



**CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO**
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC

C.O.G.nizance

November, 2004

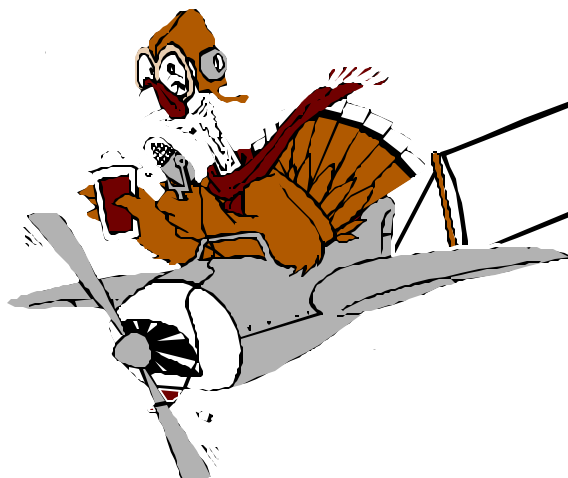
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The November meeting of the
Central Oklahoma Grotto will be held at
Anne Ault's place.

November's meeting is at the Ault house.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

*Southwest trips are scheduled the first Saturday of every month. Contact Lil Town for details.

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO Minutes of the October 8, 2004 meeting

Host: Art Wallace and wife and his house of miraculous bats everywhere!

Members present: Dale Amlee, Anne Ault, Sue and John Bozeman, Roy and Nicole and Cassandra Diehl, John Talbot, John Van Dyke, Steve Beleu.

Guest and potential new member: Brandon Renshaw

Chairman Diehl began the meeting at 8:04

OLD BUSINESS

1. Roy promised each and every one of us that he would have his article for the upcoming *Oklahoma Underground* written in no more than 16 days from the day of our meeting. So by Sunday, September 26 editor Sue Bozeman will be sure to have received it from him. Count the day down!

This is what I foolishly recorded in the last minutes, when Roy swore up, down, and sideways that he actually would get this done. It didn't happen. Life goes on.

2. Sue, John, and Roy recounted their presentation to First Unitarian Church of OKC. They had a large attendance, mostly by senior citizens, who were very interested in Spelunking in The Sooner State (aka "SSS"). After their presentation Bill Ellis, an attendee and retired geologist, came forth and gave them a copy of an article that he had written about the economic value of gypsum in Oklahoma. We plan on publishing it in our next **Oklahoma Underground**. COG thanks Mr. Ellis for his contribution.

3. I reported my talks with Lil and Dale Town on the Wednesday prior to the meeting, while I was in Altus, about the eventually forthcoming **Oklahoma Underground**. We had discussed the possibility of including a CD-ROM with the next issue that features a PDF of the issue, color photographs, and other supplemental materials. Although we didn't vote on it at the COG meeting, attendees orally approved this idea.

4. Roy reported that his contact in ODWC has now returned our release forms for accessing the smidgen of Broken Horn Cave that is on ODWC land.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Roy talked about a component of the Compass software, "Cave-X," which allows users to do 3D modeling of their caves.
2. Roy will investigate the possibility of having our summer fun trip at Fitton Cave, Arkansas.

TREASURER'S REPORT

John Talbot read his report, which is included in this newsletter.

Chairman Diehl concluded the meeting at 8:46

Minutes by The Skillful Ogre, first cousin of The Crazy Monkey

MEETINGS.....MEETINGS.....MEETINGS

Remember the November meeting is at Anne's house and the December 10th meeting is a Christmas Party at the Bozeman's place!



TREASURER'S REPORTS

INCOME		EXPENSES	
DIVIDEND	\$	4.95	
TOTALS	\$	4.95	
CASH ON HAND	\$	51.45	
CHECKING	\$	407.22	
SAVINGS	\$	2,585.92	

PREPARED BY TREASURER
JOHN TALBOT

TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 10/3/04 \$ 3,044.59

TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report: Tying up Loose Ends
Location: Cattle Cave
Date: 16 October 2004
Personnel: John Bozeman, Lil Town, Dale Amlee, Sue Bozeman
Written by: Dale Amlee

Once more into the breach, dear friends. That was the attitude for this mildly chilly Saturday morning in October. The last final section of Cattle Cave that had to be reviewed for map accuracy was the one we fondly remember as being cold, wet and altogether unpleasant. The previous month had shown that the bat room is not passable this time of year due to the frenetic activity of the gnats and bats, so to get access to the arm of the cave that needed to be reviewed required an entrance into the "Blessed Relief" exit. The weather for the previous week had included some rainfall, so we all prepared ourselves for the probability of a wet caving trip. I dressed appropriately, layering polypropylene beneath a long sleeve shirt under my caving coveralls.

The Blessed Relief exit is not really an entrance... it's not too difficult to get out, but darn tough to get in. The path is a sort of vertical corkscrew of rather tight proportions, and as Lil sat there trying to mentally visualize the path she also realized that it would be nearly impossible to show that sort of complexity on the typical scale of a caving map. The exit itself goes through about a twenty foot vertical drop while following a helical path around large breakdown boulders. At the bottom we found, much to our relief and surprise, a relatively dry cave passage.

Nowhere near as wet as on our earlier trips through this passage, we smiled as we slogged along, pausing periodically for Lil to get her bearings and check her map for accuracy. The passage was muddy, but it wasn't the waist-deep ice water that we had encountered in previous trips through this area. We zigzagged along through the wet stuff until we reached the area I had previously christened the string of pearls.

This was the first time Lil had been through this section of the cave system before, so we took our time and allowed her to sketch the area to her heart's content. Our own memories of the area were refreshed again, as we checked out the various details of this portion of the cave arm. The last room of this "string" is the most striking visually, always presenting a visitor with a vision of cave walls covered with thousands of droplets of water condensation. These drops reflect the lamps from our headlights back to us, appearing as if there are thousands of diamonds sparkling in the cave. We nicknamed this room "Silver City". We also found two rock faces in that room covered with the names of previous visitors, circa 1985 if I remember the date scratched in the rock.

We made our way up to the top of the trumpet funnel, and sat there wondering how in the world we had ever made our way up and down through there in the past. .

John mentioned that the mapping showed that this room in the cave was the highest point in the cave system.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

With all of Lil's map additions and corrections duly noted, we finally called it quits for the day. Leaving the arm the same way we entered,

we all looked back and wondered if this would truly be the last visit to Cattle Cave before the map project was completed.

POTPOURRI

From the October 5, 2004 Minutes of the Alliance Meeting First Unitarian Church -- Oklahoma City, OK Submitted by Sue Bozeman

"Linda Wasson introduced the program. The subject was Cave Exploring. The presentation was conducted by three veteran members of the Central Oklahoma Grotto, a group that fancies gypsum caves in western Oklahoma. Roy Diehl, the articulate president of that group, bears a striking resemblance for former Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakas (particularly when wearing the helmet he donned for much of his presentation). He and fellow members Sue and John Bozeman told about the organization and answered several questions before and after an informative slide show on the subject. It was a fine presentation, and several in the audience were warming up to the idea of exploring caves. However, when they learned that rattlesnakes often hover around the entrances and bats live in the bowels (frequently in enormous numbers), some lost their enthusiasm for taking up this challenging hobby. Co-presenter John Bozeman suggested that those interested in seeing a particularly beautiful cave might plan a trip to the Caverns of Sonora in Texas."

Tenn. Caves Offer Trove of Undiscovered Creatures

Up to 1,000 Species Await Explorers,
Experts Estimate

By Juliet Eilperin
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, November 1, 2004; Page A12

DUNLAP, Tenn. -- With his ample midriff, mud-spattered jeans and wire-rim glasses, Julian Lewis does not fit the typical profile of the intrepid explorer. But as he gazed at the craggy cave entrance surrounded by oak and hickory trees, he likened himself to "Star Trek's" swashbuckling Capt. James T. Kirk.

"This is a little bit like Captain Kirk going where nobody's ever been before, from a biological standpoint," said Lewis, an Indiana-based cave ex-

pert. "I'm going to unknown biological turf, and I love that, I live for that."

Lewis is in the vanguard of conservationists' ambitious new effort to inventory the living contents of some of the thousands of caves that dominate Tennessee's subterranean landscape. With more than 8,600 known caves, Tennessee has more than any other state, and they provide a home for countless ancient and rare creatures that dwell underground and out of sight.

The caves "are remarkably biodiverse," said David Withers, the state's zoologist. "Very few people know about it. It's not sexy; it doesn't make the papers."

Tennessee's caverns are part of the nation's most elaborate cave network, which extends under Alabama, Georgia and Kentucky, and beyond into Indiana, Virginia and West Virginia.

Most of these caves have never been surveyed for their biodiversity, and some scientific experts estimate that as many as 1,000 species are yet to be discovered. Sheltered until recently from the outside world and with few opportunities to escape, a variety of largely unknown species of cave flora and fauna have evolved out of sight over millions of years.

Many are rarer than ones on the federal government's endangered species list. Biologists use a "Global Rank of Rarity Scale" that specifies whether a species exists in one to five sites in the world, six to 20 sites, 21 to 100 sites and so on. After exploring 22 caves near the Tennessee-Kentucky border last year alone, Lewis discovered 43 species of global significance, including the cave flatworm, the two-clawed spider and four previously unknown species of millipedes.

Withers said Lewis, a private consultant who has devoted more than three decades to cave biology, "can go into any cave and find an organism new to science . . . It blows me away."

Today, many of these sites are under siege, as the toll of development, logging, sewage disposal and vandalism extends into the underground world. Sedimentation left behind by runoff from deforestation and construction, for example, can clog

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passageways and streams on which animals such as the threatened Tennessee cave salamander depend

"Big changes to a cave can wipe {grv}out everything," said Heather Garland, the Nature Conservancy's Tennessee program manager for caves and karst, the term for weathered limestone terrain. "Things grow very slowly, they reproduce very slowly. They survive on stability. They're not very adaptable." Concerned about development's impact on Tennessee's caves, the Conservancy, a private conservation group, launched the survey that Lewis heads, funded in part by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other private foundations.

Lewis's year-long study of 50 to 100 caves seeks to determine exactly how many cave beetles, crickets, millipedes and other invertebrates thrive there. Conservancy officials say the expedition will be one of the most comprehensive bio-inventories ever conducted in southeastern caves. In the 1950s and 1960s, Thomas C. Barr Jr. surveyed several hundred Tennessee caves and distributed the samples to taxonomists across the country.

Armed with glass specimen jars filled with isopropyl alcohol as a preservative and processed limburger cheese or spoiled yogurt for bait, Lewis and Conservancy staffers have been burying traps in caves dotted across a stretch of eastern and middle Tennessee.

The surveyors must contend with an array of logistical and physical challenges. Most caves are on private land, and landowners are wary of drawing attention to them because they attract vandals as well as drug addicts looking for a place to get high.

Caving is also physically grueling. During a typical trip to two caves, Lewis and his assistant had to scramble through a narrow passage while gripping rocks jutting out from each side, wade on hands and knees through freezing water and slog through "boot sticking" mud.

"My definition of a good cave trip is when you can stop the bleeding at the end of the day," Lewis said cheerily as he prepared to enter. Walking into the dark, the biologist started whistling "We're Off to See the Wizard," pausing to exclaim, "Get ready for the lions and tigers and bears!"

Shining his small head lamp on the traps that had lured small animals over two weeks, Lewis began inventorying the cave's inhabitants. His first haul included a spider, a primitive insect-like creature called a springtail that can catapult itself into the air to avoid predators, and an unpi-

mented millipede, which he examined while scanning the walls for live specimens.

One trap offered up a rare find, a tiny blind cave beetle called pseudanophthalmus. The water held another trove of creatures, including a blind white crayfish that was probably several decades old and a sand-colored sculpin fish with black spots that seemed to disappear into the muddy waters.

Some of the species of beetles were so small they looked like dots. Lewis said he would be able to distinguish them only under a microscope. "You have to think small when you do this," he said. Once Lewis issues his final report next year, Garland said, the Conservancy will decide which caves might be worth buying to shield them from development. In the mid-1980s, the Conservancy paid \$29,000 to buy Hubbard's Cave and the 50-acre forest that buffers it in McMinnville, Tenn., home to more than 100,000 federally endangered gray bats.

"It's important to identify the caves that support a rare species before something happens to them," said Robert Currie, an Asheville, N.C.-based U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist. "Knowing where something is a first requirement before you can protect it."

While state officials could take some steps to guard the caves, their task is complicated by the fact that invertebrates such as the millipedes are not considered wildlife under state law and do not enjoy as many protections.

Some Tennessee animals such as the Indiana bat are on the brink of extinction, but Garland said she is optimistic that conservation advocates would be able to protect many plants and species.

"We still have so much in this state," she said. "We haven't lost everything yet." ❧

EARTH TIDES

Written by Steve Belev

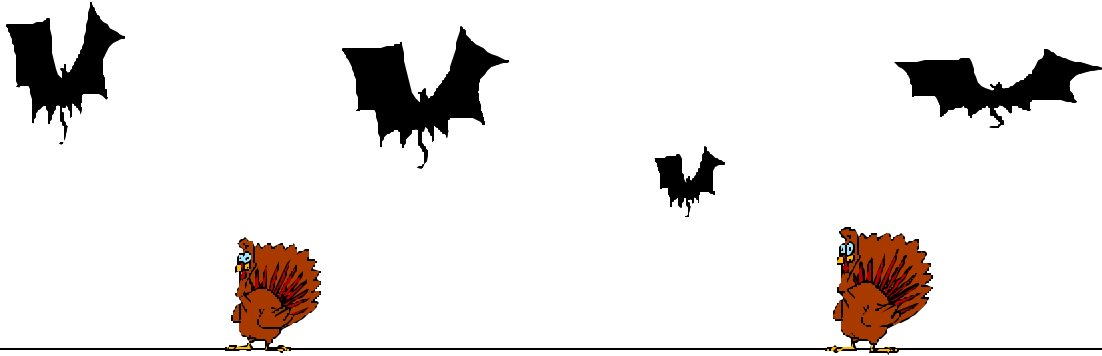
Earth bends out toward both sun and moon
In twice-daily tides, flexing joints in rock
Until caves appear after thousands of years.

So like all oceans, all rivers, streams and lakes,
Caves pulse out through space towards light
Either radiant or reflected and dim

Like water flows up and down
In right-angled joints, honeycombs of stone.

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: Email: oklmt@cablone.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 November meeting
at Anne Ault's place, Friday, November 12.



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