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THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**Next Meeting of the PBSS:**

The next official meeting of the Permian Basin Speleological Society will be held on **Tuesday, August 8**, around **7:00 PM**, in the back meeting room of Murray's Delicatessen. Murray's is located at 3211 West Wadley, Midland, Texas.

**Our Agenda:**

Meeting

Future PBSS events



If you need more directions or information call our official contact person, Walter Feaster @ (915)694-1824 or (915)559-3297, or E-Mail: <wfeaster@home.com> or <wfeaster@caver.net>.

"The Hole News" is the monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons maybe reproduced by cave oriented publications that exchange newsletters with PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Please observe copy righted © articles. Items for this newsletter can be sent to the Editor, "The Hole News", c/o Walter Feaster, 4307 Harvard Ave., Midland, TX. 79703. Regular membership dues are only \$10.00 and includes one voting right, associate membership is \$ 5.00 and does not include a newsletter. Dues should be sent to PBSS Secretary/ Treasurer, c/o Walter Feaster, (address above). If you're interested in caving or even if you think you might like to try it, then contact Kerry Lowery @ (915)394-4230 or <lowery4@crcom.net>. Or if you are not from this area and some how through circumstances beyond you're control or ours found a copy of "The Hole News" then you should contact the National Speleological Society at 2813 Cave Avenue, Huntsville AL, 35810-4431, or <www.caves.org/defaultjs.htm>.

**"PBSS Home Page"**

<http://www.caver.net/pbss/pbss.htm>

Web space donated courtesy of Bill Bentley & Caprok.net ISP.



**Future Cave Trips, Events, and Projects:**

**August 4-Bracken Bat Cave Work Trip:** Do your part, contact Bob Cowell at <bcow911@aol.com>.

**August 18-Bracken Bat Cave Work Trip:** Cavers helping Cavers, Caves, Bats, contact Bob Cowell at <bcow911@aol.com>.

**September 2-4-TSA Labor Day Project:** At Bustamane, Nueve Leon. More information at TSA web site <www.texascavers.com/tsa>, or I will have information at the next PBSS meeting.

**\*\*\*September 9-PBSS Rock Haul @ CACA:** Contact Walter Feaster\*\*

**September 9-10-Colorado Bend State Park Project:** San Saba County, TX Contact Terry Holsinger or Dale Barnard.

**October 14-15 -Colorado Bend State Park Project:** San Saba County, TX Contact Terry Holsinger or Dale Barnard.

**October 21-22 -The TEXAS CAVER REUNION:** 'Nuff said.

**October 28-30 -Powell's Cave Survey Project:** Menard Co., TX. A time honored trip. Contact Terry Holsinger. 512.443.4241, <trhli@sprynet.com>.

**November 17-26 -Traditional Thanksgiving trips to Mexico:** Haven't been caving in "Old" Mexico?...Thanksgiving is probably your best opportunity. Go see why Texas cavers spend ALL their holidays down south. Contact who?

**\*\*\*December 2-PBSS Rock Haul @ CACA:** Contact Walter Feaster\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*Denotes a PBSS Grotto Trip\*\*\*\*\*

\*Due to permit restrictions or other limitations Grotto members have priority.\*

**On Going Projects:**

**CRF- -Carlsbad Caverns:** Expeditions usually occur on holiday weekends. Contact Barbe Barker (972)594-1183 or <cavers@gte.net>. Or possibly CRF website -www.cave-research.org. (More ⇨)

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**High Guads Restoration Project (HGRP):** Upcoming events will take place the last weekend of each month. For more info contact Susan Herpin @ <sherpin@caverns.com> or Allen Laman @ <iLove2cave@apex2000.net>.

**Lincoln National Forest-Capitan Peak Study Area (LNF-CPSA):** October 7-13. Ridge walking and cave survey. Contact Dick Venters at <rventers@aol.com>. Everyone welcome.

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**Fort Stanton Bat Cave Dig (FSBCD):** Do you dig caves? Here is your chance to find new passages. Tentative dates: August 4-6, & September 1-4. Contact John Corcoran III @ john\_j\_corcoran\_iii@msn.com or Dick Venters @ <rventers@aol.com>.

**\*\*PBSS Rock Hauling At Carlsbad Caverns:** PBSS on going restoration in the Big Room of Carlsbad Caverns. Lots of fun. Tentative dates are: September 9, and December 2. Reserve a spot now, they are going fast. Contact Ruel Metcalf at (915)263-4890 or

**Editor's Note:** I must apologize to Rebecca for not publishing this trip report sooner. I think I received it almost a year ago. It must have been miss filed, in other words I lost it in the chaos of a mess I call a filing system. Hey, I have caved in Texas?

### Mitchell Caverns

When Tom obtained a job as a cavern guide for the Providence Mountains State Recreation Area in California, we quickly had to pack up everything we owned and move in less than a week. As we headed west, we hoped to see a few sights along the way. Of course, being cavers we hoped to visit a cave or two. Unfortunately, Kartchner Cavern near Benson, Arizona had not yet opened and we had to settle for a cave in Tucson called Colossal Cave which is operated by the Pima County. The cave tour costs \$7.00 per adult and lasts about 45 minutes.

Colossal Cave is not a very large cave nor are there many formations to speak about. The paved trail throughout the cave figure eights and backtracks so as to make the passages seem longer. Display cases containing artifacts found in the area line one corridor probably to give visitors something in the cave to look at. Most of the stalactites are heavily vandalized lacking their glorious tips and fake tombstones and skeletons were scattered about in honor of Halloween. As we toured the cave, Tom mumbled, "I miss the Guads."

Our guide spoke of the many bat species and outlaws that once inhabited the cave as he leaned against a formation only to tell visitors not to touch formations later on the tour. But it was his Texas that really accentuated his professionalism. Colossal Cave is basically a desperate attempt to make an attraction out of something that is normally only interesting to cavers. I fear that the fate of Colossal Cave may be sealed by the opening of Kartchner Cavern.

Providence Mountains S.R.A. has around 50 known caves with the most famous of these being Mitchell Caverns and Winding Stair Cave. Mitchell Caverns is a developed cave with cement trails and electric lights. Winding Stair Cave is a backcountry cave where for a \$25 permit fee, cavers can drop the three vertical pits of the cave, turn around, and climb back out. In order to visit Winding Stair Cave, at least half of the group must have previously been to the cave so needless to say visitation to the cave is somewhat limited.

The park's caves are found roughly between the rhyolite and limestone layers of the Providence Mountains. Mitchell Caverns consists of a combination of two caves, El Pakiva Cave derived from Chemehuevi Indian words meaning the eyes of the mountain because of the two parallel entrances and Tecopa Cave named after a Shoshone chieftain. The two were joined by an air locking tunnel to make one continuous caving tour.

Mitchell Caverns has a vast and very interesting history beginning with the use of the cave by the Chemehuevi Indians. Numerous artifacts such as seed beaters and arrow points have been found in the

caves. Additionally, sloth bones have been discovered in the caves. However, the modern day fame of the cave is owed to the efforts of a man named Jack Mitchell who initially bought the caves then called Crystal Caves and its surrounding land in 1929. Originally, he mined for silver and gold in the area and the mountains are still scarred with those prospects and tailings piles. But after the fail of his house painting business in Los Angeles, Jack decided to develop the caves for tours and set forth building a resort. By 1934, Jack was guiding caving tours for visitors and his wife Ida was feeding them. The isolation of Mitchell Caverns required visitors to stay overnight in one of the rock cabins which Jack built and tackle the arduous trek back to civilization the following morning. Jack Mitchell sold the caves and the land to the state of California in 1954 where it became a state park by 1956. Jack was killed accidentally that same year.

The caves have at least four entrances and average a temperature of 65 degrees. Several bat species such as the Western Pipstrelle and Pallid Bat have been known to inhabit the chambers. The formations in the caves include rare cave corals and shields, huge draperies, and many stalactites and stalagmites. The caves are considered dry caves although a dripping soda straw or two can be seen by a discerning eye. The caves are not really large but the ceilings in some chambers measure 50 feet or more. Touring the cave is fun but unfortunately the experience is too short lasting no more than an hour and half.

At the time of the writing of this report, Mitchell Caverns is closed due to a magnitude 7.0 earthquake that occurred in late October. Apparently, a rock fall around the El Pakiva entrance has deemed the entrance dangerous and tours are stopped until the area can be made safe according to O.S.H.A. and the state of California. It is unknown when tours will resume. But if you are ever in the area, do not hesitate to call about the cave's status because Mitchell Caverns is a cave well worth the drive if not for the formations for the experience.

Submitted by Rebecca Lee

### Web Sites and E-Mails:

The TSA web site has moved to <http://www.texascavers.com/tsa> please make the changes and appropriate links.

The <http://www.texascavers.com> web site and TSA is being funded by your donations and internet e-mails addresses purchased by Texas cavers. Get you own [texascavers.com](http://www.texascavers.com) e-mail address today (\$12 a year) and let everyone know your a Texas caver now. Follow this link and see how easy it is. <<http://www.texascavers.com/e-mail.htm>>.

**Mike Snelson** has changed his e-mail to <[kmsnell2@aol.com](mailto:kmsnell2@aol.com)>. I received this information late and it is not on the membership page.

Here are some web sites of interest:

**Knot Knowledge:** <[www.iland.net/~jbritton/html](http://www.iland.net/~jbritton/html)>.

**Caving Knots:** <[www.wanderer.erl.e-burg.su/tourizm/sovet/knot.html](http://www.wanderer.erl.e-burg.su/tourizm/sovet/knot.html)>.

**Exploding Knots:** <[www.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/explode.htm#2](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/explode.htm#2)>.

**Knots on the Web:** <[www.eralham.edu/~peters/knotlink.htm](http://www.eralham.edu/~peters/knotlink.htm)>.



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\* denotes new members

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