

The background of the cover is a photograph of a cave interior. Numerous long, thin, yellowish-brown stalactites hang from the ceiling. The floor is covered with smaller, rounded stalagmites of similar color. The lighting is warm and focused on the cave formations.

The

The Kansas City Area Grotto

Volume 24

Issue 3

June 2010

Guano

**Catching bats in Barbados
Elemental Experiences
New Mexico Caving**

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Events

August 2-6

National Speleological Society annual convention. Essex, Vermont.
<http://www.nss2010.com/default.php> for information and registration.

August 14

Carroll Cave Conservancy annual members meeting. 10:00am at the Mid-County Fire Department station in Camdenton.

October 22-24

Fall MVOR. Camp Oko-Tipi near Hannibal, MO. Sponsored by PEG and Choteau Grotto.

The Guano

June 2010, Volume 24, Issue 3

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. Please submit photos in JPG or PNG format.

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

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

Meetings are held monthly. Check <http://www.kcgrotto.org> for dates and places.

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

Not only is White Nose Syndrome (WNS) sucking up most of the oxygen in our grotto meetings, it's also sucking up all the space in these President's messages. I wish I had something more pleasant to talk about ... but I don't.

Since the last issue of the Guano appeared, a bat infected with the *Geomyces destructans* (the fungus that causes the "white" in WNS) has been confirmed in Pike County, Missouri, near Hannibal. This bumped the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC's) response plan to Phase Four. Then, two weeks later, five gray bats (*Myotis grisescens*) were confirmed with the disease in Shannon County, on the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, by Missouri State University bat biologist Lynn Robbins and his crew. They marked the first confirmed affliction by WNS of this widely migrating, endangered species. These researchers actually found that 11 of 13 captured grays appeared infected, but only five were sampled – all positives.

At the June 1-2 WNS Working Group meeting I attended on your behalf, MDC cave biologist Dr. Bill Elliott alluded to tissue samples collected from other Missouri sites that are currently undergoing analysis. WNS, propagating faster than everyone's worst-case scenario, has now been confirmed as far west as northwestern Oklahoma, in yet another species (*Myotis velifer*, the cave myotis). Dr. Elliott will be announcing a Cave Stewardship program at the September 18th meeting of the Missouri Speleological Survey in Rolla, when we'll find what role, if any, there will be for organized cavers to help MDC address this panzootic. I'll keep you informed.

Yours in (fungus-contaminated) Karst,

Jim Cooley

Cover Photo

This flowstone formation is in the Hell Hole area of Ft. Stanton Cave in New Mexico. Photo by Rick Hines.

July 2008. Catching bats in Barbados. Article by Jerry Cindric. Photos by Jerry Cindric and Gary Kwiecinski.

Due to some previous caving trips on the island of Barbuda, I became an e-mail acquaintance of Dr. Scott Peterson. Scott is a biology professor from South Dakota State University. He also has led many bat research trips to Caribbean islands in recent years. His work on Montserrat has been especially deep. He and his colleagues have produced several important papers concerning bat distribution

and densities on the islands. I provided a miniscule amount of information for a Barbuda paper he published.

I got an invitation to help out during the summer 2008 bat activities. The 2008 trip included Barbados, St. Lucie and Montserrat. Since I had other commitments, I could only arrange to be gone one week in July, which was the week on Barbados.

I arrived late afternoon on Saturday and met up with

Dr. Gary Kwiecinski at the airport. Gary had worked with Scott many times in the past on these trips. He is a professor at the University of Scranton and has done much bat work in the US Virgin Islands.

We stayed at some apartments in Holetown about five minutes from the shore. By Sunday there were four

Below: Karst area on the island of Barbados. Photo by Gary Kwiecinski.





more of us including Dr. Hugh Genoways, a well known biologist and Doctor emeritus at the museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. The other three in attendance were graduate assistants/students from various universities (Jeff, Roxy and Brandon). Everyone but me had field bat experience.

I learned that each day will generally be the same. We will have two teams and go to different areas on the island. We will head out about 2:00 p.m. or so each

Above: *Myotis martiniquensis*, Swartz's myotis. **Right:** *Monophyllus plethodon*, long tongued bat. Photos by Gary Kwiecinski.

day and set up nets so we will be ready when bats start flying before dusk. We will stay until things slow down (11:00 p.m. or so), then start counting, weighing and sexing the caught bats. The next morning, everyone will get together and process the bats that we kept from the night before. Hugh had obtained the permits for keeping a certain number of bats of certain species for studies.

Day by Day:

Sunday - Gary, Brandon and I head out to the east side of the island, near the town of Merricks. We are looking for some ponds noted on the topo. The roads are very narrow and driving is on the left side, British style.

The bat nets are much like those used to catch birds:



metal poles and mesh nets. Generally the insectivorous bats are the first out followed by fruit bats, nectar-eating bats and fish bats. The first night is slow: no insect bats and only three fruit bats, all *Artibeus jamaicensis* (AJ). We take down about 10:30 p.m., measure and release our bats and head back to the apartments. The information recorded for each bat is sex, species, weight, arm length, rough age and any unusual characteristics. The other group did better, catching about 15 bats, all fruit bats which include AJs and *Brachyphylla cavernarum* (BC). The bats to be processed are kept in cloth bags overnight. The BCs stay noisy all night.

Monday - The others come down in the morning and we process the bats. Roxy has all the stuff. Tissue samples are taken: muscle, liver and a test strip in blood to test later for viruses.

This day we (same team) are to do some netting up north. We are to check out Animal Flower Cave, which is near the coast, and go from there. We have lunch at the Chefette (fast food) and head out. We contact Jose at the cave-pay cave. He says he has not seen bats there. We see a blow hole near the shore and there are also some artificial ponds

there which lure birds for shooting. They have decoys of shorebirds so it looks like they will shoot anything.

We end up finding a gully/dry stream near Bromefield in the northwest area of the island. We set one net over the bridge and four more down in the gully. The nets come in various lengths from six meters up. We catch quite a few little insectivorous bats, *Molossus molossus*, and fruit bats (AJ). We keep some and measure and let the others go. There are a lot of people walking

and driving by. Most are curious about what we are doing. We get back about 11:30 p.m. and crash.

Tuesday - The other group gets quite a few bats and we process them in the morning. They also have BCs. Today we will all go east and a bit north of where we were on Monday to an area near Bathsheba. This area has a higher elevation and we get in some forest near a cliffy area. We can't really see the cliffs for all the vegetation. This looks more like Montserrat: elephant



Right: Brandon Bales checking one of the bat nets. Photo by Jerry Cindric.

ears, philodendron, some bananas, big trees and steeper terrain. We set up six nets. I set up two by myself. We get two new species, *Myotis nigricans* (MN) (tiny/insectivorous) and *Monophyllus plethodon* (MP) (nectar bat), besides BC and AJ. Again we keep some and measure and let others go. We are back by 11:30 p.m. after stopping by the Chefette. The other group again gets more. We keep the bats on the porch tonight to avoid the noise.

Wednesday - There are many bats to process (32). My job is to weigh and measure forearm length and record. I get a call from a guy named Allen Scott and we set up some caving for Friday morning.



Above: *Brachyphylla cavernarum*, lesser Antillean fruit bat, note parasite above eye. **Left:** *Molossus molossus*, velvety free-tail bat. Photos by Gary Kwiecinski.

Today I go with Scott, Brandon and Jeff to Jack-In-The-Box gully, which is a collapsed cave system. We go to a bridge which goes over the gully and head down. It is very obvious that the cave collapsed as there are formations and little side rooms along the gully. At 4:30 p.m. there are even some little bats flying (MN). Scott and others set up the nets. Scott suggests that I walk up the gully. It is quite long, maybe $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and pretty similar the whole way. The side



walls can be as high as 50-60 feet. Eventually I reach a Y and go left. It changes to more like a ditch and ends at a fence. I go left again and am at the top of the hill. Harrison's Cave (commercial) is supposed to be near here but I don't see it. I reach a road and walk back on the road. Along the way I see a mongoose run across the road. I get back just as they have set up. It is busy all night: AJs (70), BCs (20) and MPs (10) in 5 nets. We weigh and measure those we

release, then back to Chefette and beer. I learn Jeff is working with iguanas in Central America.

Thursday - Up at 7:00 a.m. and fix coffee. Today we are going to check out Cave Hill in the northeast area of the island. It is quite near the ocean on the Atlantic side. We do our processing first. We still have caught only five species. We meet a local guy named Patrick who works at the apartments and lives up there. He also grew up

Above: Gary Kwiecinski and Alan Scott in Cole's Cave. Photo by Jerry Cindric.

there. Brandon, Gary and I are together. There are some spectacular views from the ocean cliffs and I get some good pics. There is a pinnacle near the ocean that is especially nice. Cave Hill turns out not to be cavy, just some shelter caves that do have some bats (AJs). Gary uses a butterfly type net with long extensions to reach up to the crevices and we use a second pole to move the bats

around and he catches some in a couple of areas. These bats have harems so we catch a male, three females and three babies in one hole. They are cute little things. We head down to some ponds, setting two nets at each. It is too windy so we don't catch much. Patrick fishes quite a bit there, catching small and big fish, hammerheads which can be several hundred pounds, other sharks, conger eels and smaller flying fish with nets. There are many toads by the ponds. We get back and eat at a roadside vendor. Good food for \$10 US.

Friday - Today is cave day. We meet Allan Scott at the Chefette in Holstown. Gary and I follow in the Suzuki and we head to Cole's Cave. Allan knows Keith Laurie who was my contact via Brian Cooper (Antigua). Allan has an Adventure Company. He does cave tours, zip line and hiking for people (mostly tourists). I get the cave GPS location, then we head down a slope to the cave entrance. It was once gated. There are at least three entrances. It supposedly meets up with Harrison's Cave, the show cave on the island. Once in the entrance we are swarmed with thousands of little flies which are attracted to the lights. There are a fair number of bats (BCs) and passages that goes left and right. We check both ways. We

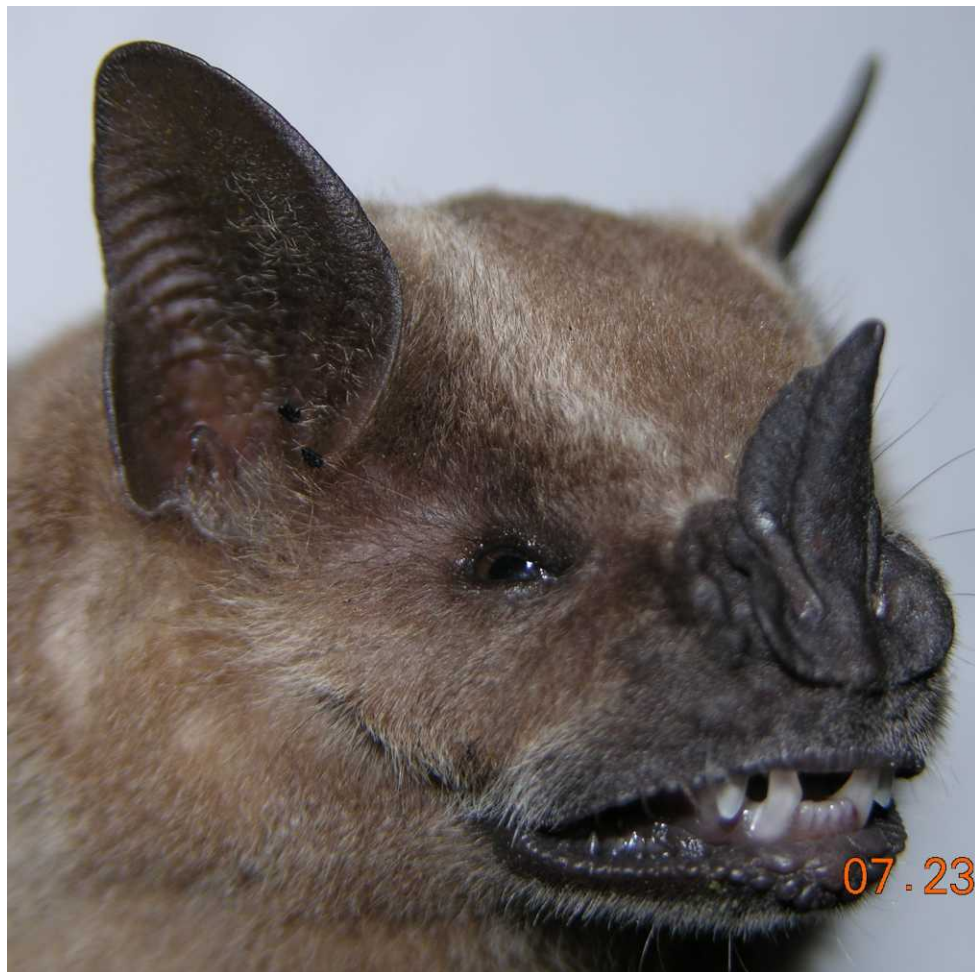
head up the left passage and the flies are gone.

There are many crickets in the front of the cave and an area teeming with roaches on the ceiling. Gary catches three bats with the butterfly net. We leave Gary behind and do some climbing into a stream area. There are many dams with pools. Some pools reach mid-chest but the

MP. We keep only 3 bats and weigh and measure the others. We eat again at the roadside place and I have BBQ pig tails. They are kind of fatty but good.

Saturday - Up at 8:00 a.m. We process more bats and three rats that Roxy has

Below: *Artibeus jamaicensis*, Jamaican fruit bat. Photo by Gary Kwiecinski.



temperature feels great. It is a pretty nice cave.

Later Jeff, Gary and I go to a gully which is only a 10 minute drive away. Some kids walk down with us and we set five nets. For the night we get 80 AJ and 1

caught. I go out and get a couple of gifts since I am leaving tomorrow. The rooms are \$71 per night and I think the vehicle is about the same. I have not had time to get in the ocean and am leaving tomorrow.

Today we (Jeff, Gary and I) head to the east coast again, toward Conset Bay. We drive up a farming area with bananas and other produce. The road ends and we turn around. Two guys come driving up and confront us asking what we are doing there. One is flashing a pistol (maybe ganja up here?). It was tense for a short time. We grab a beer at a local establishment and head down to the east side of the bay with fishing boats. We set some nets up by a small stream. While clearing some brush, Jeff accidentally hits a water line which starts

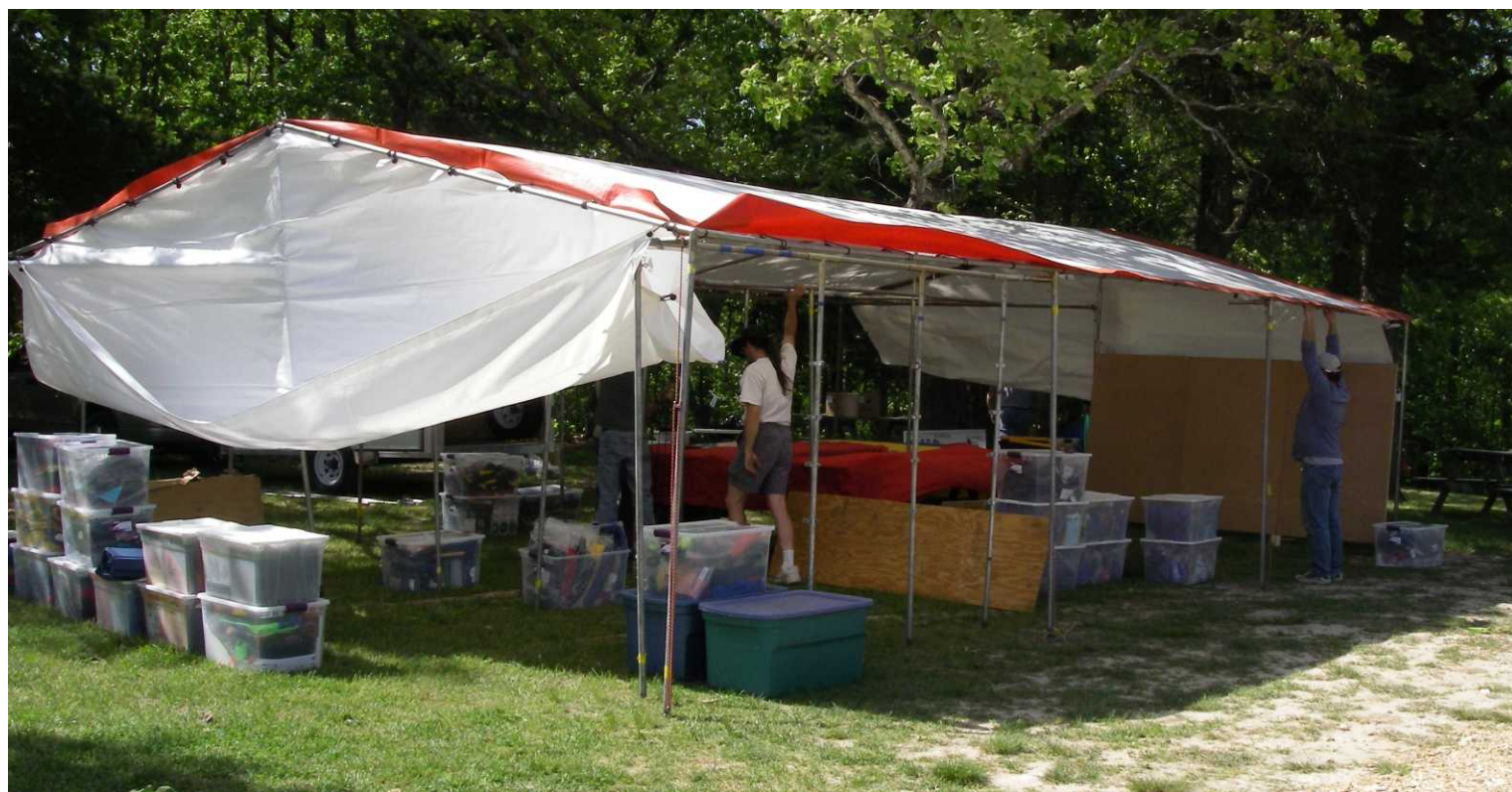
Below: Setting up the On Rope 1 tent at MVOR. Bruce packs a lot of gear in his trailer. The wind was blowing hard, but we managed to get the tent up and anchored. **Right:** A small pond in a remote section of the MVOR campground. Photos by Bill Gee

spraying. After slowing the spray, we take down the nets and head out. We go back to the area we went last night and set up a net under a bridge covering a side passage. We catch four MN before calling it a night.

Sunday - Compared to Barbuda, Barbados is too crowded for me: 300,000 residents plus many tourists. The people and drivers are

polite but difficult for me to understand. They probably say the same about me. Nothing much natural is left on the island except possibly Jack-in-the-box gully. If I come back I will try to go to Bowmanston Cave.

Overall, this was a great learning experience for me. I was able to work with some of the most knowledgeable bat biologists around.



"Exposed to the Elements" by Lorely Lather. Spring 2010 MVOR. Photos by Bill Gee.

This recent MVOR was sponsored by Daedalus Grotto at Green Country Canoe Campground near St. James, Missouri, only 13 miles from our home. We could have spent the nights at home, but we preferred to camp with the other 350+ people and enjoy the environment.

"The environment?" you ask. "Do you mean you like the partying and socializing? Do you mean you like camping out in questionable weather? Which do you like?"

"I like both," I say, "But I tend to especially like the wordless dwelling in an out-



Above: A view out over the forest from the far west end of the campground.
Below: Putting final touches on the bonfire. Photos by Bill Gee



door space, close to air, fire, water and earth." Perhaps this is because many years ago I backpacked on the Appalachian Trail and lived close to the elements for 100 days. The memory of that experience is refreshed by camping at MVOR. Perhaps it is because I don't take time to walk through a meadow or woods in the dark at my home or perhaps it is because I rarely witness large bonfires in my day-to-day life. Certainly sharing my enjoyment of the elements with friends amplifies the



Left: The center of the fire was a large section of a honey locust tree. The thorns are around three inches long. Photo by Bill Gee

outdoor experience. Here are the moments of interacting with the four elements at MVOR:

AIR-- It was wildly windy on Friday as we set up. Rain was anticipated. Clouds overhead tumbled rapidly. Ron tied all eight poles of our canopy down to stakes. The roof snapped persistently against the metal poles sup-

porting it. There was an occasional howling sound as the wind whipped around; people spoke up to be heard over it. As it grew dark, the clouds seemed more dense and deeply gray. The wind continued to gust erratically. (In fact, a tornado was reported within six miles of the MVOR site that night.) I felt this contact to be as close as

a person can get to pure, elemental air without struggling against it, still being safe and comfortable.

WATER-- Rain began with widely spaced large drops making noise on our canopy roof. A flushing from the sky soon followed. Rain poured down, overwhelming the horizontal push of the wind, falling hard and fast downward. Friends had gathered under our canopy, laughing and talking. A wall of water poured down just beyond the edge of our sheltered area. I reached my hand out palm flat, as if to touch a solid structure, determining the edge by the point where my hand was only dampened by mist, but not by water. I felt this contact to be as close as a person can get to pure, elemental water without being immersed in it, still being safe and comfortable.

EARTH-- We watched our tent being drenched by the rain. We'd set it up just behind the canopy on a grassy lawn. It is a new REI dome; a zipper blew out on our 15 year-old REI. I had loved sleeping in a tent when hiking on the Appalachian Trail. The fact that there are mere inches between my sleeping body and the earth always intrigues me. I go to sleep

dreaming that the earth has a pulse, an energy, and that I sleep in union with that pulse when I sleep in a tent. I acknowledge people cannot live steadily in tents; we are too frail for that. Generally, humans need a protected, dry, and clean nightly shelter in order to flourish. Those two nights at MVOR, our tent was dry, clean, and protected enough for a good night's sleep listening to the earth's pulse. I felt this contact to be as close as a person can get to pure, elemental earth without being muddled or roughened by it, still being safe and comfortable.

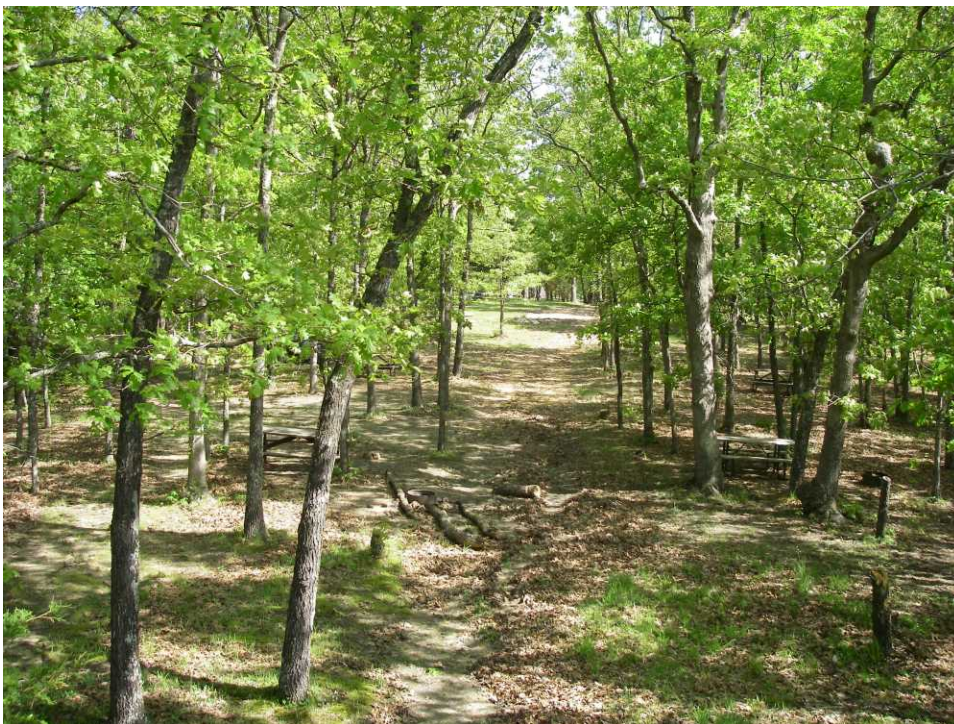
FIRE-- Daedalus Grotto had hauled in an old thorny honey locust trunk to be the center of their bonfire. It burned slowly and became a huge ten-foot standing ember. The tree's burned-out



knot holes appeared as eyes. Indeed, such an ember seems to make fire have substance rather than being an ever shifting series of flames. Burning logs extended somewhat horizontally outward so that Micki Nelson and I stood

Above: Greg Small helps to hold up the On Rope 1 tent against the wind. At this point the wind is blowing against the roof trying to collapse it.

Below left: This is the far west end of the campground. Quite a few people came down here to camp under the trees. Photos by Bill Gee



close to the blaze, warming our faces, then our backs, as Saturday evening wound down. "Look, Micki," I said, "Fire is the final pure element we can come very close to without being consumed, and still be safe and comfortable." She laughed to hear me repeat the focus I'd been telling her about all weekend.

I like MVOR for the wordless interactions with life forces which happen in addition to the warmth of seeing many friends. I like contact with pure, elemental life.

Caving in New Mexico. April 2010. Article by Jerry Cindric. Photos by Rick Hines.

In a normal year I would have planned a spring trip to TAG country, however, with WNS issues east of us, I thought it best to head another direction. After many calls and emails, I lined up some caving opportunities in New Mexico.

I caught a ride in the Rick Hines van. Rick, Kay Hines and I drove directly to the BLM bunkhouse near Ft. Stanton Cave. We left at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, April 16 and arrived 15 hours later to grab a three hour nap. It pretty much rained the entire drive.

Saturday - The NSS Southwest Regional was this weekend and held at the BLM bunkhouse. The business meeting was held at 9:00 a.m. and afterwards the fun began. Ft. Stanton Cave is famous for a new area discovered in recent years named "Snowy River". The area is gated and tightly controlled. To get there, a shaft of about 35 feet was dug from an upper level to a crawl passage which leads to Snowy River. The dig is supported by a wooden structure. The wood support is a short term fix and is to be replaced this year in a series of work trips. The new sup-

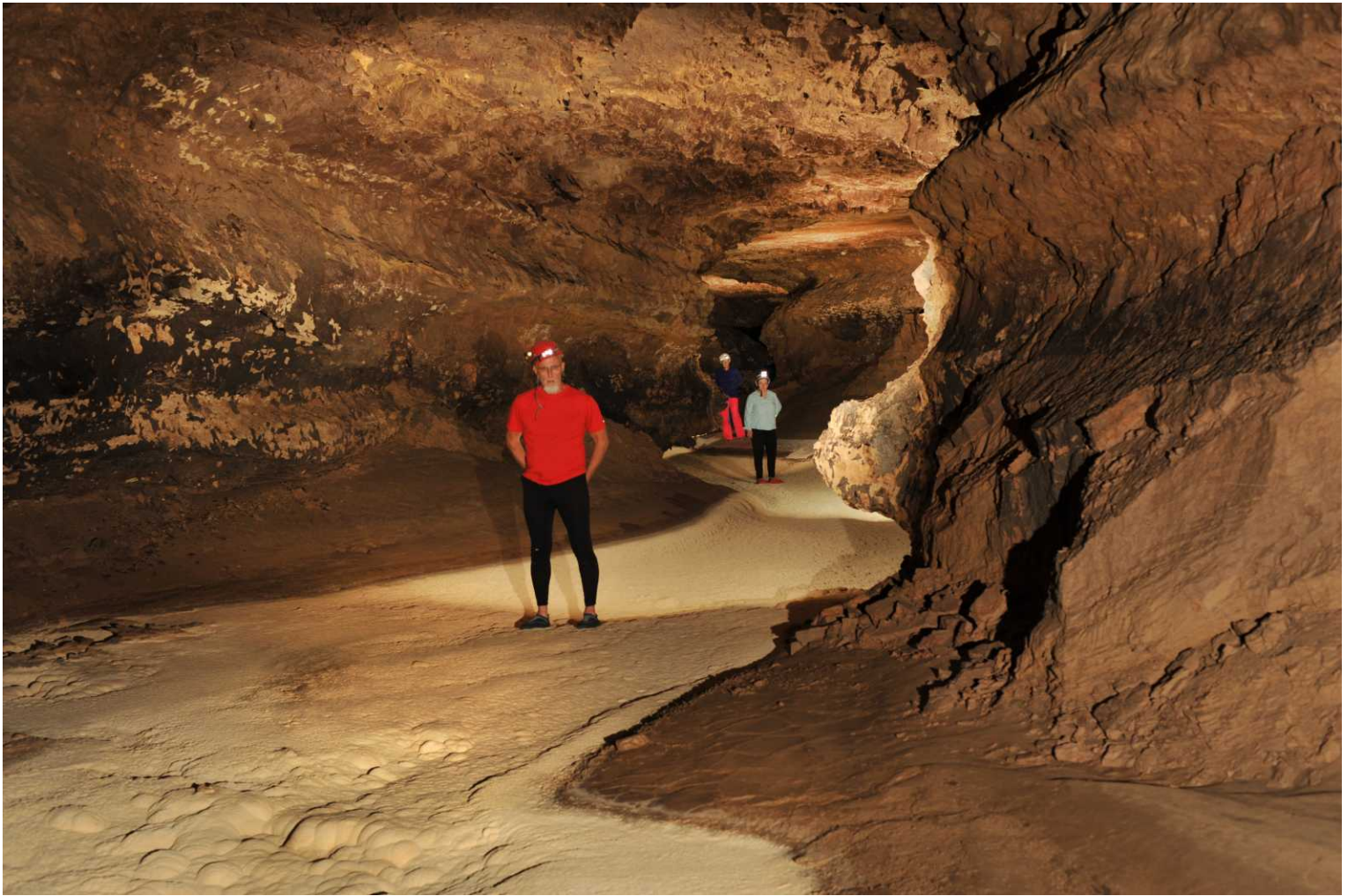


porting structure will be stainless steel frame and plastic. A detailed drawing was posted in the bunkhouse.

For the Southwest Region-

Above: Kay Hines in clean clothes standing in Snowy River of Ft. Stanton Cave. There is a dedicated changing area where everyone changes everything before going onto the formation. **Below:** A view of the water lines in Snowy River. Photos by Rick Hines.





al, cement to be used for the stainless support was to be hauled into a spot above the dig. Prior to the SWR, people had placed cement in bags of about ten pounds each. Participants hauled as many bags as they could to the site for as many trips as they could. I think it was about a mile trip into the site, mostly walking. There were hundreds of bags and I would guess about 30 people hauling cement. After Saturday, almost all the cement was in place for future work trips. By evening, the other two of our team had arrived.

Above: Jerry Cindric (foreground), Kay Hines (middle) and Evelyn Townsend (E.T.) (background) standing in Snowy River. **Below:** A closeup of the calcite lining in Snowy River. Photos by Rick Hines.





Left: An example of the gypsum chandelier formations in Torgac Cave. Photo by Rick Hines.

the BLM, was our trip leader. He is a friend of a friend of Ken. Knutt used his Sunday to help us out, a very generous move.

Torgac was about 1.5 hours away, right in the middle of nowhere. It is a gypsum cave located in relatively flat, arid, prairie terrain. The cave was full of gypsum chandeliers and other gypsum flowers and extrusions. It was like the Chandelier Ballroom in Lechuguilla only much easier to get to. Torgac also contains some unusual formations called gypsum trays, found in only a couple of caves in the world. These trays often have stalactites growing underneath, forming “claw” shapes.

It was a fairly short cave, just a couple of thousand feet. It also contained a quite large room called the Football Field. Mark, Ken and I helped Rick take many photos of this fantastic cave.

Most cavers from the SWR had left by Sunday evening and the bunkhouse was now open. I stayed in one of the beds for the next two nights. The bunkhouse was a nice place for cavers. It was well equipped with restrooms, showers, washer/dryer, TV/DVD, furnace, bunk beds, full kitchen and outside was

Mark Lankford drove his beast of an F250 from Harrison, Arkansas, picking up Ken Lyon in Oklahoma along the way.

Sunday - We had a permit for Torgac (Targac) Cave from the Bureau of Land

Management. Torgac is gated and trips are allowed only accompanied by a trip leader. Only one trip per month is allowed and then only for half a year. A caver from Roswell, Knutt Peterson, who also works for



Above: The entrance to Torgac Cave. From left to right - Knutt Peterson, Ken Lyon, Mark Lankford and Jerry Cindric. **Below:** A close up of gypsum flowers in Torgac Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.

a WNS decontamination station which we used after each trip.

Monday - We had a permit for Ft. Stanton Cave for the Hell Hole section. Ft. Stanton is the third longest cave in NM. We had to negotiate through the Crystal Crawl and Hell Hole to get to the formations in the back. Also we had to open three locked gates to get there. Along the way, Rick took some nice photos of selenite needles.

It took all four of us to get the photo gear to the back of the cave; crawling and stoop-





ing 3,000 feet. Besides the camera, Rick had eight slave flashes. We were given some good directions and were pretty lucky to make it to our destination. In the back, the formations were very colorful: blues, purples, oranges and yellows. Again, more photos. We had a long trip back, ending with some bruised and bloodied knees.

Tuesday - Mike Bilbo of the BLM had been issuing the permits for us. For Tuesday, we had a permit for Crockett's Cave, also a gypsum cave. We had a big problem today, however since it had rained hard and Mike said the road to Crockett's would be impassable. It looked like

we needed an alternate plan. Mike's thought was that since we had helped carry cement perhaps we would like to visit the Snowy River section of Ft. Stanton. He said fewer

Above: The Football Field room of Torgac Cave. Left to right - Jerry Cindric, Mark Lankford, Knutt Peterson, Ken Lyon. **Below:** Knutt Peterson looking at calcite crystals in Torgac Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.



Right: Jerry Cindric among the gypsum chandelier formations in Torgac Cave. Photo by Rick Hines.

than 100 people had actually been on Snowy River. We reluctantly said yes (ha!).

Hank Boudinot and Evelyn Townsend (aka E.T.) of the Gypsy Underground Grotto were staying at the bunk-house and available to lead us. Kay could also join us today. We had planned for restoration work, so we had non-marking slippers with us. We also had to wear clean synthetic clothes. We made the trip to the dig and dropped down the ladders at the wooden structure to a passage called Mud Turtle passage. This passage is a crawl/stoop that leads to Snowy River.

At the intersection with Snowy River, a clean plastic sheet was down to separate the “dirty” area from the “clean” area. You basically changed trying to keep all dirt off of the plastic. From here, with clean stuff on, we were able to walk on to Snowy River. Snowy River is a meandering stream of calcite that goes for about 4.5 miles - so far. When walking on the calcite we were instructed to walk near the center of the dry stream.

We were able to go about a quarter of a mile up and down stream, taking many photos. Rick had us carry a bunch of slaves/strobes to



get some great pictures. We found out that Snowy River is occasionally wet which causes the calcite to replenish itself. The water must be saturated with calcium. In the quarter mile we saw some areas that were de-

pressed and must be like a four foot deep pond when water is present. This was really an amazing site and we were quite fortunate to get a chance to see it. Many thanks to Mike, Hank and E.T. for getting us there. We



Above: The crew at Snowy River. Front - Ken Lyon and Rick Hines. Middle - Jerry Cindric, Evelyn Townsend (E.T.), Kay Hines. Back - Hank Boudinot, Mark Lankford. **Below:** Breakdown in the Hell Hole area of Ft. Stanton Cave. Front to back - Ken Lyon, Jerry Cindric and Mark Lankford. Photos by Rick Hines.

later found out that two days after our visit Snowy River had 12 inches of water.

We now had to pack up and head down to the Carlsbad area, about three hours away. We got to White City rather late and settled in.

Wednesday - We had conflicting permits for today. We had a Sentinel Cave permit in the High Guads as well as permits for caves in the Slaughter Canyon area. We decided to go to Slaughter Canyon. We visited Christmas Tree Cave as well as Helen's Cave. I had been to Christmas Tree be-





Above: Mark Lankford admires a formation in the Hell Hole area of Ft. Stanton Cave. **Below:** A spider web on formations in Christmas Tree Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.



fore but not Helen's.

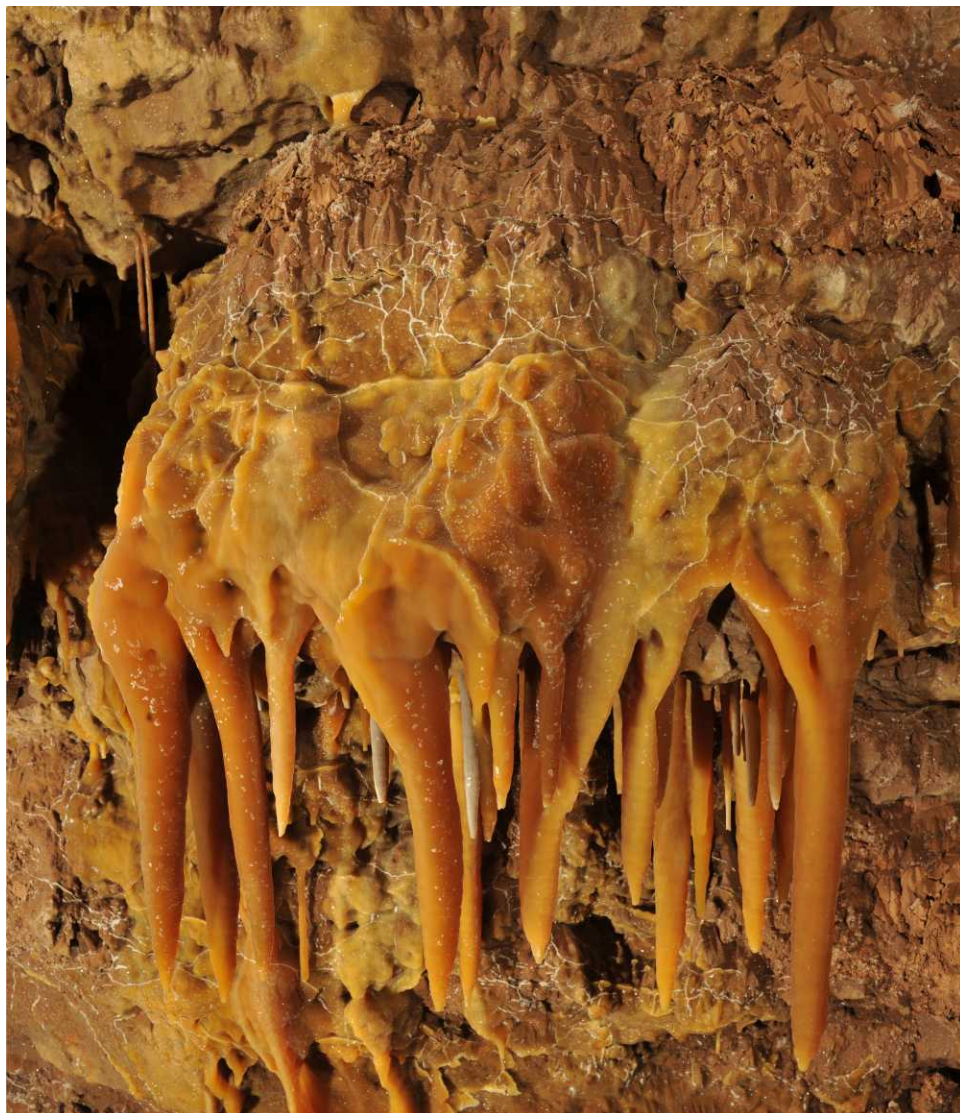
Whereas the weather near Ft. Stanton was cool and mostly wet, the desert near Carlsbad was dry and high in the 80s. The hike to Christmas Tree is mostly in a very picturesque canyon to a point and then up about 600 vertical feet to the cave. There is a short drop into the cave. Kay joined us for the hike and the other four of us dropped in. Christmas Tree is highly decorated and known for its namesake formation. We spent about 1.5 hours touring this small cave and Rick again took

many great photos.

From here, we crossed the canyon and found Helen's Cave. It was somewhat close to Ogle Cave. Rick decided to head back to the vehicles with Kay, taking some spring desert flower photos. Ken, Mark and I dropped the 50 or so foot drop into the cave, tying off on a spindly tree. Helen's is another shorter cave with some nice formations. We spent about an hour looking around and headed out.

Back at the vehicles, a couple of biologists walked in from the canyon. They had been looking for Mexican Spotted Owls in Carlsbad Caverns National Park and had been out a few days and nights.

For the final leg of our trip, we needed to travel to an area called Texas Camp in the High Guadalupe Mountains. Although not that far from Slaughter Canyon, it takes about two hours to get



Above: A formation in the Hell Hole area of Ft. Stanton Cave. **Below:** Blooming prickly pear cactus. Photos by Rick Hines.



there by vehicle. In our case it took more. Mark's 4x4 high clearance truck had no trouble but Rick's van had some issues with the bad roads. A week before, there had been very heavy rains and the road in the valley going up to Texas Camp was badly washed away. We had to get out many times and work on the road. To compound things, we drove through some light rain with nasty lightning. We arrived after dark and got set up for the next several days.

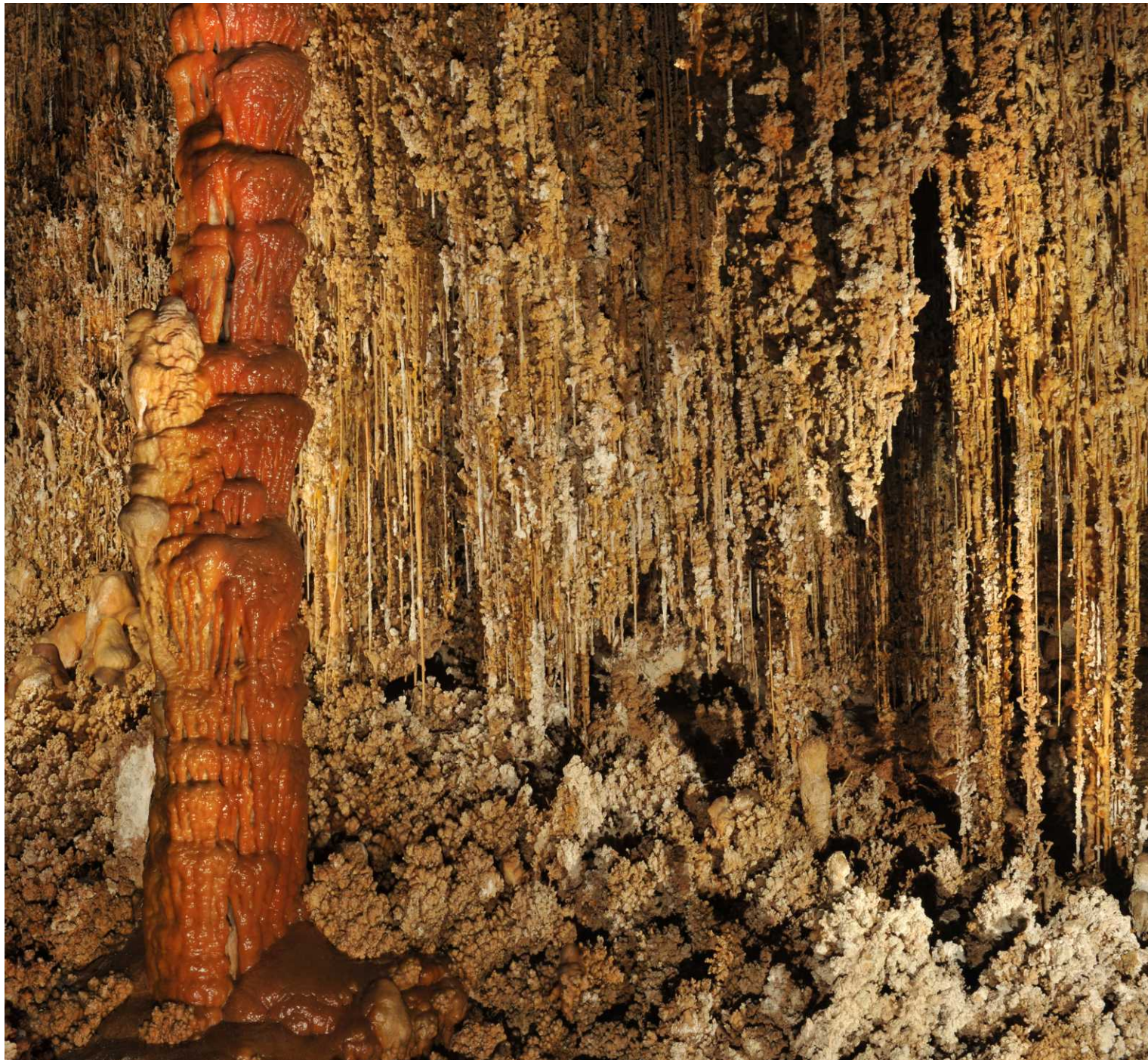
Overnight it turned cold and windy. This was just the start.

Thursday - Ken, Mark and I loaded up Mark's truck for the nasty 3.5 mile drive to the trailhead to Deep Cave. Deep Cave requires a couple of ropes of about 150 feet and 350 feet. We used Ken's 400 foot for the long rope. The hike is nearly an hour. Cavers just need to make sure they find the turn off the main trail to get to the cave. Although the entrance is huge, it can be easily missed when hiking from above.



Above: A desert plant in full bloom. **Below:** The namesake formation in Christmas Tree Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.





Ken and I had both been there before so we made it with no problem. The 150 foot rope is used to get up and down a talus slope to reach the main rig point. The 300 foot-plus drop is about half on steep slope and about half free fall. It ends

on a massive breakdown pile. Of note is an old 1930's wire and wood ladder which is mostly still intact. Although not wet by Missouri/Arkansas standards, since there had been a lot of rain recently, the cave was wetter than my previous trip. The

Above: Part of the Speleogasm Room in Pink Panther Cave. Photo by Rick Hines.



Above: Tammy Tucker demonstrates proper cave cleaning technique and attire in Hidden Cave. **Above right:** Close-up of formations in Pink Panther Cave. **Below right:** Jerry Cindric in Pink Panther Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.



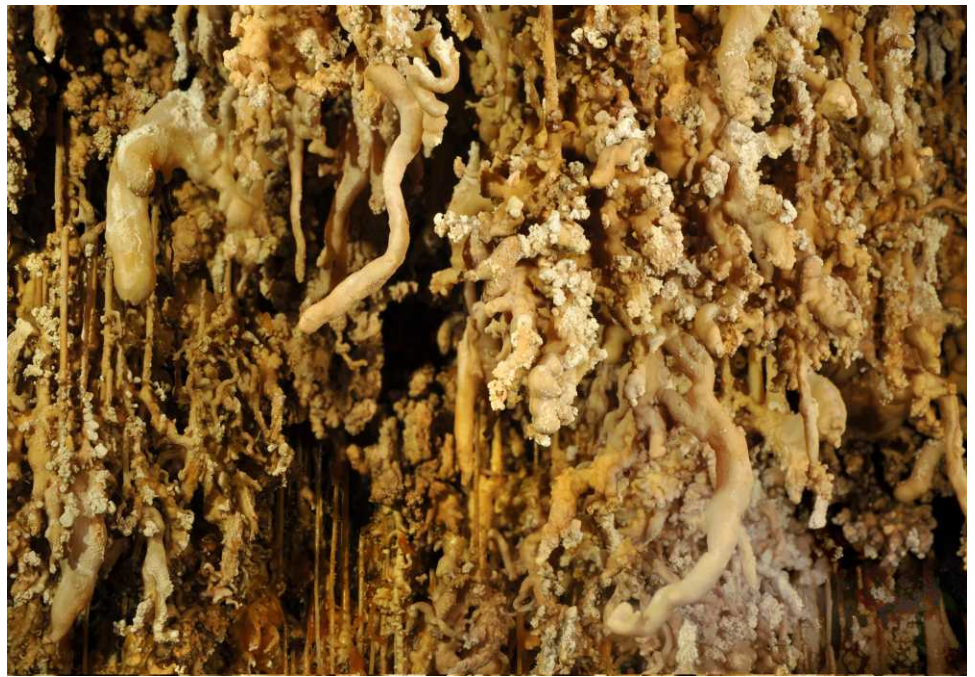
water made this highly decorated cave more beautiful than normal. The cave featured totems, bell canopies, shields and some huge stalagmites.

Friday - We woke up to very high winds, I would guess up to 50 mph and some light snow and temperature of about 40. It was very ugly. I didn't want to get out of the sleeping bag.



Today was the first day of the High Guads Restoration Project (HGRP) weekend. Most of the work was to be done Saturday and Sunday, but Phyllis Boneau was generous enough to lead a restoration trip to Pink Panther Cave. We drove past the Dragon's Teeth (nasty spot in road) to the parking spot. The snow increased and we hiked in a blizzard. I had seen the entrance to Pink Panther before but had never been in it. Shortly inside the gated there is a 50 foot drop.

The main part of the cave is well decorated but was



Above: Formations in the Speleogasm Room of Pink Panther Cave. **Below:** The skeleton of a short-faced bear in Pink Panther Cave. Photos by Rick Hines.



meager when compared to a room that we had to climb and chimney to see. The Speleogasm Room was a sensory treat. There were formations/helectites of all kinds going in all directions. Only three people are allowed in the room at one time. Rick had a field day with the camera and Ken and I helped with the strobes. In between the pretties, we improved the trail flagging for future trips.

One of the special features of Pink Panther is a full skeleton of an extinct short-faced bear. On the way back we checked out the entrances of some of the other “Pink” caves, Pink Palette, Pink Damn and Pink Dragon. The walk back was cold and windy but at least the snow had stopped.

Saturday - Today was the “official” start of the HGRP weekend. The weather had improved a bit but it was still windy and pretty cold. There were about 15 of us which included Jacque Buchanan, the Forest Supervisor for the Lincoln National Forest, and Ken’s friend, Scott Christiansen, from Albuquerque.

There were three projects on Saturday. I went to Virgin Cave to clean formations with several others. Another group went to Hidden Cave for formation cleaning and the third group did a long



hike to change out locks on some gated caves.

It took over an hour to get to the parking area to hike to Virgin and another 45 minutes to hike there. Some of us hauled water to the cave for cleaning. We had the basic resto gear, brushes, sprayers, sponges, tweezers, etc to try to undo misplaced tracks. We settled on an area not a great distance in the cave and spent several hours cleaning. I spent most of my time on a flowstone

Above: A long hanging formation in Hidden Cave. This is a composite assembled from several images. Photo by Rick Hines.

bank and 1.5 gallons of water later I was pretty proud of the results.

Near Texas Camp is a small forest service building with electricity and propane. That evening after everyone returned, we had a potluck dinner featuring spaghetti.

Sunday - Ken and Mark had to head out early since both needed to work



Monday. Most of the rest of us went to Hidden Cave. It was much better weather and a shorter drive and walk.

Hidden Cave is vertical, although only 70 feet or so. It is a cave that can be accessed for recreation trips and has received a lot of restoration in the past but still requires more. One group started working on a large flowstone bank. They began at the top. It will take several future trips, a lot of water and much scrubbing to clean this flowstone back to near-pristine condition. I helped Rick shoot a few photos and

did some resto work besides.

Sundays are usually short days so cavers can get back home at a decent time. We left the cave about 2:00 p.m. Rick, Kay and I packed up our stuff and headed home. After a flat tire and a nearly non-stop drive, I was back home about 10:00 a.m. Monday morning.

Overall, I was very happy with the trip. Ken, Mark, Rick and Kay were great caving companions. We met several new cavers; everyone we met was friendly and helpful to visiting cavers. Lastly, we saw some of the

Above: Trunk passage at Hidden Cave. The line of rocks in the foreground marks a trail. Jerry Cindric is in the background. Photo by Rick Hines.

best cave formations in the country.



Above: A reflecting pool in Hidden Cave. Photo by Rick Hines.