



BEXARfacts

The Bexar Grotto Monthly Newsletter February 2009

REVIEW - CAVING SAFETY

from wikipedia.com

This article is for all of us Newbies!

Caves can be dangerous places; hypothermia, falling, flooding, and physical exhaustion are the main risks. Rescuing people from underground is difficult and time-consuming, and requires special skills, training, and equipment. Full-scale cave rescues often involve the efforts of dozens of rescue workers (often other long-time cavers who have participated in specialised courses, as normal rescue staff are not sufficiently experienced in cave environments), who may themselves be put in jeopardy in effecting the rescue. This said, caving is not necessarily a high-risk sport (especially if it does not involve difficult climbs or diving). As in all physical sports, knowing one's limitations is key. The risks are minimized by a number of techniques:

Using teams of at least of four cavers. If an injury occurs, one caver stays with the injured person while the other two go out for help, providing assistance to each other on their way out.

Notifying people outside the cave as to the intended return time. After an appropriate delay without a return, these will then organise a search party (usually made up by other cavers trained in cave rescues, as even professional emergency personnel are unlikely to have the skills to effect a rescue in difficult conditions).

Use of helmet-mounted lights (hands-free) with extra batteries, and a minimum of three independent sources of light per person.

Sturdy clothing and footwear, as well as a helmet, are necessary to reduce the impact of abrasions, falls, and falling objects. Synthetic fibers and woolens, which dry quickly, shed water, and are warm when wet, are vastly preferred to cotton materials, which retain water and increase the risk of hypothermia. It is also helpful to have several layers of clothing, which can be shed (and stored in the pack) or added as needed. In watery cave passages, polypropylene thermal underwear or wetsuits may be required to avoid hypothermia.

Cave passages look different from different directions. In long or complex caves, even experienced cavers can become lost. To reduce the risk of becoming lost, it is necessary to memorise the appearance of key navigational points in the cave as they are passed by the exploring party. *Each member of a cave party shares responsibility for being able to remember the route out of the cave.* In some caves it may be acceptable to mark a small number of key junctions with small stacks or "cairns" of rocks, or to leave a non-permanent mark such as high-visibility flagging tape tied to a projection.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO CAVING?

By Jill Orr



Inside the Mammoth Cave. That's me in the back reading the brochure!

Sooner or later the question that always comes up between cavers is: "What got you interested in caving?" Each month BexarFacts will feature one or two different club members to answer the inevitable question. And since there are so many new members to the Grotto, even old times stories are new. Because this is a new idea, I'll start with - Me!

When I was about ten years old I wrote to the Kentucky Tourism Board for information. The packet arrived and included was a fascinating brochure about the Mammoth Caves. When I showed it to my dad, he decided to take the family there for vacation.

At the cave, we took the shortest tour because my littlest sister was only 5 years old. I remember

being really disappointed because we were only in the cave for about 1 1/2 hours. It was really cool when the tour guide turned off the lights so we could experience the total darkness of the cave. The enormity of the rooms, the beautiful formations and a complete stillness that I could feel was amazing. I was hooked.

I asked to go to the Carlsbad Caverns the next year, but it was "no" to that. Years later as an adult I finally did go to Carlsbad and on a wild tour into an old guano mine. I also tried to go on a wild cave tour in Pittsburgh one winter, but a snow storm caused the trip to be cancelled. It was on the Discovery tour at Natural Bridge Caverns last summer that I got my first experience of real caving. From the guide I learned about the Bexar Grotto!

If you want to volunteer your story, please feel free to contact me.



On a trip into Deep Cave last year Mark Childre lost his eye looking over a ledge. On the February 14th trip, several man hours were spent unsuccessfully eye searching, so it was decided that Mark's eye got tired of waiting for him and has gone off on a quest of its own to visit famous caves throughout the world. Do you know this cave?*

By the way, Mark has offered a \$100 reward for the safe return of his eye.

CAVING GEAR

There are a lot of options in caving gear and how much you want to spend. Below is the basic caving gear necessary to get started:

- Sturdy hard hat with chin strap, no cycling helmets!
- Three reliable sources of light including hard hat mounted light
- Spare batteries
- Sturdy boots with ankle support
- Elbow and knee pads
- Sturdy cave pack
- Containers for food and water for extended visits
- Individual first aid kit that fits in cave pack

the world beneath the world

CAVING TERMINOLOGY & LINGO

Brain Bucket *Helmet.*

Eardipper *Water passage where the caver must turn his head sideways to breath.*

Armchair Caver *One who talks about caving more than going underground. Modern version is the 'virtual' caver*

Flashlighters *A more derogatory term for spelunkers, generally regarded as connoting a lesser level of preparation, knowledge and concern for conservation.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Additional Information
25 Feb	CPR & AED Training Class	Sponsored by Venturing Crew 410. Pre-requisite to the Wilderness First Aid Training held on February 27-March 1. for details.
25 Feb	Vertical Work	Rob Bisset's house 6 PM
25 Feb	CPR & AED training	Bluff Creek Tower 4201 Medical Drive, Suite 120 San Antonio, TX 78229; 6:30 - 9:30 PM; Cost is \$5
28 Feb	Bracken Work Project	We are building a rainwater collection system. This will evolve setting posts, framing a tin roof, installing piping to water storage tanks and drinking troughs.
18 Mar	ICS Planning Meeting	Rob Bisset's house - 6:30 PM
20 Mar	Distinguished Lecture Series	Dr. Derek Ford will be the Edwards Aquifer Authority's 6th Distinguished Lecturer. \$20 fee to attend the lecture includes lunch.

**On the front page: Ellisons Cave Ellisons Cave - Fantastic Pit in northwest Georgia. The deepest known cave pit in the continental United States, Fantastic Pit in Georgia's Ellison's Cave descends 586 feet (179 meters) straight down*