CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,INC

C.O.G.nizance

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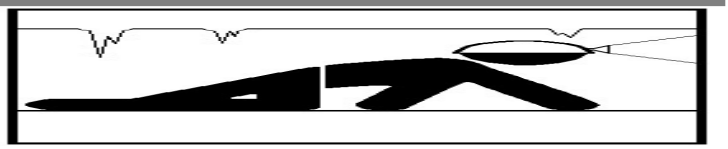
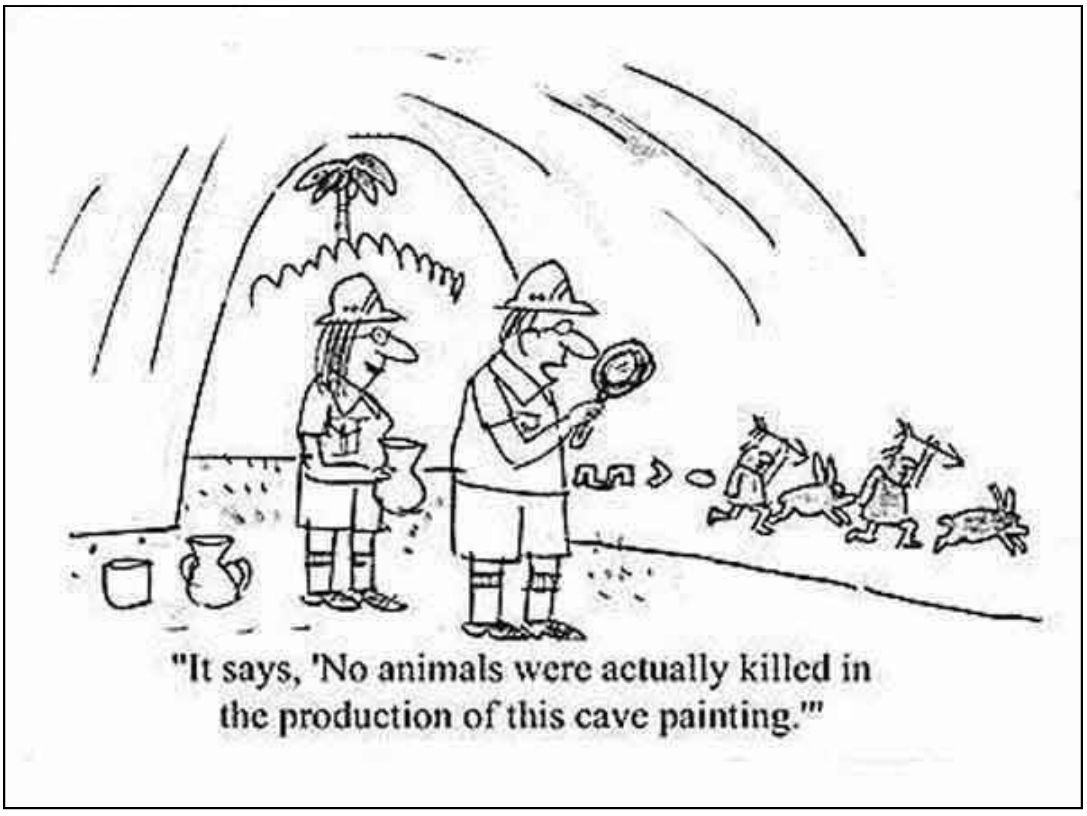
The Next Meeting will be on Friday November 11, 2019 7:30 p.m. at John VanDyke's house.





http://getdrawings.com/anthropology-drawing#anthropology-drawing-1.jpg

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Northwest trips are scheduled the third Saturday of every month. Contract Sue or John Bozeman for details.

*The Next meeting will be Friday, November 8, 2019 at home of John Van Dyke.

MEETING PLACES FOR 2019

Dec – Bozeman – Christmas Party

Gads, it's almost the end of 2019!

WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME DECONTAMINATION PROTOCOL, September 2018

This is the latest formal revision of the national decontamination protocol to prevent spread of the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. This document is the product of a collaborative effort with multiple federal and state agencies and several non-governmental organizations. Go to this website to view the detailed suggestions listed to help stop the spreading of WNS.

https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/static-page/decontamination-information

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO MEETING
Date of meeting: October 11, 2019
Location: the abode of John Talbot

Members in attendance: John Talbot, Jason Talbot, Dale Amlee, Sue and John Bozeman, Jon and Kelley Woltz, Steve Beleu
Presiding: The Honorable Jon Woltz
Start: 8:10

Old Business: None

New Business:
1. When John Talbot left the room we made him Lead Officer in our possible fun trip to a salt mine in Kansas.
2. We discussed the following Saturday's survey trip.
Sue read John Talbot's treasurer's report in his absence.
End: 8:41

TREASURER'S REPORT

NOVEMBER 2019 TREASURERS'S REPORT

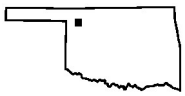
INCOME		EXPENSES
DIVIDENDS	$ .27	
TOTAL	$ .27	
CASH ON HAND	$ 70.05	
CHECKING	$ 30.98	
SAVINGS	$ 2,165.85	
TOTAL	**$ 2,166.88**	

PREPARED BY
TREASURER JOHN TALBOT NSS#3054RE

10/15/2019

TRIP REPORT

Cave Trip Report, "The Grotto" Cave
19 October 2019
Trip members: Sue Bozeman Jon Woltz, and Dale Amlee
Report by Dale Amlee



Cooler fall weather had finally descended upon Oklahoma. We journeyed again to the northwest part of the state for possibly the last survey trip into the "Grotto Cave". Our previous surveys had pushed the cave a fairly good distance, but signs were such that we suspected it would sump out soon. We met up at the Alabaster Caverns state park to change into our caving gear, then drove over to the cave entrance. The weather was right at the point where it was difficult to decide how many layers to put on underneath the cave coveralls. Most caves have a very moderate temperature in them year round, but the shallower caves, such as we were about to enter, can often have an interior temperature swing of up to 15 degrees from summer to winter. Guessing wrong during a survey trip can sometimes mean the difference between shivering and sweating.

Despite fairly dry weather in recent weeks, the cave had a fairly good amount of water coming out of it, pretty much the same as on all of our previous trips. This made for moderately muddy walking as we journeyed

(Continued on page 3)

deeper into the cave to pick up our last survey point from earlier in the year. The last point was found, and we were in a passage quite typical for gypsum caves in that there were nearly no rocks, sticks or other objects handy with

there were nearly no rocks, sticks or other objects handy with which to make survey points. So we found a couple of adequate items, plunked them into the mud as points, then moved them along with them after each shot was taken.

which to make survey points. So we found a couple of adequate items, plunked them into the mud as points, then moved them along with them after each shot was taken.

There was a small stream bed in the middle of the passage for most of the distance, but then quite suddenly the water disappeared and the remainder of the passage was dry. Sue commented that there must be an underground spring feeding into the cave at that point, which would also explain why the water outflow from the cave was so constant over the months.

As it turns out our earlier expectations as to the passage termination were correct. The passage was getting smaller and smaller, such that it had been several hundred feet since we had been able to stand upright. After taking a few shots along the cave, the passage made a sudden turn to the left and rapidly narrowed out to a point where no human could go. Jon crawled forward in

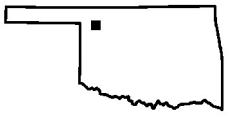
After taking a few shots along the cave, the passage made a sudden turn to the left and rapidly narrowed out to a point where no human could go.

that narrow passage as far as he could, reaching a point where the distance from the ceiling to the floor was less than the width of his helmet, and set his last point there. We took our last shot and left the cave. Total survey distance today: 99 feet.

There was still good daylight left, so we decided to tromp around on the surface to see if there were any likely sink holes that might be feeding water into the cave. We poked into a couple of smaller sinks that, by our compass measurements, should have been more or less over the cave, but found no openings larger than an underfed rat.

We continued to work our way further along past the direction that the cave had taken and eventually stumbled across a quite large sink, cut fairly deeply into the surface. This sink was roughly 30 feet deep and at least 100 feet in length. Jon started at the shallow end of the sink and worked his way deeper into the sink, past numerous dead trees, thick shrubs and mats of poison ivy. Sue and I followed along on the ridgeline at the top of the sink edge, struggling at times to keep Jon in sight. At the deepest point of the sink, he did find an entrance. He briefly poked his nose in and returned with the report that this was large enough to warrant a survey to see where it went. However, at that time the sun was beginning to drop low in the sky and we made the decision to look into this on our next visit. For now, it was back to the trucks.

Grotto Cave
Date: October 19, 2019
Participants: Dale Amlee, Jon Woltz and Sue Bozeman
Written by Sue Bozeman



Hi Steve,

Thought I'd let you know we had a good day, too. The predicted 40% chance of rain for that area disappeared. We had a clear, pleasant day. We finished up the one little cave the landowners call "The Grotto" which we have been working on. Lots of crayfish and frogs; about 15 bats and plenty of squishy mud. Finished up balked by a tube that got so low, we couldn't fit. Solid top and cemented rock bottom: Steve, even you couldn't dig – no room to swing the pickaxe.

We know that tube comes from somewhere around a big sink due east that we know has a cross-shaped slot entry, also too narrow for humans. So we went up and over the hill farther east to an even larger sink with a multi-acre watershed. All rainwater funnels into

All rainwater funnels into a previously unseen walking-height entrance10 feet wide and 6 feet tall. Too late in the day to start a new survey, but WE ARE THRILLED and excited to see what this cave has in store for us.

a previously unseen walking-height entrance10 feet wide and 6 feet tall. Too late in the day to start a new survey, but WE ARE THRILLED and excited to see what this cave has in store for us. Only Jon took a little look: goes 25 feet to a bit of a rock fall; beyond is big passage and the smell of bats and the sound of running water! That may be the source of the spring in the first cave! Neat. We surveyed 99 more feet today.

Then we cleaned up at Betty's and chatted with her for an hour. She's missed us. In pretty good shape and very much 'with it' mentally, she talked and talked, asking us questions about bat count and people from the past -- where are they, how are they doing, how is John, where is Steve, etc.

So yes, the possibilities with the new cave is exciting. Probably more than anything, for me, was the fact

So yes, the possibilities with the new cave is exciting. Probably more than anything, for me, was the fact that I had just….

what I had just commented to Dale, "You know, there has GOT to be a big cave entrance here somewhere in this huge sink, because there isn't an outflow valley anywhere. The watershed is HUGE and it all feeds INTO this sink. How does it get out?" And ONE MINUTE later, Jon says, "There's a big entrance here!" It was hidden in the steep side of the sink under scrub, deadfall from last year's fires, poison ivy and wild currant bushes. Perfect snake territory, but we didn't see a one. May it stay that way!

I called Justin Vogt from the car after finding the new cave entrance. He didn't know about this new cave and was pleased to get our call.

Hope we can gain entry next month. It is the beginning of deer season and the property is usually leased out to hunters and we become persona non grata.

Sue

POTPOURRI

Nickajack Cave
South Pittsburg, Tennessee
https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/nickajack-cave

This large cave is a summer home to thousands of bats and has a rich history dating back to prehistoric times.

Where can you witness 60,000 bats emerging at sunset? Where did Johnny Cash find an angel that lead him to safety? Where do you find rumors of giant catfish that feed on bats? The answer is Nickajack Cave on the Tennessee River. It's barely three miles from a busy interstate, and you've probably never heard of it.

Just a short bit upstream from Nickajack Dam is a very large, partly flooded cave rich with history. Currently, you will find it to be a marvelous sight of nature in the late summer as tens of thousands of grey bats leave their perches in the 140-foot-wide cave and head out for dinner. Like a real-life horror movie, you can witness hundreds of them flying overhead, and if you score a kayak or small boat you can sit in the middle of the cove enjoying the most perfect view of it all. As darkness settles around you, bats have consumed all the nearest bugs and begin zooming over the water, passing you by just a few feet. Their trusty echo-location means you need not worry about a collision with them.

This cave, with an opening height of 50 feet, was long used by the native people of the area, and later as a saltpeter mine. In the late 1960s, a dam project downstream meant the mouth of the cave would be flooded as well as the remains of old prehistoric villages.

There is a fence at the waterline to keep out boaters, but that didn't deter two divers in 1992. Passing below the fence in search of catfish rumored to feed on any bats not strong enough to hold perch on the roof, they speared a large one but had to return the next day to retrieve it. One of the divers, a man named David Gant, got lost while searching and found himself stranded with his scuba tank running out of air. He survived in an 8-inch air pocket but faced certain death. His dive buddy had made it back to safety and desperately tried to have authorities lower the lake and save Gant. After many hours the sheriff in charge requested TVA open the dam, and Gant was finally saved as the lake level dropped below his 8-inch air pocket. Almost four million gallons of water had been let through the dam lowering the lake by over a foot. As rescuers made it to him he believed they were angles.

Rumor has it that long before Gant another man had a spiritual visit deep in Nickajack Cave. In 1967, a desperate Johnny Cash ventured into the cave intending to be lost deep inside by the time the batteries died on his flashlight. After hours in the dark, he became focused on God and from then on said he was "born again" in Nickajack Cave. (Others dispute this story as the dam was completed in December of 1967, implying the opening would have flooded too much to allow deep passage into the cave by that time.) Maybe only God and the Nickajack Cave know the truth.

From Chattanooga take the Interstate 24 exit at Highway 156 and go south about three miles. As soon as you see a cove on the left, the cave's mouth will be visible. Turn into the parking area at the far edge of the cove. A walkway leads from the east side of the parking lot about 1,000 feet to an observation platform near the cave. There is a boat launch here but the small parking lot can fill up.

There is a campground across the lake, and from there you can canoe about one mile to the cove, crossing under the Highway 156 bridge. It is too low for big boats (water levels may vary). If you are paddling to see the bats, be sure to have multiple lights since you will return in the dark and the dam sees much commercial barge traffic.

Oaxaca's Huautla Cave: 'the most magnificent cave on earth'

At 1,560 meters it is the deepest cave in the western hemisphere and the ninth deepest in the world

By John Pint
Published on Friday, May 31, 2019
https://mexiconewsdaily.com/mexicolife/the-most-magnificent-cave-on-earth/

For die-hard cave explorers around the world, Mexico has long been considered "the new frontier of caving." Here cavers have a high likelihood of being among the first human beings ever to boldly set foot where "no one has gone before."

Maybe the best example of Mexico's magnificent caves is the Huautla Cave System located in Oaxaca's Sierra Mazateca. Exploration began in 1965 when a group of cavers from Austin, Texas, arrived at the village of Huautla de Jiménez.

They soon discovered three beautiful and challenging caves in the area: Sótano de San Agustin, La Grieta and Nita Nanta. In time it became clear that these and other caves they kept finding were interconnected, all part of one big cave system, which became known as Sistema Huautla.

Numerous expeditions took place over the years and more than 65 kilometers of passages were mapped by cave explorers from all around the globe. In the late winter of 2013, an international team of cave divers entered the cave, rappelled through crashing waterfalls down chasms as tall as skyscrapers and carried out eight separate scuba dives past "the mother of all sumps" to reach a depth of -1,554 meters, making Huautla the western hemisphere's deepest cave — and now the longest of the 17 deepest caves in the world.

In 2015, 47 speleologists from seven countries (Mexico, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Poland, Switzerland and Romania) participated in a six-week expedition to venture into parts of the system which had not yet been explored.

"We mapped and connected two caves 700 meters deep," said veteran Huautla pioneer and Explorers Club member Bill Steele. "You need a lot more than 700 meters of rope to reach that point because you have horizontal traverses to do on the way down . . . and it takes a whole week just to put the ropes in place."

(Continued on page 5)

In 2014, Steele helped to form PESH (Proyecto Espleleológico Sistema Huautla), a project dedicated to conducting a comprehensive speleological study of Sistema Huautla over a 10-year period.

Recently, I caught up with Steele just after he returned from the latest exploration of Huautla, which took place throughout April.

"Sistema Huautla is now 89 kilometers long," he told me, "and 1,560 meters deep, which makes it the deepest cave in the western hemisphere and the ninth deepest in the world, tied for that place right now with a cave in Austria. This year we added three entrances to the system, so we've got 29 entrances now."

"This was the sixth PESH expedition," Steele went on, "and this year we had 42 people. They were from three countries: Mexico, the U.S. and Costa Rica. The way we structure it is we have 30 people at any given time: that's what our infrastructure on the surface can handle. One thing of note this year is that at one point we had five deep underground camps going at the same time, a new benchmark for exploration in Huautla. These people stayed underground for a week at a time and then came out to report.

"Some of your readers may not realize that there is no radio in existence that works through that much rock, although there are a couple of people working on that sort of thing. So, at the moment, it's like Pony Express: the way you find out what's going on is when somebody comes out and tells you.

"And years ago we decided it's better if these people actually write out their report before heading for the surface, because after climbing up so many ropes and working so hard for so long, people arrive up here so tired that they forget what it was they were supposed to tell you or they can't quite remember all the details, so we now have a rule that all messages must be written down."

As for scientific results, this year's PESH expedition had a graduate student from Western Kentucky University who is studying karst hydrology. "His name is Fernando Hernández," Steele told me, "and he's a very good caver. He is still there in Huautla right now. He's been there since February. In regard to biology, we have a collecting permit issued to us by Dr. Oscar Francke of UNAM in Mexico City. He's described 48 different life forms that live in Sistema Huautla. Eleven of these have turned out to be highly adapted troglobic creatures.

"As for paleontology, Dr. Iván Alarcón Durán out of Puebla and his people are looking at some remains of Pleistocene megafauna that we've seen in the caves. They discovered the only complete skull ever found in Mexico of a Pleistocene sloth over 12,000 years old. So we are really happy about what Mexican cave scientists are finding here."

The yearly presence of cave explorers in the local villages has had unexpected consequences. This is just one of many anecdotes told by Bill Steele:

"On the very last day of last year's expedition, a school teacher walked up and he had a USB drive in his hand. Now he was a little shy. He lives in the same village where we rent houses, and he said: 'This is my life's work and I'm hoping that you can find a way to print a hundred copies of this to help children learn to read their native language, Mazateco. I teach it, but we don't have a book. If you can print 100 copies, I would be so happy.'

"So I went back to Texas wondering, 'How am I going to do that?' Every page in that teacher's manuscript was in color . . . and I looked into the cost and sort of gulped, because publishing really isn't our thing. But I went to the Whole Earth Provision Company, which has been so good to cavers. They had printed our brochure, which explains what we were doing in Huautla.

"That brochure, by the way, is written in three languages: English, Spanish and Mazateco, and we found out that it is the only document in existence in those three languages, other than the Holy Bible! So schoolteachers like it.

"Of course, that teacher knew about the brochure because he is the very one who translated it into Mazateco. So, as for the primer, we said, 'We'll do what we can.'

"Well, we did better than 100 copies: we were able to print 180, beautifully done and spiral bound so they lay flat on a desk."

Back to caving, I asked Bill Steele where Huautla stands in relation to the rest of the world's caves.

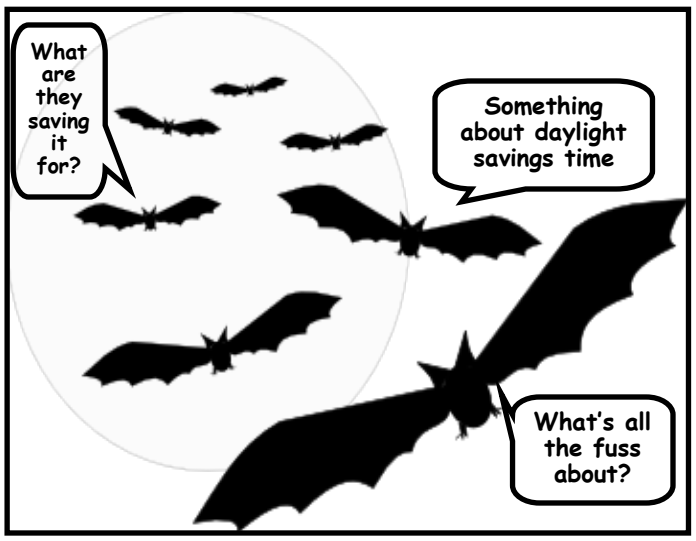
"Well," replied Steele, "Carlsbad Caverns is known for one very big chamber called the Big Room, but here in Huautla we've got at least 12 rooms just as big . . . and one of them is twice the size of the Dallas Cowboys' stadium! . . .

"You know, way back in 1987, a famous Swiss caver named Phillipe Rouillier approached me deep inside the cave and said, with his German-Swiss accent, 'Bill, I do believe this is the most magnificent cave on earth.' Thirty-two years later — after numerous stupendous additions to the cave, I hear more and more speleologists saying the same.

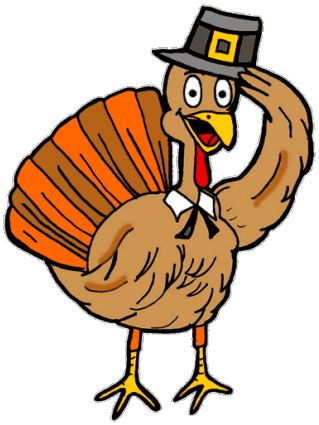
Get Directions

"This was my 25th Huautla expedition over 42 years. I was a young man of 28 the first time I went. Now I am 70 years old. I feel really blessed that I am able to be a part of such a significant exploration of a major geographical feature of this planet. It's an incredible cave!

Would you like to visit the Huautla caves from your living room, without getting your clothes muddy? Have a look at the PESH page. The pictures are spectacular. http://www.peshcaving.org/



Central Oklahoma Grotto is a non-profit organization and a chapter of the NSS (National Speleological Society), Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL., 35810. Dedicated to cave conservation and safety, C.O.G. published general information in a monthly newsletter ($6.00/year) and detailed cave surveys and related Speleological items in a yearly publication, *The Oklahoma Underground* ($3-$8/ issue) Membership is by sponsor and is $12 per year for adults, $6 for spouses and students, and $3 if under 18. Central Oklahoma Grotto meets once a month on the second Friday of each month. For information, write Lil Town, 25692 Mosier Circle, Conifer, CO 80433: All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil Town, 25692 Mosier Circle, Conifer, CO 80433: Telephone: (580)471-1238: E-mail: cavemoose@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions for any particular month's issue is the 20th day of the previous month. If you wish material returned. Please include a SASE with submission. All materials in this newsletter is available for reproduction, provided proper credit is given with the article when you print it. Trade publications are welcomed. *Cave softly and safely!* Website: http://www.okcavers.com



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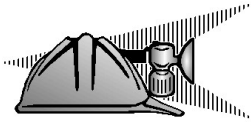

Central Oklahoma Grotto
Porcupine Poop Press
2125 Holly Oaks Lane #105
Weatherford, TX 76087