CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,INC

C.O.G.nizance

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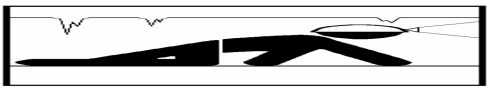
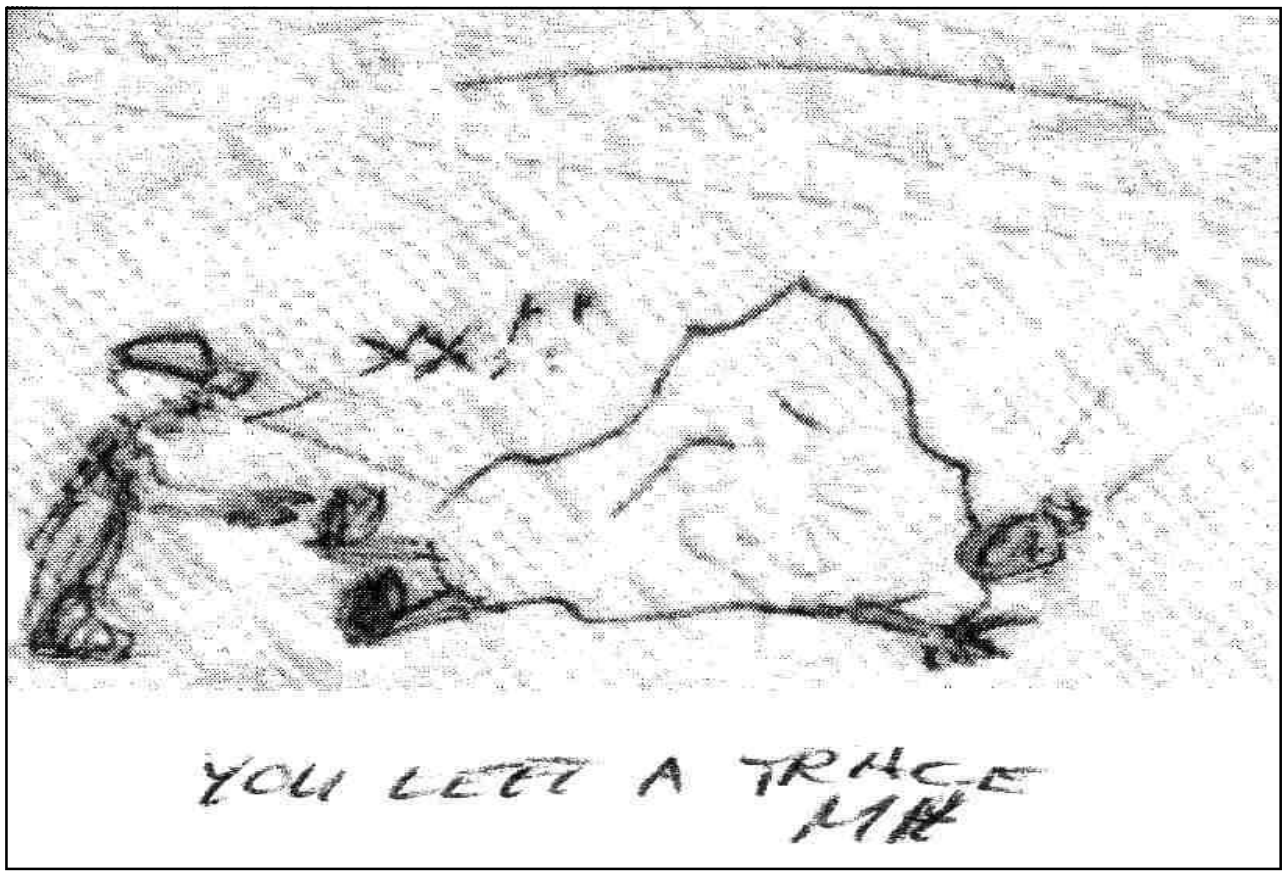


Napkin Art

Artist, Mark Hunsinger



ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Northwest trips are scheduled the third Saturday of every month. Contract Sue or John Bozeman for details.
*Carlsbad cleanup trip is April 25-27.

*The 7:30 March meeting will be at The Town House

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO
Minutes of the meeting of March 14, 2008

Host: the home of Dale Amlee
Attendees: Dale Amlee, Anne Ault, Sue and John Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, Mark Miller, John Talbot, John Van Dyke, S. Beleu.

OLD BUSINESS

Participants in the bat count held during February and the first week of March discussed how there were less bats in cave than during most previous years. They also talked about some Texas cavers accessing Jester Cave without getting permission from the landowners; they apparently just jumped the fence. We all agreed that this is bad for caving in our state and made the Texas cavers look bad.

Duane talked about our Annual Pilgrimage to Carlsbad Caverns on April 25-27. Duane hadn't heard about the type of work we will be doing there this year.

Sue noted that Dr. Graening sent the Bozemans full-text copies of all the historic and current Oklahoma Undergrounds in .pdf format. Sue said that she and John will save these texts to CD-ROMS and distribute them to some of us for safe off-site archiving.

NEW BUSINESS

Sue said that we needed to replace Jon Woltz as our COGnizance newsletter printer and distributor. Duane may be able to take on this extra task, but must first get permission from his supervisor. He would charge COG a very nominal fee to duplicate the newsletter.

Sue said that she received an e-mail from former COG member Shaun Thomas. Shaun has actually worked in Carlsbad Caverns, but now works in the national parks of the northwest. Since he helped begin the survey of Cattle Cave we will send him a copy of the Cattle Cave issue of the Oklahoma Underground that he is properly due.

Dale brought up the topic of meeting places for the remainder of 2008. Here they are. Aaaaiiiieeee! Their houses will never be the same again!

April – Lil Town
May – Mark Miller
June – Duane Del Vecchio
September – Jon Woltz
October – Art Wallace
November - S Beleu, The Skillful Ogre
December – The Bozemans

TREASURER'S REPORT

John Talbot gave his report.

We got it over with at 9:12, ugh.

TREASURER'S REPORT

INCOME			EXPENSES		
Dividends	$	0.08	Postage	$	21.67
Publication Sales	$	44.16	Envelopes	$	4.54
Dues	$	39.00	Map Reproductions	$	14.63
Postage Credit	$	8.36	Glue Stick	$	1.97
			Card	$	0.54
TOTAL	**$**	**91.58**	**TOTAL**	**$**	**43.35**

CASH ON HAND	**$**	**155.54**
CHECKING	**$**	**434.71**
SAVINGS	**$**	**2,668.33**

TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 3/6/06 $3,258.58

PREPARED BY TREASURER JOHN TALBOT

TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report: Selman Cave System Bat Count: ***I love Bat Count.***
Date: Sunday, Feb. 23, 2008
Bat Counters: Mark and Becky Hunsinger, Mark Miller, John and Sue Bozeman, Duane Del Vecchio, and Jon Woltz
Trip Report: Becky Hunsinger

It is a way to contribute, in some small measure, to the understanding and protection of our furry friends, to promote the larger goals of science, to get underground and, afterwards, to drink beer with some of my dearest friends. Who could ask for more?

And so, with joy in my heart, I and husband Mark wended our way to Woodward OK to take part in Bat Count NW, 2008.

We convened at the Selman Ranch between 10:00 and 11:00 Saturday morning, February 23, enjoying the incomparable Selman hospitality. John & Sue Bozeman were there when we arrived, followed by Duane Del Vecchio and Jon Woltz.

We split into two teams and headed off to count noses. Mark, Duane, and John B headed out first, followed by Sue, Jon, & me.

As we pulled up beside the Duanemobile parked at the wellpad, Sue commented that something was dangling from the undercarriage. Indeed, it appeared that a piece of the venerable Honda had decided to part ways with its compatriots. A driver from UCO, who was parked on the other side of the pad, said that Duane was aware, so we took no further action.

Under cloudy skies, we hiked to the Don't Know sink and prepared to enter. Sue first checked that the entrance was still passable, then cautioned us strongly to keep it passable by refraining from touching, talking, sneezing, or any other generation of motive force while wriggling under the fractured block framing the entrance. We complied, and continued into the cave, pushing our packs through the low entrance crawl.

No bats here. We continued to a room leading to the loved and loathed SExit, which Sue explained—days later—stands for S Exit, simply a survey station determined during the Selman Cave System survey, but humorously pronounced "sex-it". It turned out to be a tight vertical slot through breakdown, loved because it provided a much-needed shortcut to Don't Know entrance, loathed because, well, because it is a tight vertical slot.

Sue slid down first, then coached us on the technique. Face forward, flip, work to your right, and try not to land in the stream. It went quite smoothly.

From SExit, we headed down passage toward the resurgence. Sue took notes, and Jon & I either leap-frogged the smaller passages in sections or divided the larger rooms by some prominent physical feature, or lacking such, by where Sue sat. We were soon avidly scouting every crack and pocket, looking for bats, as the numbers appeared to be severely diminished from previous years. I was struck by the range of body sizes in the velifer, something not normally

(Continued on page 4)

observed in the Jester bats. A fair number of pipistrellus were encountered as well.

Eventually, we had to give up the notion of dry boots and take to the stream at times, a decision that is almost a relief as navigation becomes a bit easier, though feet are markedly chillier. We continued through Root Dome, where an improbably long root of—something—dangles some 20 feet from the ceiling, through thin air. The next dome has a similar feature, but I was informed that it is a rope, a difference not readily discernable from the floor of the cave. We took a few interludes for photographs of rimstone, calcite rafts, selenite in the MJ maze area, and a lone but largish crayfish.

Downstream from Cedar Shaft at the high dome, we counted the few bats there, then Sue & I turned around and headed back toward the Cedar Shaft exit area. At length, Sue heard Jon yodeling for us, and we returned to the high dome. No Jon in sight. Eventually, we heard him high above, saying that he had found a room with many clusters. Sue took out her pad and recorded as he shouted numbers and dimensions, then he rejoined us. We all headed for the Cedar Shaft entrance area and counted mats and the singles or small clusters of velifer.

Once done there, we retraced our steps to the SExit area, then headed down the Overflow Arm to the Spring Bat Room branch through vaulted passages. This area had more clusters, but Sue commented that it was still not as many as usual. In the high, hot dome just upstream from Spring Bat Room, we paused to photograph a bat skeleton and to collect a tiny bit of guano to try to entice bats to occupy my bat house in New Mexico. Jon observed that it was probably for the best that I was not trying to fly home; even though the guano was in TSA-compliant sized baggies, they could be recalcitrant about letting concentrated nitrate on the plane!

Our mission completed, we headed back to SExit. Now, it hadn't been so tough sliding down, with Sue guiding from below. Getting back up reminds one that gravity, for all its benefits, also has its downside, (no) pun intended. Sue coached again, advising us to enter the slot with knees spread for better gripping and pushing power, a technique that helped tremendously. It is always good to go with a pro.

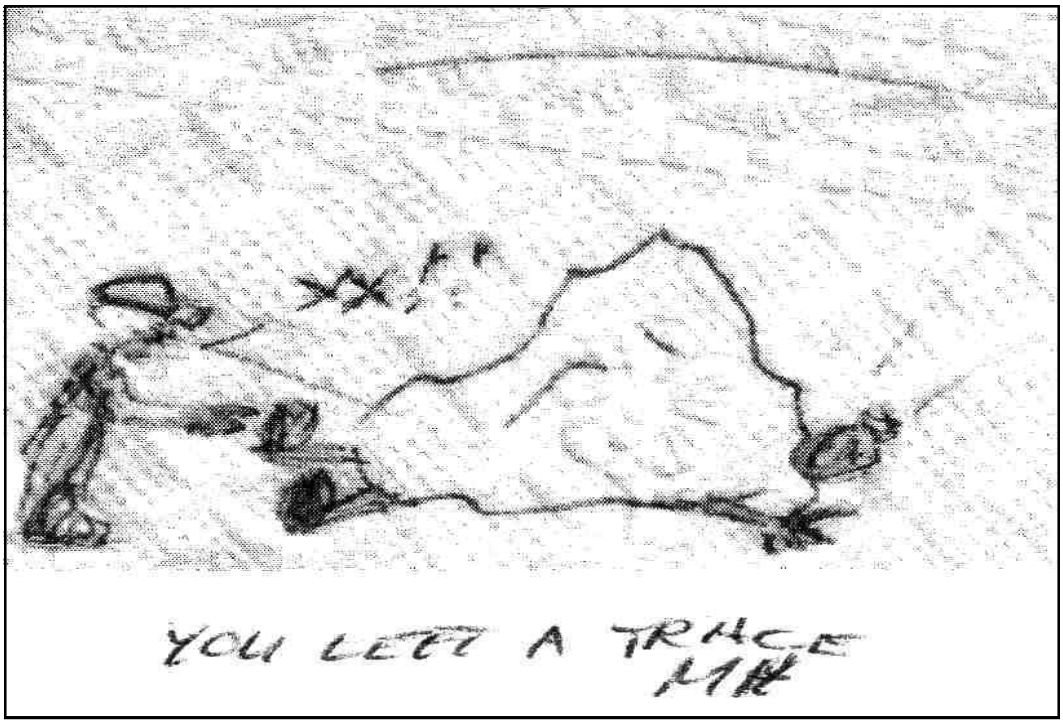
We gingerly exited the precarious Don't Know squeeze around 5:30 and hiked back to the car. Duane's car was gone, and Mark was waiting in our car. He said they had used baling wire and chewing gum to re-attach the thingy, and that the car had driven off OK. We learned later that Duane made it safely back to Lawton – with better gas mileage than ever. As of this writing, it is unknown whether or not he opted to have the thingy properly reinstalled.

We reconvened later at the Woodward Pizza Hut to trade tales of the day's adventures.

Judging from the copious mud on my gear and the number of bruises on my body, I'd say my team had the most fun.

Napkin Art

Artist Mark Hunsinger



Trip Report: Broken Horn Cave
Date: 22 March 2008
Personnel: Sue Bozeman, John Bozeman, Dale Amlee, Duane Del Vecchio.
Report by Dale Amlee

This survey trip to Broken Horn began on a fairly decent spring day. The weather forecast looked cooperative, and after the previous month's freezer-like situation I was looking forward to more comfortable caving. Still, I brought an extra shirt just in case.

The temperature outside the cave was in the mid 60's when we approached the cave under slightly cloudy skies. The first thing we decided to do, however, was to do a quick overland walk to familiarize ourselves with the terrain in the vicinity of the possible entrances that we thought our survey was heading towards. During recent trips some of our crew had gone around on the surface to log GPS points of possible cave entrances to this cave system, and when we laid these points on top of our cave survey map it looked very promising that the cave arm we were surveying should meet one of these exit points. I had brought with me a topographical map of the area to use as a reference as we walked around on the surface, unfortunately the accuracy and precision of the topo maps available at this time are not really sufficient to truly show us what the ground looked like. There were numerous instances where the map and the land disagreed with each other, and in those cases it is usually prudent to believe the land. Still, we managed to poke our noses into several openings that could be either human size entrances or at least water entrances into the cave arm below us.

When we finally crawled into our normal entrance near Jay's Tree, we paused to let our eyes adjust to the darkness and Sue took a temperature reading. We were all curious, after last month's experience, to see how much the internal cave temperature changed from one end to the other. Her first reading in the cairn room read a balmy 66 degrees, and a second reading down one level in the stream course measured about the same, if not a touch warmer (air temp measured). Sue took additional temperature readings as we progressed through the cave arm to our survey area, and we observed the temp dropping to 59 at the echo chamber (just past the large stream intersection), 56 in the dig room, but shortly past that point it took a steep drop to 48 degrees by the time we reached the muddy area where we were to begin our survey once more. So from the entrance to the survey area the air temperature dropped by 18 degrees, and this was on a fairly warm spring day.

Duane had not been on a cave trip in this arm of the cave for about a year, so on the way through the cave we took time to point out and photograph various pretty formations for his viewing pleasure. The central portion of this arm is truly attractive. It is unfortunate that the only way to get to the pretty stuff requires some moderately arduous crawling though relatively challenging junk.

We picked up our survey where we had left off last month, and it quickly led us into some mucky muddy crap with low ceilings that allowed us no options but to belly down into the goo as we took our compass readings. In just a few survey shots we came to a stagnant pool of water surrounded by sticky mud that, when penetrated by a boot or elbow, released a wonderful cloud of methane gas. So, coughing and sputtering, we steadfastly continued our surveying, and fairly quickly we came to our first official daylight of this cave mapping project. The exit from the cave consisted of a somewhat acrobatic crawl, as the cave transitioned from a low ceiling (about 2-3 feet high) mud passage to a jumble of breakdown boulders that led nearly vertically up to a sinkhole on the surface. Squeezing between the boulders was a tight fit for me, and as I crawled vertically up through the rocks I felt a couple of them move under my hands. I looked at my position and realized that if the boulders were to come loose from their relatively precarious positions, they would most likely fall down and effectively plug the hole that I had just crawled through.

Generally speaking, plugging a hole with a heavy boulder when your fellow cavers are directly below is considered to be quite the social faux pas in caving circles. So, even though

(Continued on page 6)

I was officially out of the cave at that point, I turned around and gingerly headed back into the cave to rejoin the rest of the crew. It was decided that due to the tightness of this exit, plus the precarious nature of the boulders, that trying to get our whole crew out through this exit would be too risky. Therefore, due to safety reasons, we all turned around and headed back through the cave the way we had come in, retracing our steps back to our original entrance at Jay's Tree.

We exited the cave under cloudy skies, with the wind beginning to pick up and the scent of rain on the horizon. We quickly packed up our gear, and headed out to complete our weekend survey trip with the traditional beer and pizza feast.

POTPOURRI

Scientists unearth primitive bat skeleton

Creature likely hunted insects but lacked the ability to echolocate

By Will Dunham
Reprint from the internet
updated 12:49 p.m. CT, Wed., Feb. 13, 2008

WASHINGTON - The most primitive bat ever found fluttered around about 52 million years ago, but lacked a key feature seen in most bats — the ability to echolocate, hunting and navigating using a kind of sonar.

A team of scientists announced the discovery on Wednesday of a medium-sized ancient bat called Onychonycteris finneyi that possessed fully developed wings and was completely capable of flying. But they said that based on the evidence from its skeleton it lacked the ability to echolocate.

Kevin Seymour of the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, one of the scientists who describe it in the journal Nature, said this bat appears to settle a long-standing debate of which came first in bats — echolocation or flight. The answer is flight.

"It is like this is sort of halfway to being a modern bat. It's the most primitive bat that we know. It could clearly fly. But it could not echolocate. The evidence from the skull and throat region shows us none of the features that echolocating bats have," Seymour said in a telephone interview.

'Missing link'

Bats are the second most common type of mammal living today, constituting a fifth of all mammal species. Only rodents, which make up half of mammals, are more plentiful.

Bats also are an ancient form of mammals, and scientists have struggled to understand their early evolutionary history. Onychonycteris, unearthed in 2003 in southwestern Wyoming, appears to be filling in some important gaps.

"It's clearly a bat, but unlike any previously known," said Nancy Simmons of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. "In many respects, it is a missing link between bats and their nonflying ancestors."

Echolocation is a form of sonar used by several mammals to navigate and hunt. They use high-pitched sounds to find the location of objects by the sounds reflected from them. Most bats use it to find flying insects to catch in mid-air. Other mammals with this ability include whales, dolphins and shrews.

The scientists called the fossil of Onychonycteris beautifully preserved, representing a previously unknown bat family. But while they call it the most primitive bat, they said a bat with more modern features, Icaronycteris, lived at the same time. Icaronycteris used echolocation, they said.

A diet of insects

Seymour said there is nothing unusual about more primitive forms living alongside more advanced ones. "That's completely normal. Think today of the monotremes living in Australia, the egg-laying mammals," Seymour said. These include the platypus.

The wingspan of Onychonycteris was

(Continued on page 7)

about 12 inches. It had short, broad wings, suggesting it probably could not fly as quickly as most bats that appeared later. Rather than flapping its wings continuously while flying, it may have alternated flapping and gliding while in the air.

Its teeth suggest its diet consisted mostly of insects, like most bats today. It had claws on all five of its fingers, while modern bats have them on only one or two digits of each hand. Its limb proportions are different from all other bats. Seymour said scientists are not certain from what type of mammal bats evolved, but it could have been a tree-dwelling insectivore like a shrew.

Bats are one of only three types of vertebrates in the history of Earth to develop the ability to fly, joining the flying reptiles called pterosaurs, which went extinct 65 million years ago, and birds.

Behold the Gladdening Dark

by Steve Beleu

Whenever we enter Carlsbad
We exit from a time machine
Into a past of sulphuric fumes
Strong enough to dissolve limestone.

See how small this cave is
Now, not distinguished, plain.
It will grow into a miracle
100 miles long.

We climb carefully down
A vast underground mountain,
But we climb inside that mountain
And its peak is the deepest pit.

You will never cave alone
In this infinite darkness!
Wherever you cave
We all cave with you!

Bat specialist is on deck at school

By Sheila Stogsdill, *State Correspondent*
Reprint from THE OKLAHOMAN
October 16, 2007, Page 4a

CHEROKEE — Mexican free-tailed bats remain in a false ceiling at Cherokee High School a month after officials began plan-ning their eviction.

Some of the estimated 2,000 to 1,000 bats have been removed, but school offi-cials are unsure of how many bats are left, said Ray Pebsworth, Cherokee School Dis-trict Superintendent.

Ivan Laurer, pest specialist, will be back at the school Wednesday to check if the pesky rodent population is getting smaller, Pebsworth said.

The school district hired Laurer to rid the school of a 50-year-old problem with bats. Lauer is being paid $8,100.

“That’s just for exclusion, not for clean-ing up," Pebsworth said.

Pebsworth said the type of trap Laurer set allows the bats to get out of the school building, but they aren't able to get back in.

"A bat can get through a quarter-of-an-inch opening," Pebsworth said. "We know there are two major entrances."

About the problem

Pebsworth said the bats are in the school's auditori-um and cafeteria false ceiling and are not visible to students or workers, but occa-sionally bats have made their way into the school hallway or classroom.

"Last Monday, there were seven bats hanging up-side down in the foyer of the auditorium," Pebsworth said.

Most of the Old-timers said they have been dealing with bats for more than 50 years, and a lot of people don't understand why the school wants to clean up the problem, Pebsworth said.

"Their (bats) main diet is mosquitoes," Pebsworth said.

Mexican free-tailed bats are migratory and spend winters in Mexico.

Health effect

The Oklahoma Health Department said the bats pose little threat to students and staff, bat colonies can pose health problems, mainly from the guano they produce.

Histoplasmosis, an airborne disease caused by a microscopic soil fungus can damage human lungs.

It often is misdiagnosed as influenza or tuberculosis.

It becomes a problem only when guano is disturbed.

Bites usually result from people attempting to handle a bat, according to the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center.

MYOTIS VELIFER (Cave Bat)

CAVE NAME	CAVE NUMBER	2/8&16 2003	2/5 2004	2/12 2005	2/11 2006	2/17 2007	2/9,23&3/1 2008
Jester	GR-011	17844	25970	17839	15572	15660	8729
Selman: C.O.G.*	WD-041	12118	9207	64882	72695	100380	60196
Selman: U.C.O.	WD-041	52565	68103	45296			
Washita Bat: North	WA-039	173	83	369	196	9377	120
Washita Bat: Center	WA-038	2304	6322	1113	2798	198	610
Washita Bat: South	WA-040	7420	1460	546	416	101	6057
TOTALS		92424	111145	130045	91677	125716	75712

* Combined cave section count from 2006 forward

CORYNORHINUS TOWNSENDII PALESCENS (Big-eared)

CAVE NAME	CAVE NUMBER	2/8&16 2003	2/5 2004	2/12 2005	2/11 2006	2/17 2007	2/9,23&3/1 2008
Jester	GR-011	13	9	17	2	4	4
Selman: C.O.G.	WD-041	0	0	0	0	0	0
Selman: U.C.O.	WD-041	0	0	0	0		0
Washita Bat: North	WA-039	0	1	0	0	0	0
Washita Bat: Center	WA-038	0	0	0	0	0	0
Washita Bat: South	WA-040	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS		13	10	17	2	4	4

PIPISTRELLUS SUBFLAVUS (Pipistrel)

CAVE NAME	CAVE NUMBER	2/8&16 2003	2/5 2004	2/12 2005	2/11 2006	2/17 2007	2/9,23&3/1 2008
Jester	GR-011	44	52	203	100	167	53
Selman: C.O.G. (area)	WD-041	22	47	35	62	33	37
Selman: U.C.O. (area)	WD-041	46	39	89			
Washita Bat: North	WA-039	39	42	0	1	0	0
Washita Bat: Center	WA-038	0	4	0	0	0	0
Washita Bat: South	WA-040	0	66	0	0	0	0
TOTALS		151	184	327	163	200	90

EPTESICUS FUSCUS (Big Brown)

CAVE NAME	CAVE NUMBER	2/8&16 2003	2/5 2004	2/12 2005	2/11 2006	2/17 2007	2/9,23&3/1 2008
Jester	GR-011	0	0	0	0	0	0
Selman: C.O.G.	WD-041	0	1	1	1	2	0
Selman: U.C.O.	WD-041	0	1	0	0		
Washita Bat: North	WA-039	0	0	0	0	0	0
Washita Bat: Center	WA-038	0	0	0	0	0	0
Washita Bat: South	WA-040	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS		0	2	1	1	2	0

Two reports about the same event!

Oklahoma Emergency Management
(OKEM) Digest Number 449
Saturday, March 22, 2008 7:30

Family from Owasso

TOWNSEND, Tenn. (AP) -- Rescuers found four cavers cold and wet but otherwise safe on Friday after they didn't return as planned from an overnight spelunking trip in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The four were brought out of the cave in good condition shortly before 8 p.m., about six hours after searchers made contact with them. The men had descended about 500 feet into the cave from its entrance, park spokesman Kent Cave said.

'They were at the bottom of the third of three major vertical drops in the cave,' Cave said earlier Friday.

'It's like rock climbing, but rock climbing in the dark with water falling over you. The vertical drops are basically waterfalls.'

Rescue squad members had warm clothes, blankets and hot food waiting for the four.

'They had huddled together,' said Bob Miller, a park spokesman. 'They simply didn't have the strength to get out on their own.'

He said the temperature in the cave was in the low to mid-50s.

The four had left Maryville, Tenn., at about 10 p.m. Thursday night and had expected to return five hours later.

The wife of one of the cavers, Garry Blakesley, a 24-year-old youth minister in Maryville, reported the group missing around Friday morning. Also missing were Blakesley's brother, Dustin Blakesley, 17; Jake Layman, 17; and Chris Smith, 20, all of Owasso, Okla. Rangers and rescue workers began searching Rainbow Cave, one of four with entrances in the area, after finding a backpack and rope belonging to the men.

They had 'little or no experience in caving and were very poorly equipped,' Cave said. Once they discovered they couldn't get out, they apparently called for help but couldn't be heard over the sound of underground waterfalls.

3 Owasso cavers found safe, 'cold'

By The Associated Press
Saturday, March 22, 2008

TOWNSEND, Tenn. — Rescurers found four cavers "cold and wet," but otherwise safe after they went missing on an overnight spelunking trip in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The four were found about 2 p.m. Friday at the bottom of Rainbow Cave about 500 feet from the entrance. They had left Maryville, Tenn., about 10 p.m. Thursday and had expected to return five hours later.

The wife of one of the cavers, Garry Blakesley, a 24-year-old youth minister in Maryville, Tenn., reported the group missing to park officials about 7:30 a.m. Friday. With him were his brother, Dustin Blakesley, 17; Jake Layman, 17, and Chris Smith, 20 all of Owasso.

'Little or no experience'

They had "little or no experience in caving and were very poorly equipped," park spokesman Kent Cave said. Once they discovered they couldn't get out, they apparently called for help but couldn't be heard over the sound of underground waterfalls.

The slow process to bring the men out wasn't expected to be over until 10 p.m. Medical personnel were waiting to attend to them as soon as they were out. Cave said he didn't think any of them were hurt.

"They were at the bottom of the third of three major vertical drops in the cave," Cave said. "It's like rock climbing, but rock climbing in the dark with water falling over you. The vertical drops are basically waterfalls."

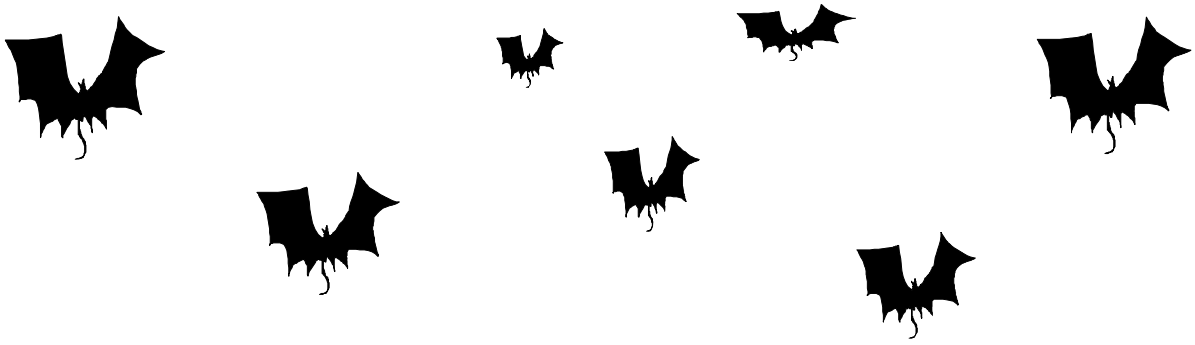
Rangers and rescue workers began searching Rainbow Cave, one of four caves with entrances in the Whiteoak Sinks area of the park near Townsend, after finding a backpack and rope belonging to the group.

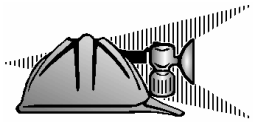
A volunteer rescue squad from Knoxville, about 34 miles north of the Townsend entrance to the park, was assisting in the rescue.

"This group is very experienced in cave rescue and had, in fact, trained in Rainbow Cave within the past year," Cave said.

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 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, Oklahoma, 73521. All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil or Dale Town, 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, OK 73521: Telephone: (580)477-4027: E-mail: oklmt@cableone.net. 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!*

Don't forget to come to the April meeting at The Town House, Friday, April 11.





Central Oklahoma Grotto
C/o 3208 Gettysburg Drive
Altus, Oklahoma 73521