covered with white flowstone. Workers removed their shoes in order to avoid spoiling this flowstone. Maybe someday I'll get to see this part of the passage, but not on this trip. We were sticking strictly to the tourist trail.

On the way back out of the cave, Bill Gee attempted to get a good shot of the Saguaro, which is a dry column that has undergone dissolution, resulting in a hollow interior, sort of like one of those massive California trees with a hollow base. Jonathan ended up on his knees beside the column, directing a flash into the column's interior. Eventually they got a decent shot, balancing exterior flash with the flash in the column.

**Top:** Stairs curve past The Cataract (photo by Bill Gee). **Above right:** More formations in the East Passage (photo by Bill Gee).



After the cave trip, a dinner was arranged at the field house, and it was quite a spread, prepared by Carol. We squeezed into the field house, along with several friends of the Alley's, who were also visiting on this same weekend. It was a very busy weekend at Ozark Underground Lab. A guitar player strummed and sang songs as we ate, and later Tom picked up the guitar himself and sang a couple songs.

Eventually, Dr. Ashley and his group arrived and I got to talk to him for a little while. I found out he was interested in doing work at Carroll Cave, so I talked with

him about this and promised to contact some of the officers of Carroll Cave Conservancy about getting Dr. Ashley into the cave to do some research.

Overall, this was an excellent trip. Thanks go to Eric Hertzler for inviting us to participate, to Jonathan Beard for sharing his knowledge of Tumbling Creek Cave, to Carol Alley for preparing an excellent lunch and dinner, and to Tom Alley for allowing us to participate and providing outstanding housing. I certainly hope I can convince KCAG to return to Ozark Underground Lab in the near future. ●



# Looking for Crawfish in Smallin Cave

trip report by  
**Gary Johnson**

photos by  
**Jonathan Beard**  
and **Dr. David Ashley**

**W**hen I arrived at Ozark Underground Lab for a November 2006 Saturday work trip, Eric Hertzler told me that Jonathan Beard would be leading Dr. David Ashley and his students on a trip to Smallin Cave on Sunday. So I talked to Jonathan and asked for permission to join his trip. He agreed. So while I wasn't sure what the rest of the KCAG group would do on Sunday (and that made me feel a little guilty), I had a set plan.

On Sunday, after a hard day of cleaning a dump on the OUL property, I followed Jonathan and Dr. Ashley to Smallin Cave. The cave is located on the grounds of a religious organization in Christian County. So access to the cave is restricted. Work is currently taking place to resurvey the cave, including a major side passage that eluded previous explorers for several decades. The site isn't immune to renegade cavers who might decide to jump the fence, but an onsite groundskeeper is being added, which

should make it difficult for any trespassers to enter the cave.

This wasn't my first trip to the vicinity of Smallin. In 2004, I interviewed Jerry Vineyard about an article on Carroll Cave, and at this time, he lived beside a huge sinkhole that is part of a drainage system that feeds Smallin Cave. This portion of the cave system is called Jeff Cave. While giving me a quick tour of the sinkhole, Jerry told me that only a voice connection had been established between Smallin and Jeff. But Jonathan told me that cavers in the past couple years had actually made the crawl between the two systems.

At the grounds of the religious organization, we parked and suited up. From the parking lot, we couldn't see the cave. We were on an open field. After everyone was ready, Jonathan led us down a hill, past several small buildings, into a canyon. Once in the canyon, we were on a paved path. It

**Above:** Looking out from the entrance of Smallin Cave (photo by Jonathan Beard).

felt like we were in a city park. We passed what looked like a railroad car.

The canyon walls were vertical and about 50 feet high. We passed another cave, which Jonathan identified as Sunrise Cave. He said it had a couple hundred feet of passage. The walls of the canyon were pockmarked with many potential openings, and Jonathan had investigated some of these cavities so he gave us a running commentary on the holes as we walked to Smallin. By now, the entrance of Smallin was clearly visible in front of us.

Smallin Cave has one of the most impressive entrances in all of Missouri. First, the canyon leading directly to the entrance is impressive in its own right. Several large trees stand in the canyon providing a canopy that is most likely a verdant green in the



**Above:** Dr. David Ashley looking for crayfish in Smallin Cave (photo by Jonathan Beard).

**Right, above:** A crayfish in Smallin Cave (photo courtesy of Dr. David Ashley). **Right:** Dr. David Ashley measuring a cave crayfish (photo courtesy of Dr. David Ashley).

summer. In November, it was mostly brown, but still it was drop-dead beautiful. The cave entrance is huge, approximately 55 feet high and 90 feet wide. There are bigger cave entrances in the state. Green Cave, for example, is larger at the dripline, but it immediately decreases in size. Jam-Up Cave is comparable in size to Smallin, but much of Jam-Up's entrance is filled with breakdown. The Smallin Cave entrance isn't obscured in any way. And its dimensions diminish only very gradually as one ventures further into the cave.

J. Harlan Bretz chose a drawing of the Smallin Cave entrance for the cover of *Caves of Missouri*, and it's easy to see why. This may very well be the most beautiful cave entrance in the state. Its beauty is diminished only slightly by the elevated concrete tourist trail that enters on the right side of the entrance.

We strolled into the cave. That's how it is at Smallin. You don't climb in, or crawl or slide or jump or squeeze or any thing like that. You stroll, easy as can be, along a concrete path. Heck, you could even be pushing a baby stroller or rolling in a wheelchair. This is an equal opportunity cave. So we s-t-r-o-l-l-e-d into Smallin.



When you walk into Smallin in caving gear, it's hard to not feel sort of overdressed. However, cavers who have been beyond the end of the tourist trail know better. Eventually, the main passage drops to crawling dimensions, and it stays that way for over 2,500 feet. Contrary to the easygoing entrance, Smallin can be a demanding cave.

The cave map prepared back in 1958 by Oz Hawksley, Jack Reynolds, George Dieke, and several others shows several small

passages heading away from the main passage. Each of these passages are marked with dotted lines and a question mark. In one of these side passages, recent explorers discovered a long stretch of unsurveyed passage. In addition, while the main passage of Smallin isn't exactly highly decorated, the side passage contains some nicely decorated stretches.

On today's trip, however, we weren't going anywhere near the side passage. We



**Above:** Ryan Evans, Mike Voltz, Dr. Dave Ashley, Logan Uptegrove, Gary Johson, and Jonathan Beard at the Mushroom in Smallin Cave (photo by Jonathan Beard).

would only be going far enough that Dr. Ashley and his crew could check out some of the pools for crawfish. That meant we would be going only a few hundred feet beyond the end of the tourist trail.

The concrete tourist walkway sits on piers that hold it about three feet above the cave floor. The walkway is lined with plastic guardrails not meant to take any weight, so no leaning is allowed. The church group has even built a large side platform on the right side for meetings/get-togethers.

For the first 200 feet beyond the entrance, the main passage gradually gets smaller. At the first minor turn to the left, the passage is about 40 feet wide and 20 feet high. Not far beyond, at about 250 feet into the cave, a large, dry flowstone mound sits on the right. This mound is about eight-feet high. The elevated walkway stays far to the left and goes over a four-foot high dam, where water is always pooled. Jonathan said he rarely sees any crawfish this close to the entrance. So we continued deeper into the cave before we looked for crawfish.

At about 350 feet, the passage bends back to the right and becomes smaller, about 20 feet wide and 14 feet high. Now the path heads over large shallow pools. Here, we started looking for crawfish.

We slid through the railing to the cave floor and started staring into the pools. It wasn't long before Jonathan found a crawfish, and then Dr. Ashley found one, and then I found a small one. Dr. Ashley netted the crawfish and placed them in shallow pans. Jonathan, Dr. Ashley, and I crawled under and around the walkway, looking for more crawfish.

The walkway ends about 550 feet into the cave, over a large pool that looks to be about a foot deep. Dr. Ashley's crew jumped down into the water, and we continued looking for crawfish for several minutes.

Just across from the end of the walkway, the character of the passage changes. A four-foot high ledge sits above the pool. Here is where the main passage continues. We crawled up on top of the ledge. Here, the passage is now about 12 feet wide and nine feet high. Not far from here is the old gate. It has long since been breached. The door was not locked, and even if it had been locked, someone had dug a hole under the gate.

We continued up the main passage. I followed at the rear, letting Dr. Ashley and his crew take the lead in looking for crawfish, and they found several more. Jonathan remarked that he had rarely seen so much water in this part of the main passage. We were typically sloshing through several inches of water.

Dr. Ashley said he'd seen enough of the cave at about the point where crawling would've been required. Here, a nice example of flowstone forms a little canopy on the right, in a passage about four feet high. We stood beside the little canopy, in about 10 inches of water, as Jonathan rigged a photo. He set the timer and scrambled beside me. Smile. Click.

Now it was time to measure the crawfish and record data. For this part of the trip, I wasn't going to be much help. I was also thinking that a Kansas City Chiefs' football game was on the radio, and I really wanted to catch some of it. So I said goodbye and headed out.

Thanks, Jonathan, for allowing me to join this trip. This is an amazing cave, and I hope to return in the future. ●

# Skull Cave & Remnant Cave

trip report by Bill Gee • photos by Jay Kennedy and Bill Gee

In November 2006, a large group of cavers gathered at Ozark Underground Labs for a work weekend. On Saturday, we cleaned a trash dump. On Sunday, Eric Hertzler, Jay Kennedy, and I went to look at two small caves in the area.

The first of these caves is on private property just across Hwy. 125 from OUL. The owner calls it Skull Cave, though we are not sure why. The cave opens in a very small depression with a rock outcropping on one side. Under the outcropping is a fairly tight passage that almost immediately turns into a slot. The ceiling stays at the same level, but the floor of the slot slopes down steeply about 15 or 20 feet. The slot is no more than 16 or 20 inches across and is widest at the top. You can see a wider area about 25 or 30 feet into the cave.

Eric and Jay were too big to get very far into the slot, so I went in. It was basically a matter of wedging myself between the walls of the slot and sliding along a few inches at a time. For safety, I set a bolt above a wide spot where I thought I could slide down to the bottom. Jay set another bolt back at the entrance to the slot, and we rigged a rope between the bolts and down the slot. I tied my pack to the rope and lowered it. Then using the rope as a brake, I slid down through the wide spot.

It was *just* wide enough for me to get down to the floor where I wiggled out into a small dome room. The room was about 8 feet wide, 10 or 12 feet long, and maybe 25 feet high. There was no obvious drain at the bottom. The floor was mostly dirt. I saw a small group of a dozen or so bats hanging close together on one side and about another half-dozen bats hanging

**Photos:** Bill Gee set a bolt and then descended to the bottom of a dome in Skull Cave (photos by Jay Kennedy).





**Above:** Eric Hertzler in Remnant Cave (photo by Jay Kennedy).

singly. There were no formations to speak of.

The slot goes on, but I was unable to get into it from the bottom. There is a rock protrusion that could be lassoed and used to climb back up. I could see perhaps 20 feet farther in before the slot took a turn to the right.

After taking some photographs, I climbed back up the slot and edged my way back to the beginning. We left the bolts but took everything else with us. I was wearing my seat harness and a chest croll, which I used for safety while climbing back up. I climbed where the slot starts to widen into the dome room. In hindsight, we should have set a bolt here to use for both up and down climbing.

Eric found out later that Skull Cave has already been mapped even though the owner says it has not.

The second cave we visited is high in a road cut along US 160 Highway. From across the road, Eric said it looked like it might go. Jay, Eric, and I carried climbing gear and a rope to the top of the road cut. We rigged an anchor to rappel over the side. Eric used a cable ladder because he has no vertical gear. Jay went down the rope, Eric went down the ladder, and I stayed topside.

As it turns out, the cave is barely more than a shelter. It has no passage to speak of and no twilight zone. The whole thing was maybe 15 feet long. Eric named it Remnant Cave. Jay took some pictures and then they climbed out. We derigged and went back to OUL.

Both caves took us about 3 or 4 hours to visit including drive time from OUL. ●

# Corkscrew Cave

trip report and photo by Jerry Cindric

**B**rother Richard and I had unsuccessfully tried to find this cave twice in previous years. I asked Chuck Bitting in late 2005 about Corkscrew Cave, and he agreed to take me on a winter visit. Chuck is a geologist at Buffalo National River in Arkansas. He called and I joined him in late February. I had planned to camp at the Buffalo campgrounds near Jasper, but there was too much snow for me to get the van down and up the hilly road. Instead, I found a parking lot and slept in the back of the van. I met Chuck in Jasper in the morning, and he drove us in a government truck to the cave in Newton County. We had to put on tire chains before we got there. After a 10-15 minute walk, we reached the cave. The entrance is pretty obscure, but I was still embarrassed we could not find it earlier.

According to Chuck, Corkscrew Cave is about 218 feet deep, with around 2,500 feet of surveyed passage. He says the entire cave fits in a chunk of Boone limestone 1.36 acres in surface area, or 480 cubic yards in total extent. The cave acts as a chimney, sucking cold air in from the bottom and blowing warm air out the entrance, which is basically the highest point. This keeps the Indiana bats cool through the winter when they hibernate here.

Chuck uses HOBO Pro Temp/RH dataloggers in Corkscrew and 14 additional caves throughout the park to document temperature and humidity conditions of endangered bat roosts. He also uses HOBO light event recorders to document human disturbances. Sometime in the mid 1980s it was realized that Indiana bats used Corkscrew Cave as a roost. Since that time, the cave has been closed during the winter months. There are never very many Indiana bats in the cave, but they seem to be fairly stable in their numbers, unlike some of the other populations in the southern Ozarks. The Indiana bats were near the bottom. I helped Chuck change out the HOBOs and do some

bat counting. The HOBOs last nearly a year on a battery charge. Information is downloaded to a computer and can be downloaded into a Palm or other PDA in the cave, if needed.

We saw several additional species of bats, including Keen's bat, which are also



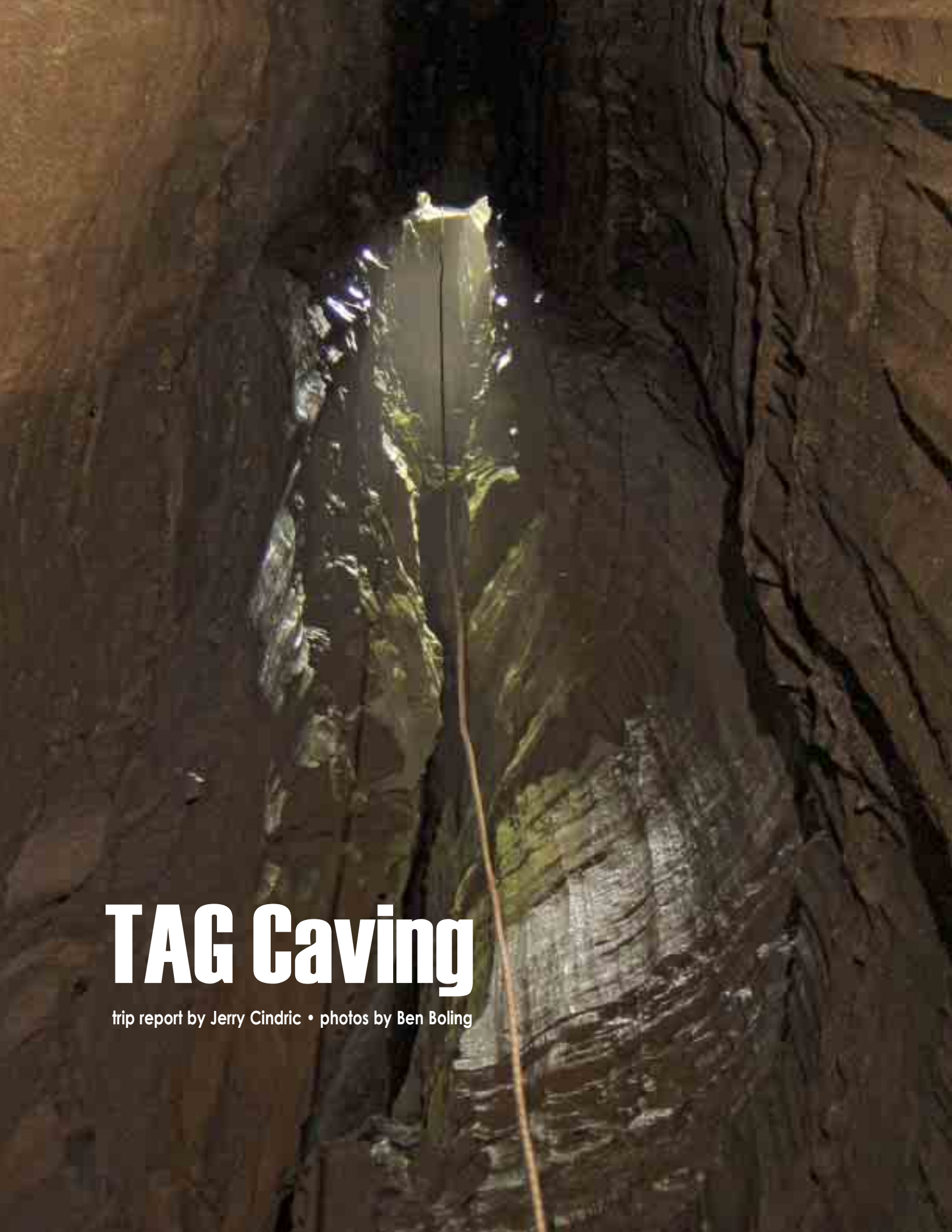
**Above:** Chuck Bitting in Corkscrew Cave (photo by Jerry Cindric).

known as Northern myotis or Northern Long Ear bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). If anyone sees clustering bats (i.e., more than two or three bats) in an Ozarks cave, chances are good they are listed as endangered species under the federal endangered species act and should not be disturbed.

Corkscrew is pretty sporty and rather small until near the bottom. Then it opens into some bigger rooms. No rope is needed. There was also a small stream at the bottom. We spent about half a day in the cave and then headed out.

I had planned to do some ridge walking the next day, but the snow kept me from getting where I wanted to go, so I headed back home and went fishing instead. It is good to be retired.

I would like to thank Chuck for taking me. It was good caving and informative. ●



# TAG Caving

trip report by Jerry Cindric • photos by Ben Boling



The boys from Bayer (where I worked before I retired) approached me about a cave trip to the Southeast U.S.A. We met a few times discussing the caves we would like to visit. Jim Watson, Ben Boling, and I all are members of Southeast Cave Conservancy (SCCi), which owns or leases many caves in the Southeast. While investigating the caves we would like to visit, I made contact with a young guy from Scottsboro, Alabama, who was interested in going caving with us. We made plans to meet him.

We only had two days of cave time and two days of windshield time, so we needed to keep the caves in close proximity to each other—or we would risk spending the entire trip behind the steering wheel. We decided to go to Glove Pit on the first day, which is south of Huntsville, drop in at the NSS Headquarters to see how our dues are spent, and then visit Valhalla Cave, east of Huntsville and Scottsboro. I got a permit to Valhalla from Buddy Lane, cave manager from SCCi. The second day we planned a through trip at Kennamer Cave, east of Huntsville.

We left in Ben's four-wheel-drive vehicle on Thursday, August 24, and arrived in Huntsville that night. We chose the cheap motel route vs. the camping route for this trip. Up for breakfast and on to Glove Pit. Using a combination of GPS and software, TOPO USA, we found the best parking spot. The cave was not far from some of Huntsville's southern burbs and not far off the road. After parking, the GPS took us directly there. John from Scottsboro was busy today and could not join us at Glove, but he would join us tomorrow.

Glove Pit has a classic entrance—a sink hole with a nice tree near the drop and a medium size opening. The crude map

**Previous page:** Looking up from the bottom of Glove Pit (photo by Ben Boling). **Upper left:** The entrance of Valhalla Cave (photo by Ben Boling). **Left:** Jim Watson and Jerry Cindric preparing to drop Valhalla Cave. Note the plaque on the right, which commemorates cavers who died at this site (photo by Ben Boling).

showed a drop of about 100 feet and a couple of rooms that might be enterable. I say this because, according to the map, to get to these rooms would require a difficult climb. The map was done by the Huntsville Grotto in the late 1960s. We tied to the tree and rappelled in. It was a nice drop; very scenic looking up from the bottom.

As expected, getting to the other rooms would be no easy task. We did bring a short rope, etrier, webbing, so we were somewhat prepared for the activity. It looked to be about a 40 foot climb to get to the next room over “cut your ass open” limestone. You know that stuff that over time water has sharpened to a razor’s edge. While Ben stayed at the original drop to take some photos, Jim and I checked out the climb. Because Jim is a better climber, he took the lead. Using everything we had at our disposal, Jim made it about 2/3 of the way up and decided to go further would be pretty risky. If it was virgin passage and we had more equipment, it would have been a push; not this time. Up and back out and to the car.

Our next stop was the NSS headquarters in Huntsville. We found it easily and walked around a bit. Before entering, we walked the fence around Shelta Cave which is right behind the headquarters and in an area with many homes. Headquarters was more modest than I would have guessed. Inside was one visitor from Wisconsin, someone from the NSS office staff, and Bill Torode, a long time caver who lives directly across the street from the office. We talked a bit, bought a few shirts and books, and left for Valhalla. One of the best purchases was a 1998 NSS convention guide book that Jim Watson bought. It had a map of Kennamer Cave. This would be helpful the next day.

We called our new found friend from Scottsboro who wanted to go to Valhalla with us. He also wanted to show us the entrance to Mega Well, which is near



**Top:** Jim Watson (top) and Jerry Cindric climbing in Glove Pit (photo by Ben Boling).  
**Right:** Ben Boling, Jim Watson, and Jerry Cindric in Kennamar Cave (photo by Ben Boling).



**Above:** Ben Boling, Jim Watson, and Jerry Cindric after exiting the stream entrance of Kennamar Cave (photo by Ben Boling).

Valhalla. Mega Well is a vertical cave that is off limits. John from Scottsboro knew the owner and had permission to view the entrance but not permission to enter. We met John in Scottsboro, and he had his young son with him. John did not have caving equipment with him but brought something quite interesting that I will get to later. We followed John to the Valhalla exit using the back roads. A short distance down the Valhalla road we stopped and started the long trek up the hill to Mega Well. After some time, we came to a karst area where Mega Well is obviously located. John had not been to the actual cave and neither had we, so the entrance eluded us. We wanted to get to Valhalla well before dark, and we could not cave Mega Well anyway, so we quickly gave up the search. Mega Well is a 300+ foot vertical cave with the pit inside the cave. There was a fatality there in 1991. You can find more about the accident by going to this web page: <http://www.stationr.org/rescues/megawell.htm>.

We returned to our vehicles. John had in his possession two binders with cave information. One described the vertical caves of Alabama. It was a bit dated, but each cave

entry had a description and rough location. The other book described the caves of Jackson County, Alabama. John lent us the books, which I have since returned to him. These books contained a lot of valuable information for future trips. John returned home with his son.

The drive to Valhalla is rough. It can be done with a two-wheel drive vehicle in dry weather only. The pit is near the road and is marked with a rock memorial to two 21-year-old guys who were crushed by a 30 foot x 30 foot rock in 1984 at the bottom of the pit while waiting to get their turn to ascend. The culprit boulder remains at the bottom as a reminder to those that cave that there is a danger in our sport. The pit is spectacular; one of nature's best. The descent and ascent of 227 ft should be savored and not hurried. The cave bells out from the entrance with walls that show the work of water eroding and dissolving limestone for countless eons. We did not go through the one mile cave but just enjoyed the drop. I had been through the cave previously, and it just does not match the entrance drop.

The next day we planned a through trip at Kennamer Cave. Richard Cindric, Terry DeFraties and I had visited the cave on an earlier trip, but we had not had sufficient time for a through trip. Kennamer is in the

same general area as Fern Cave, the longest cave in Alabama, and has six entrances and well over two miles of cave. Prior to walking to the cave, we took a photo of the map from Jim's book, which would be invaluable on the trip. We entered one of the three entrances at the top of the mountain (30 minute walk). Two entrances are stream passages down the hill and there is one pit entrance that we did not see. The cave is sporty: large rooms, big breakdown, crawling, climbing—all fun caving stuff. After about three hours, we were past the part Richard, Terry, and I had experienced. We got to a point we needed to descend about 50 feet to continue on. We saw a crumby rope that had accident written all over it. We had no vertical equipment with us. We spent a long time exploring many possible ways to make the descent and finally decided upon one to try. We were not in the mood to return the way we came. Although a little dicey, we scrambled down to the stream passage. From here it was low, wide, and wet. Of the two stream exits, one was decidedly shorter and was our goal. We just needed to find the correct turn off to the right. After much slogging around, I tried a turn off that went a long way but did not pan out. I returned and we found another turn off that was correct. We exited after about nine hours in the cave. A couple of notes about the stream passage: first, there were many, many cave crawfish in the water, and second, never, ever go in this part of the cave if a hard thunderstorm is predicted, as you will drown.

All in all, it was a nice SCCi trip. Too bad these caves are so far away. ●

# Rollins Cave Captured on Video

article by Gary Johnson

During 2004 and 2005, Ronald Jaeger organized several trips into Rollins Cave in Pulaski County. Ron used these trips to produce a video, soliciting many helpers to carry lights and equipment through the cave. Sean Melton served as the principal video photographer, and Rick Hines constructed the lamps. In late 2006, Ron completed a first run at editing the footage, and he distributed his version on CD to all the participants.

This video is 65 minutes long, and it's titled *The Work of Dark Water: Rollins Cave*. It recreates the experience of caving at Rollins. That means the video isn't simply a collection of the cave's prettiest sights. You also see cavers trudging through mud, pushing themselves through crawlways, climbing up slippery clay slopes, and navigating narrow fissures.



The Rollins Cave video is Ronald Jaeger's first effort at producing a video. He wanted a personal means of recalling this cave, which he had enjoyed for over forty years, ever since his first entry during a stay at Fort Leonard Wood.

"Knowing my caving days were numbered (I'm 69 years old)," says Ron, "I engaged enough volunteers (there were twenty of us in all from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, and Texas) over a two-year period for four trips into the cave to get enough video to edit into the hour-long result. I doubt that I will ever actually enter the cave again."

Because he wanted to ensure that anyone who participated would also appear in the final product, he made sure to include at least one camera shot of all the participants. So the video is probably longer than it would have been otherwise. Ron is now in the process of tightening the video's editing as he creates a 15-minute version for non-cavers.

Ron says the video's "story" divides into two parts—effort and reward.

"The first half is a straight forward showing of the size and extent of the cave and the exertion required to go through it," said Ron. "The second half is very different in feeling. It begins with the beautiful room at the end of the left side corridor. The sequence is cut to give the feeling of a caver gazing around this room."

In merging the videos from four trips, Ron organized the scenes to be faithful to the chronology of a caving trip (until the last scenes). So the completed video serves as a fairly accurate document of what it's like to visit Rollins Cave.

Ron originally intended to provide narration for the video, but he eventually felt that narration would be redundant because the images told the story. For example, on the trip into the cave, the camera looks down at a narrow slot in the rock as a group of cavers passes. Later, as the group exits the cave, the camera looks down at them, this time following as they move in the other direction through the slot. Visual cues like this allow the video to communicate its story with an absolute minimum of words.

If you are interested in seeing this video, you should contact one of the participants. From KCAG, the following people participated: Bill Gee, Jeff Page, and Rick Hines. The video is not available commercially and, according to Ron, can be freely distributed. ●

**Frame captures from the Rollins Cave video:** (left, top) on the road to Rollins Cave, (left, bottom) Ron Jaeger crawling in Rollins Cave, (right, top three photos) formations in Rollins Cave, (right, next to bottom) Bill Gee attempting to negotiate a slippery slope, and (right, bottom) looking out the entrance.

