

P.B.S.S. SPYLUNK

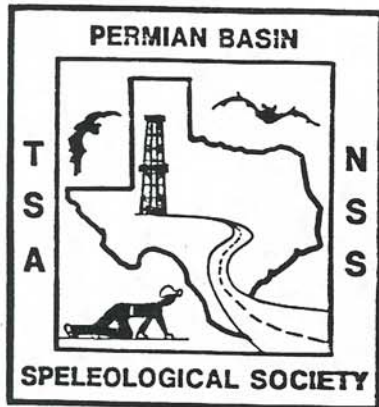
JULY 1984

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The P.B.S. Monthly Spylunk

JULY, 1984



BILL GREENLEE - PRESIDENT
919 N.E. AV. 'F'
ANDREWS, TEXAS 79714
(915) 523-9550

MEETING: The July meeting of the PBSS will be held THURSDAY, July 19, 7:30 PM at the home of Bill Greenlee, 919 N.E. Avenue "F", Andrews, TX. Call 523-9550 if you need directions. Final plans for the July trip will be made at this meeting, so if you plan on going caving, be there!

IMPORTANT STUFF: Exalted Grand Poobah: At the June meeting it was decided that Bill Greenlee is the new PBSS Exalted Grand Poobah, replacing Bill Bentley, who resigned because of work commitments. As President, Bill now be handling most of the monthly grotto trips, so if you have any suggestions for future trips, or if you want to sign up for a scheduled trip, give him a call. The grotto owes its thanks to Bill Bentley, who did an outstanding job as grotto organizer and president over the last 10 months or so.

Southwestern Region: The PBSS was voted in to the Southwestern Region at the regional meeting, Fort Stanton Cave, June 16-17. The grotto is now affiliated with both the SWR and the TSA, which means that any spylunk who gets the urge to be involved in NSS activities on a regional level can make a choice, depending on where he or she caves the most. Bill Greenlee represented us at this meeting, and his report is given below.

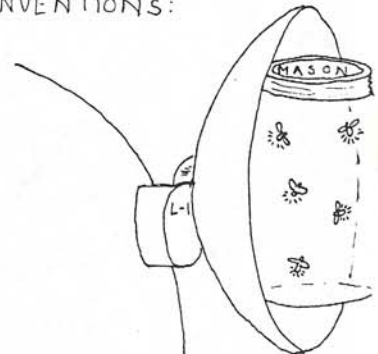
IMPORTANT EVENTS: August 11-12, 1984: PVG Goat Roast, 3-Mile Hill. Call Dave Belski (505-885-6168) for info. September 1-3, 1984: SWR regional meeting, Lake McMillan Caves. Call Dave Belski for info. This may be your last chance to see these neat caves, since it appears they will be flooded when the lake level is raised.

CAVE TRIPS: June 21-22, 1984 - Bill Greenlee is working on getting permits for one of the caves at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Chimney and Spider caves have been mentioned as possibilities. Call Bill Greenlee for further info and sign up. Final plans will be made at the July meeting, so if you sign up for the trip, plan to be there!

August 18-19, 1984 - Pink Ridge Caves, Guadalupe Mountains. Permits have been obtained for these caves. Call Tony Grieco or Bill Greenlee if you are interested in going.

Please note that our cave trips are not by any means restricted to PBSS members! Our June trip had two folks from Mesilla Valley Grotto, and we do encourage members of other grottos to participate in our trips. We, in turn, would appreciate the opportunity to attend caving trips sponsored by other grottos. If any other grottos would send notices of upcoming activity to the SPYLUNK, we will be more than happy to list them here to help keep our membership informed as to what is going on!

LITTLE KNOWN (AND LESS APPRECIATED) SPELEO-INVENTIONS:



#5: THE 'NOTRIT' FIREFLY-POWERED CAVERS CAP LAMP! NO BATTERIES TO CHARGE - NO SMELLY CARBIDE! (FIREFLY FOOD INCL.)

RECENT ACTIVITY: June 9, 1984 - Odessa Meteor Crater shaft (report by Bill Bentley):

Participants: Bill Bentley, Richard Galle, Tony Grieco, Terry Hill.

Since the actual trip into this 165' deep shaft, I have regarded it as one of the dumbest things I have ever done. The City of Odessa/Ector County Parks and Recreation Manager Richard Galle had contacted me on June 3rd, 1984 and had first mentioned the idea of rappelling down the shaft at the meteor crater to survey, map and take slides, with the hope of renewing interest in the crater as a park. The lid to the shaft was welded shut and Richard was to approach the County about having a welder cut open the lid and put hinges and a clasp with lock on it. Projected entry was set for Saturday, June 9th.

I contacted members of the local caving group about dropping the shaft. I had always been lured to this since I had first seen the entrance several years ago. Finally, after the week-long wait the day came, and on Saturday morning we met at Tony Grieco's house and set into action our plans for the coming day. They were as follows: meet at Ricahrd Galle's apartment @ 1:00 p.m., then proceed to the Parks and Recreation office to gather gas masks (neither of which were functional, unfortunately - editor) and 2-way radios. We would then meet at the crater site around 2:00 p.m.

Everything went smoothly and by 2:00 p.m. we were assembled at the crater shaft. We rigged the rope (a 300 ft. section of Bluewater II) to the steel bars which composed the fence around the entrance, and it gave us a tie-off point above the half-moon shaped lid. Richard was the first to rappel down, carrying a .357 gun for snakes, radio, and climbing gear. Once past the squeeze at the entrance he was off. His reports indicated that the shaft was not cut into rock, but "sand", and he estimated the shaft to be approximately 8 ft by 8 ft. The temperature was decreasing as he descended. About three-quarters of the way down he reported a very strong smell coming from the bottom. Finally after several minutes he was on the bottom, and reported that there was something dead. I then rigged in and started the descent. After several feet I noticed the walls were blackened with soot from a fire of a distant past, and I could still make out shovel marks in places. To have been dug from sand and dirt, the shaft was remarkably stable.

Once on the bottom I noticed two dead rats, one a fresh kill (death by rope weight!) and one several days old. The smell was terrible and the stench of death lingered heavily in the air. I signaled to Tony that I was off rope, and he rigged in and started down. The entrance of the shaft, with its concrete canopy and half-moon shaped lid looked as if it were miles away. I looked around the floor and it was muddy and wet. Small pebbles were showering down as Tony's feet touched the loose walls far above us. The floor was becoming clear as my eyes adjusted to the darkness, and I noticed that there were many carcasses all about us, some recognizable and others in advanced decay.

As Tony was about to reach the floor, Richard and I both tried to keep him off the dead rats and in the process put his foot on the carcass that had been there the longest. The smell at that point was anything but pleasant, so before telling anyone of my actions, I had rigged in and was climbing, trying to concentrate on getting up the rope and not on the nausea and stomach-turning sickness that would soon beset all. Three minutes or so later and I was near the top and out of that unfriendly place. Ice cold drinks in the near 100° temperature outside the shaft made me realize how lucky I was to be outside in the FRESH air.

Richard then started climbing using a two Jumar/chest roller rig, but at a point half way up the combination of the wretched smell, the unfamiliar chest-roller and the length of the climb got to him and his right arm began to cramp. Terry (who wisely elected to stay above ground-editor) and I rigged a rescue pulling system using two Jumars and pulled Richard up about 10 ft. or so, and he was able to climb out on his own power the rest of the way. Total time on the rope was 20 to 30 minutes. Meanwhile, Tony, who had been in the pit the longest, had become sick and had begun to mumble to himself (that wasn't mumbling, that was cussing!-editor). Once rigged in he was out in three minutes. Then Terry pulled the rope from this godforsaken pit, and I quickly slammed the lid and locked it.

Asked my opinion of this epic journey, I said I was going to go home, put my gear away, clean up and go to bed - and forget this day ever happened.

JUNE 16-17, 1984: Southwestern Region Meeting, Fort Stanton Cave (report by Bill Greenlee) - The SWR's summer regional attracted nearly a hundred cavers and other humanoids. At the "formal" meeting, held outside the BLM's mobil field office, these issues affecting the PBSS were decided:

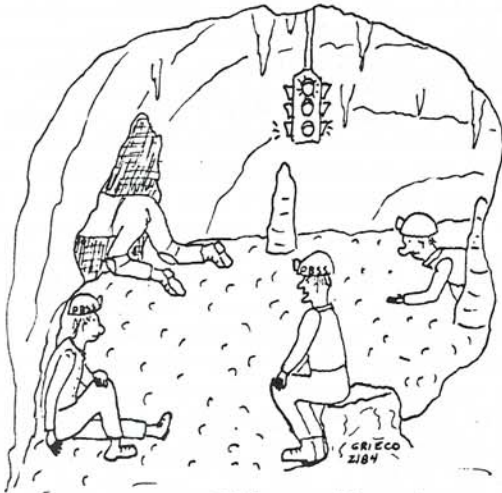
- The PBSS and all current members now enjoy full privileges of SWR membership, by unanimous vote;
- All future prospective SWR members, however, must be voted in individually.

Following the meeting, the BLM coordinated team projects, both inside the cave and on the surface. Most projects involved digging out new leads. The exquisite sensuality of Fort Stanton Cave's mud is only surpassed by that of Comanche Springs Cave.

On Sunday, Randy Cutts and Phil Smith of Mesilla Valley Grotto conducted me through the "Hall of Velvet" in the new section of the cave. The cave velvet formations strongly resemble grape popsicles fresh out of the freezer. This spectacle made the "Hell Hole" crawl extremely worthwhile.

Other activities at the regional included ridge walking, marshmallow roasting, brew quaffing, cribbage, and yarn spinning.

JUNE 23-24, 1984: Hidden Cave, Black Cave, Cottonwood Cave (report by Bill Greenlee): Participants: Tim George, Bill Greenlee, Tony Grieco, Dick Larson, David Nice.



I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH THE TRAFFIC HAS PICKED UP IN THIS CAVE - THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO HANDLE IT!!

Cottonwood Cave: The view into Cottonwood's mouth is very inspiring indeed! The gaping maw is similar to that of Carlsbad Caverns in appearance. This trip marked my first into Cottonwood during the day. My previous night trip kept me from seeing the entrance's splendor. Dave Nice accompanied us as far as the twilight zone before returning for a look at Guadalupe surface geology.

At the gated side passage to Wonderland, Tony Grieco elected to remain in the big section of the cave since he had suffered an attack of "Burger Kingitis" the previous night (cave'til you puke!-editor), and didn't feel quite up to negotiating the vertizontal.

Tim opened the gate while Dick showed me the balcony overlooking the trunk passage. We all made the 30' chimney with little trouble. At the vertizontal, we had to doff most of our equipment - Tim removed his shirt. However, at the Keyhole, Tim could not make the squeeze even if he'd been naked. A diligent search revealed an upper bypass to the Keyhole, which Tim took.

Wonderland is a series of three small chambers, jam-packed full of pretties. It's the most marvelous display of helictites I've yet seen. Also, a serene stream covered with patches of shelf-stone greets the explorer. After pushing a few leads out of Wonderland, we departed.

We met Tony back at the gate, where he reported poking around the lower level of the trunk passage and finding lots of old graffiti. This was Tony's second attempt at Wonderland, and he was thwarted both times. Maybe next time!

Hidden Cave: We rigged the drop into Hidden using Tony's virgin 100' rope. All five of us rapelled directly to the lower section. Hidden strikes me as being a "TV" cave - flat floor, big room, highly decorated. All that's missing is the colored lights. We all split up hither and yon for a couple hours of poking, crawling and napping. We rigged the 25' drop in the back corridor and Tony descended but reported no further leads. Everyone ascended safely. Dave did exceptionally well with his first vertical cave.

Black Cave: After all the fuss and worry I'd heard about finding this elusive cave, we walked right to the entrance. Black is one of the wetter Guadalupe caves I've visited. The dark walls, floor and ceiling gobbled up light faster than we could pump it out - hence the name, "Black" We all tried our skill at skirting pools, negotiating slick slopes, and chimneying. A splendid time was had by all.

JUNE 30, 1984: Lead checking - Bill Bentley, Richard Galle, Tony Grieco and Terry Hill went on a trek to S. Texas to check out some leads. Only one opening was found, a promising looking little hole, but this pinched off about 10 feet below the surface. The other lead could not be located, but another try will be made later. Afterward Bill and Ricahrd ducked their heads into Amazing Maze Cave, to give Richard a look at it.

JULY 8, 1984: Out to Lunch Cave, Comanche Springs Cave (report by Bill Bentley) Participants: Bill Bentley, Anthony Ivy
This trip started as a wild hair spur of the moment decision and after trying to call several people I managed to get Anthony to accompany me. I had some directions scribbled down that Dennis Haynes had given me last April and they proved to be very accurate. We departed Midland at 11:30 P.M. and arrived at a roadside park near the cave at 2:30 A.M. We slept until 7:00 A.M. and found the entrance to O.T.L. about an hour later. For the first time in a long time the cave was right where they said it was. Once inside we explored all of the easy upper level passages first and then proceeded to some small chimney squeezes and finally reached the lower level of the cave. A short rest and we exited the cave after an hour. The cave was very heavily vandalized and was very dry, there was also some graffiti in places. The entire cave seemed to be made up of breakdown rocks. On the way back we stopped in Fort Stockton and went into Comanche Springs Cave only as far as the first water pit "Stephen's Well" and I checked the register and it seems that quite a lot of people have been visiting the cave.

MISCELLANEOUS: Cover - The neat photo on the cover of this issue is a picture of two cave-dwelling, nectar-eating bats, male and female. The photo is by Dr. Merlin Tuttle and first appeared in the January, 1984 Smithsonian. Our thanks to Dr. Tuttle for giving us his permission to reproduce it in the SPYLUNK.

Bats: Speaking of bats, Dr. Tuttle also sent me a considerable amount of literature on an organization which he founded and heads, BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL. Enclosed herein you will find a copy of one of their brochures, and all the other literature will be available at meetings or on request. Several people at the last meeting donated money to enroll the PBSS as a member in this fine organization, but this should not discourage any of you from joining individually. We, as cavers and thus frequent invaders of the bats' habitat, have a great responsibility to protect these critters and educate people about them. TO HELL WITH THE WHALES, SAVE THE BATS! (Just kidding, whale fans...)

KUDOS: Our thanks to Lety Hernandez for once again typing the SPYLUNK especially the part about Meteor Crater, which makes me sick just reading about it. Also thanks to Bill Greenlee and Bill Bentley for their trip reports, and again to Dr. Tuttle for the cover photo. Keep those contributions coming in!

The way this newsletter reads, you'd think the PBSS is a mutual admiration society for 4 or 5 people! Don't be shy, I know you're out there someplace - send your cartoons, articles, trip reports, letters, jokes (I might even stoop low enough to take an Aggie joke or two), poems, etc., to Tony Grieco, 4723 W. Illinois, Midland, Tx. 79703. Oztotl will bless you for it!

INTRODUCING BATS

Using sophisticated ultrasonic signals for navigation and communication, bats have mastered the night skies just as dolphins have mastered the seas. And like dolphins, bats are highly intelligent and easily trained.

Bats are among the world's most diverse and fascinating mammals. Nearly a thousand kinds comprise approximately a fourth of all mammal species, and they inhabit nearly every part of the earth. They range in size from a bumblebee-sized bat that is the world's smallest mammal to giant flying foxes with six-foot wingspans. Although bats are, for their size, the world's longest lived mammals (more than 30 years), their highly specialized life styles and unusually slow reproductive rates (usually only one young per year) make adaptation to habitat changes extremely difficult. Furthermore, bats form the largest and most vulnerable colonies of any warm-blooded animal.

COMMERCIAL, SCIENTIFIC AND ECOLOGICAL VALUES

YOUR GROCERY STORE WOULD NOT BE THE SAME WITHOUT BATS.

Fruit-eating bats are nature's most important seed-dispersing mammals. And nectar-eating bats, along with some fruit-bats that visit flowers, pollinate more than 130 genera of tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs. Such bats have greatly influenced the survival of many plants that are now of great commercial value.

The nearly endless list of valuable fruits, nuts, spices and derivatives includes:

peaches	avocados	plantain
carob	bananas	cashews
palm sugar	breadfruit	cloves
figs	mangos	dates
guavas	Tequila	Javanese long pepper

Chiclet latex for chewing gum

Manila & sisal fibers for rope

Balsa wood & other timber

Kapak for life preservers, surgical bandages, cooking oil & livestock feed

Many economically valuable plants continue to depend upon bats. For example, throughout Southeast Asia people enjoy the delicious fruits of the Durian tree. One hectare of these trees may produce fruit worth \$10,000 or more annually, and regional sales total 112 million dollars per year. Durians are pollinated almost entirely by a single species of bat. This bat, the Cave-dwelling Nectar-eating Bat, is seriously threatened. Too many are killed for human food, and their roosting caves are being destroyed by limestone quarries.

In West Africa the Iroko tree is also bat-dependent. Its annual timber harvest is valued at 100 million dollars. Straw-colored Fruit Bats are responsible for Iroko seed dispersal, yet poorly informed governments are considering their mass eradication.

BATS ARE THE ONLY MAJOR PREDATORS OF NIGHT-FLYING INSECTS.

A single endangered Gray Bat may eat up to 3,000 or more insects nightly, and large bat colonies consume countless billions. For example, the Bracken Cave (Texas) colony of Free-tailed Bats, numbering roughly 20 million individuals, may eat a quarter of a million pounds of insects in a single night!

MILLIONS OF OLD WORLD FRUIT-BATS ARE HARVESTED FOR HUMAN FOOD.

Bats are hunted for human consumption throughout much of Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands. They are even eaten in Australia. In some countries hundreds of thousands may be harvested annually from a single cave. On Guam, people pay up to \$25 a plate for a bat dinner. In West Africa a market hunter can earn \$500 in a day. The demand for bats is increasing, yet lack of adequate management threatens to drive several important

BAT GUANO IS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FERTILIZER.

In the southwestern U.S. as many as 100,000 tons of bat guano were once mined from a single cave. Guano continues to be a major source of fertilizer in developing countries. In Thailand, bat guano is considered to be the best fertilizer available, and in Sarawak it is used to fertilize nearly a third of the world supply of black and white peppers.

BATS ARE EXTREMELY VALUABLE IN MEDICAL AND OTHER RESEARCH.

Because bats use highly sophisticated sonar, are exceptionally long-lived and disease resistant, can become torpid at any time, and have nearly transparent wing membranes, they are increasingly sought for research. Their contributions to science are many. For example, they have contributed to development of navigational aids for the blind, to vaccine development, to drug testing, and to studies of aging, birth control, and artificial insemination.

THREATS TO BAT SURVIVAL

EXTERMINATION: Simply because bats are nocturnal and secretive, they are misunderstood, intensely feared, and relentlessly persecuted. Despite grossly exaggerated "news" stories, bats seldom transmit disease to man. When people are endangered, it is normally because they have foolishly picked up a sick bat that bites in self-defense. Mortality statistics show that even our own pet dogs are far more dangerous! Nevertheless, thousands of bat colonies are destroyed annually in the name of public health. Worldwide, tens of thousands of bat caves and other roosts have been poisoned, blown-up or bulldozed shut, killing countless millions of beneficial bats. Entire cave ecosystems often are simultaneously destroyed.

HUMAN DISTURBANCE: Millions of bats have been killed by people who explore caves. Many of these people are unaware of the damage they do. Others intentionally kill bats. Hibernating bats must conserve limited fat supplies until spring or face starvation. Yet in winter each human entry into a bat hibernating cave causes the bats to waste 10 to 30 days of stored fat reserve. In



Summer young bats die from human disturbance at their nursery roosts. Most caves can be explored without harm to bats, but cavers must be educated regarding how and when.

PESTICIDE POISONING: In the early 1960's an estimated 150 million Free-tailed Bats fed over farms of the southwestern U.S. They caught approximately a quarter million tons (metric) of insects annually (half there and half while wintering in Mexico). But since then, these bat populations have declined drastically, some by as much as 99%. Most apparently died from the overuse of agricultural pesticides. Voracious appetites and slow reproduction make bats everywhere extremely vulnerable.

OVER-EXPLOITATION: Even in countries where bats are of obvious economic value, they seldom receive legal protection. Where laws are passed, they are rarely enforced. Consequently, over-exploitation of bats is a serious threat. Large flying fox bats are increasingly threatened by the restaurant trade. Numerous populations of smaller bats, especially in Asia, have been decimated for use in folk medicines and aphrodisiac potions. Finally, many thousands more die annually because of their great value to research. Management is essential if viable populations are to be maintained.

HABITAT LOSS: Many animals have become extinct from habitat loss alone. But for bats, this is only one of many devastating threats.

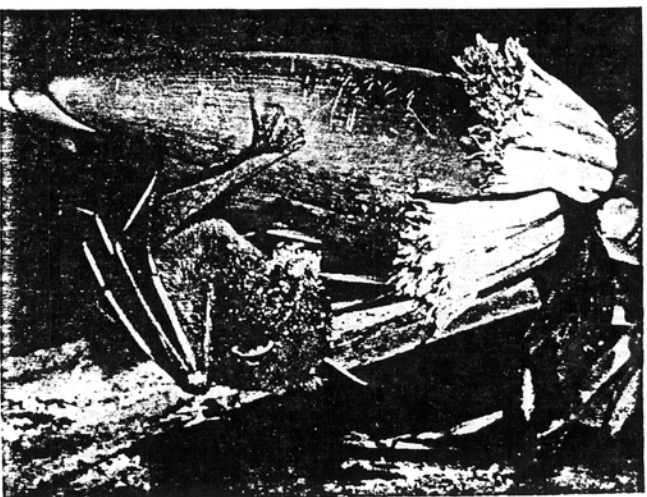
WHY BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL?

Bat Conservation International was founded to meet urgent and increasing conservation demands that require major funding. The purpose of BCI is to prevent extinction of bat species, to insure survival of viable bat populations, and to inform the public of the value of bats. Many existing conservation organizations are interested and willing to help, but they require reliable information to deal with specific needs and widespread public misconceptions. BCI is meeting these needs.

The Directors of BCI, Drs. Merlin D. Tuttle and Robert E. Stebbings, are internationally recognized authorities on bat biology and conservation. They combine more than 40 years of experience and are closely allied with experts and conservation organizations worldwide. Their research has been featured by the National Geographic Society, by BBC film specials, and by many scientific journals.

BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

c/o Milwaukee Public Museum
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233 USA



YOUR SUPPORT IS URGENTLY NEEDED

Despite their obvious value, bats are perhaps the most relentlessly and unjustifiably persecuted animals on earth. Although they comprise a fourth of the world's mammal species, their conservation needs have received extremely little attention. Bats are disappearing at alarming rates. Some are already extinct, and many more may soon become extinct if human misconceptions are not corrected. Bat colonies numbering hundreds of thousands and even millions have been destroyed in a single day, and this destruction continues. Such activities cannot be countered by a mere handful of dedicated scientists. Most of the largest bat colonies are already gone. In many cases, protective action taken even a year from now may be too late. The survival of millions of bats depends upon unified and well funded action.



BCI's logo is from an ancient Chinese design. Five bats symbolize the five blessings — health, long life, prosperity, love of virtue, and natural death. The stylized bats are commonly depicted in red, the color of good luck and good fortune.