

# The Hole News

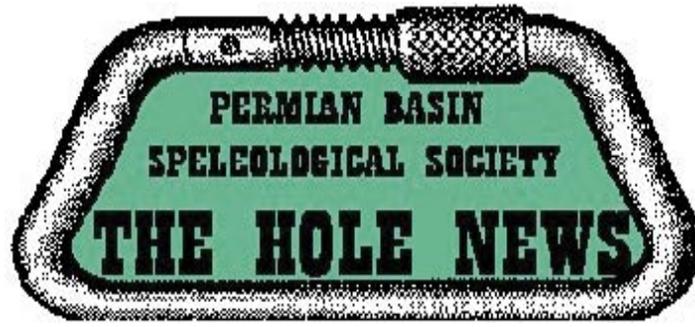
Volume 24 Number 7

July, 2009

## *ICS Special Edition*



*Logo by Switchback Design*



July, 2009

Chartered in 1984 as the 300th Grotto of the NSS

Volume 24 Number 7

# NSS President Puts Out The Welcome Mat

*Gordon Birkhimer, President  
National Speleological Society*

The National Speleological Society (NSS) of the U.S.A. is looking forward to welcoming you to the 15th International Congress of Speleology and annual NSS Convention. We are honored to host this prestigious premier speleological event, and to be the first country to twice host a Congress.

The goals of the NSS are to promote the study and science of speleology, to support the protection of caves and their contents, and to encourage fellowship among those who share these interests. So we are very pleased to provide this outstanding opportunity for our colleagues from all over the world to get to know one another and exchange ideas. It is through the friendships made and the knowledge gained at these International Congresses that we can continue to make important progress in the science and management of caves and karst.

There are only three remaining areas of exploration in the universe: outer space, the deep oceans, and caves. We are fortunate to be the pioneers of one of these last frontiers, the karst ho-

rizons. I hope you will visit some of North America's caves, for NSS members look forward to sharing them with you, our fellow pioneers. There are many interesting day trips planned for you during your week in Kerrville, as well as field camps in significant caving areas before and after the Congress. I hope you will plan to attend and make the most of your visit. Our continent offers a large variety of caves, lava tubes, karst, and pseudo-karst for you to visit, study, and explore. Please be our guests.

The NSS has been preparing for several years to welcome you to this Congress and introduce you to U.S. cavers and scientists. The organizing committee's goal is to make your experience in our country one to remember. I would like to personally thank all of our generous sponsors, excellent volunteers, and the outstanding Schreiner University staff, all of whom are dedicated to making this Congress a splendid success.

We all look forward to meeting you, sharing ideas, and introducing you to new karst horizons. Again, welcome to Kerrville!

## *Scheduled Upcoming Events*

*July 14*  
**PBSS Monthly Meeting  
7:00 p.m. Murray's Deli,  
Midland, TX**

*July 19-26:*  
**ICS/NSS conventions,  
Kerrville, TX**

*Sept. 5-7*  
**SWR Labor Day Regional  
Pinon Cave**

*October 16-18:*  
**Texas Cavers Reunion,  
Paradise Canyon,  
Medina River**

*Nov. 7:*  
**Carlsbad Caverns  
Rock Haul**

*Dec.*  
**PBSS Christmas Party**

*All 2009 NSS/ICS convention information contained within this edition is courtesy of the ICS website. We thank them for their hard work with this historic upcoming event.*

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## A Brief History of the ICS

**Andy Eavis, UIS President**

Over 50 years ago, a number of visionary central European cavers got together and organised the first International Congress of Speleology in Paris. This was the foundation of internationally organised speleology. Then in 1965, at the fourth International Congress in Postojna, Slovenia (then Yugoslavia), the "Union Internationale de Spéléologie" (UIS) was born.

Kerrville, Texas is honoured to experience the 15th Congress in 2009.

Since 1953, the event has evolved from a European-based affair to today's highly international one with people coming from over one hundred countries.

Over this period, progress of the main elements of speleology has also accelerated. Cave exploration is now going on all over the globe, with many new areas being visited.

Suggestions 30 years ago that there were no caves in the Himalayas have long since been superseded. Af-

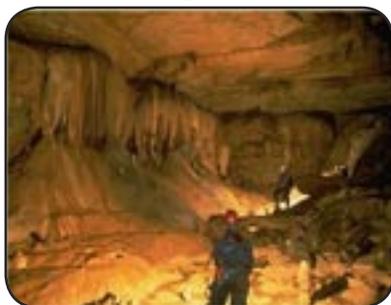
rica and South America are new frontiers with relatively small numbers of caves so far explored.

On the cave science front, who, 30 years ago, could have envisaged the possibility of being able to date speleothems to such accuracy. In some areas of the world we can look at individual storms that happened 350,000 years ago!

There is still a huge amount to do: paleo-sediment, paleo-guano and paleo-stalagmite research - not to mention formation of caves by hydrothermal solution. Probably no more than ten percent of the caves in the world have been explored and only a fraction of the potential cave science accomplished.

What a wonderful activity speleology is and there is no better way of getting an up-to-date appreciation of its many aspects than coming to an international congress.

I look forward to meeting many cave explorers and scientists in Kerrville, USA, in July 2009.



*Cave in the Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee.  
Photo: S. Capps*



*Canoeing in Kerrville.  
Photo: Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau*



*UIS President Andy Eavis on the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, wearing an ICS T-shirt*

## Congress Description

The National Speleological Society (NSS) of the USA submitted a bid to host the 15th International Congress of Speleology (ICS). A delegation attended the ICS in Athens, Greece in 2005 to present the bid, which was unanimously accepted. The 2009 Congress site is Kerrville, Texas. The dates for the ICS are July 19-26, 2009.

Kerrville is centrally located to many karst locales in the United States and is very close to major karst areas in Mexico.

Pre- and post-Congress field camps and excursions are planned to some of the most significant karst and caving areas in the United States and to sites in the Caribbean and other areas.

Pre- and post-Congress activities include field camps (camping) and excursions (sleeping and eating in hotels and restaurants). There will also be day trips during the Congress. Many activities are available near the Kerrville area for family members who are not attending the ICS.

The 2009 International Congress of Speleology promises attendees an outstanding Congress and the opportunity to experience some of the country's best "karst horizons."



*West Texas caving.  
Photo: G. Veni*

***15th International Congress of Speleology &  
2009 National Speleological Society Convention Classes and Workshops***

**SpeleoArt Workshops and Events**

During the week of the ICS, special sessions for speleoartists will be offered, in addition to the SpeleoArt exhibition and competition.

**Cave Photography Workshop**

An informal meeting will be held on Tuesday morning for the presentation of short talks on subjects related to cave photography. Relevant topics include, but are not limited to: techniques, equipment, and esthetic considerations.

**Vertical Workshop**

The Vertical Workshop will be held on Thursday from 11 AM to 5 PM; The workshop is designed to provide a basic overview of climbing equipment, techniques, and safety considerations for American-style single rope techniques. Participants will experience hands-on practice at knot tying, belaying, ladder work, rappelling (with a rack and a Petzl stop), and use of several ascending systems (ropewalker, Mitchell, frog, and prusik knot). Participants should bring a helmet, seat harness, locking carabiner, gloves, and a lunch. Other equipment will be provided for use by participants.

While this workshop will give the novice climber good exposure to using different systems under instructor supervision in a controlled environment, it is not intended as a complete training course.

**Speleology for Cavers**

This one-day course will be offered on Friday, 24 July. Come and learn the difference between strike and dip, vadose and phreatic, and the birds and the bats. Take home with you the reason why there are two parallel passages in Sinnett's Big Room, the meaning of Bögli's mixing corrosion, and the difference between the lifestyles of *Riparia riparia* and *Pipistrellus subflavus*. Experts in speleology will lecture on geology, meteorology, chemistry, hydrology, biology, and paleontology. The course will last the entire day.

**Cave Survey and Cartography Workshop**

This all-day Friday workshop will include demonstrations of software and techniques (so bring your computer, thumb drive, or PowerPoint presentation) and a training session on methods and techniques for survey and cartography. The number of participants is limited to 15; there will be a sign-up sheet at registration.

**What's In Your Cave Pack?**

On Saturday afternoon, 25 July, bring your clean cave pack, fully packed for an average trip (or bring a PowerPoint presentation, if you aren't bringing cave gear to the Congress). Participants may display the contents of their packs, explaining why they carry each of the items; interesting and useful discussion is anticipated.

***15th International Congress of Speleology &  
2009 National Speleological Society Convention  
Programs and Schedules***

The 15th International Congress of Speleology will have a full array of sessions and symposia. Poster sessions will also be presented, offering opportunities for Congress registrants to meet and talk with poster authors.

To see the current program schedule online, go to [www.ics2009.us/nssconv.html](http://www.ics2009.us/nssconv.html) and click on Schedules. This link connects you to a large Adobe Acrobat PDF file which can be viewed and printed. The printed size is about equal to 2 letter or A4 sheets (tabloid); it can be resized to fit different paper sizes. Detailed schedules listing session and symposium titles and times, as well as the titles and authors of papers, will appear as soon as possible.

**Special Meetings, Events, And Discussion Groups**

**UNESCO/IUGS International Geoscience Program (IGCP) Project 513 Business Meeting**

The purpose of IGCP Project 513 is to increase and improve global understanding of karst and water resources and their effects on ecological health and on human issues which involve water supply, agriculture, and urban development. This is being accomplished through the sharing of ideas, experiences, and resources to develop solutions to karst water resource challenges. Chris Groves is coordinating this Tuesday afternoon meeting of the project's members; others who are interested are welcome to attend.

**Cave Diving Discussion Meeting**

The purpose of this Thursday morning meeting is to discuss the laws related to cave diving in the world: for diver certification, for exploration, and for discoveries.

**White Nose Syndrome Discussion**

This four-hour meeting on Thursday afternoon, hosted by the NSS, will include introductory material followed by open discussion.

**Lightning Talks**

Did you miss the deadline to submit a paper? Do you have something to present that is not enough for a full paper? Do you have late-breaking news that you want to share at the Congress? Then come to Lightning Talks on Friday afternoon! This session, moderated by Jim Washington, consists of five-minute talks about anything concerning caves, cavers, or caving. Bring your visuals in PowerPoint format on a USB flash drive. When you arrive, a card will be available on which you can write your name and the title of your presentation. Hold up the card to be given your five-minute opportunity to speak. The session will end when there are no more speakers or no more time. Whether you want to talk or only to listen, come to Lightning Talks for a fast-paced and exciting assortment of brief presentations.

**BCRA map grades / UIS map grades: Use, limitations, improvement**

The UIS Infomatics Commission's Survey and Mapping Working Group invites you to a special meeting on grades for maps and surveys. This meeting will take place on Saturday morning; see your program for time and location. Many cavers are familiar with British Cave Research Association (BCRA) map grades, which indicate the precision of the survey and the level of detail. In many parts of the world, BCRA grades are indicated on cave maps, even in countries that have no historical link to Britain. The BCRA grades have effectively become "international" grades. In Sweden they were even regarded as UIS grades, although no record has been found by the Working Group of formal adoption by the UIS.

The aim of this special session is to discuss the grades, to see where and how they may be improved, and to find a consensus in order to establish official UIS grades. Suggested topics of discussion include improving the grading of drawings and upgrading or abolishing grades "that should not be used." Discussion is open. Working Group Chairman Philipp Häuselmann asks you to please come and share your thoughts!

**The Largest Maps in the World of the Longest Caves in the World**

Toward the end of the Congress week, very large-scale maps of four famous caves on US National Park Service land (Wind Cave, Jewel Cave, Mammoth Cave, and Lechugilla Cave) will be available for viewing. The US National Park Service is sponsoring the display of these amazing maps on the gymnasium floor, where you can walk (or crawl) alongside the passageways!

**Cave Restoration Seminar**

A review of the current techniques of cave restoration (walls, speleothems, etc.) will be held on Sunday morning, July 26. The seminar will include invited papers, open discussions, and possibly demonstrations of some tested products. For more information, contact Val Werker.

## *SpeleOlympic Competitions*

Do you think you are fast at climbing a rope? A cable ladder? Are you a good surveyor? How well do you move through a cave? Can you squeeze through smaller holes than anyone else? This is your chance to find out.

The SpeleOlympics will offer competitions in rope and ladder climbing, surveying, maneuvering through obstacle courses, and other cave-related skills.

Participation is free and open to everyone, with age limitations in some events. Valuable prizes will be given to the winners. Some competitions will have winners in several age categories, so no one is too young or too old to join the fun! The SpeleOlympics will consist of the following events. Dates, times, and locations of the events will be published in the Congress Program. None of the events will be held in caves.

**The Rope Climbing Contests** will include the 30m and 120m rope climbs, with separate divisions based on age for men and women.

**Obstacle Course.** The contestant must properly negotiate a series of cave-like obstacles. This will be a timed event with separate divisions for men and women

**Rebelay Course.** This competition will measure the contestant's ability to safely and quickly navigate a series of rebelays and deviations that resemble those found in caving situations. Scoring will be based on the time to complete the course, with demerits subtracted for safety violations. Participation will be subject to time limitations and will be on a first-come, first-served basis. There will be separate divisions for men and women.

**Cable Ladder Climb.** The contestant must safely and quickly ascend and descend a cable ladder, which will hang freely for a length of approximately 7-10m. This will be a timed event with separate categories for men and women.

**Survey Contest.** Each team of surveyors must negotiate a predefined course measuring distance, azimuth, and inclination. There will not be separate categories for men and women.

**Team competition.** In the spirit of international friendship, multi-national teams will compete in all five of the above contests, with their best achievements in each contest combined to create the Team Competition Contest score.

## *International Cave Arts and Music Salons*

The International Cave Arts and Music Salons promote and recognize excellent cave-related art, artists and musicians. They are open to everyone, regardless of caving affiliation or attendance at the Congress. The entries for each salon will be exhibited from 19-26 July 2009 at the International Con-

gress of Speleology (ICS), although in some salons only the best entries will be shown. The highest awards for each salon will be presented, and a portrait of the winner shown, during the Congress Thursday evening Salon Awards Program.

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