

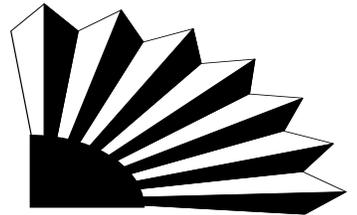
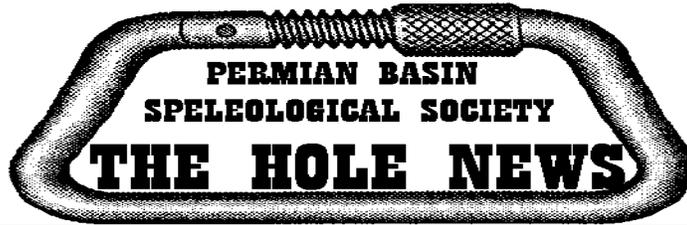
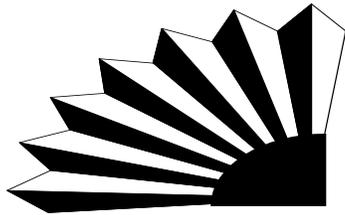
# THE HOLE NEWS

## September 1994

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PERMIAN BASIN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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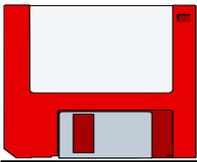


September 1994

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## The monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society

"THE HOLE NEWS" is edited on a 80486 40 MHz IBM Personal Computer utilizing Microsoft Publisher Ver. 2.0 publishing program. We will accept 5 1/4 or 3 1/2 floppy disks with \*.txt, .pub, .rtf, .doc, .wps, and .wri formats for trip reports and would be greatly appreciated.



"The Hole News" is the monthly publication of the Permian Basin Speleological Society. Articles and cartoons may be reproduced by publications that exchange newsletters with PBSS, as long as proper credit is given to the author. Items for this newsletter should be sent to Chief Editor, "The Hole News" c/o Bill Bentley, 400 Eastwood Dr., Midland, Texas 79703-5308.

Membership dues are still only \$ 5.00 and should be sent to the treasurer c/o Don Carlton, 1301 Daventry, Midland, Texas 79705

If you're interested in caving or even think you might like to try contact Chuck Anderle at (915)-685-3119. or if you not from this area and some how through circumstances beyond your control or ours found a copy of "The Hole News" then you should contact the National Speleological Society at 2813 Cave Avenue, Huntsville Alabama, 35810-4431.

### FROM THE EDITOR:

This issue might as well be titled as the bat issue as I have, thanks to Don Carlton found several good stories on bats all of which I might add came from the August '94 *Texas Highways*. It also gave me the opportunity to check out my optical character reader OCR program here on the computer. The editor's job is made much easier when I don't have to beg and plead for material so to those that have contributed, I thank you and for those that haven't then I suggest that you do so soon. I need artwork for our coversheet and stories, true or not! As well as caving cartoons. I'm getting tired of stealing the material from elsewhere. I hope to see all of you at the next meeting and maybe even on a trip or two. Also our treasurer has informed us that so far in 1994 we haven't had one new member! The club almost died in 1987 for this same reason and we have an opportunity to keep this from happening, so bring a friend or a possible future caver to the next meeting.

Bill Bentley

### PBSS Meeting:

The next meeting of the PBSS will be on September 13th, 1994, at 7:00 PM, at Murry's Delicatessen which is located at 3211 West Wadley. It's easy to find because Murry's is located on the South side of the Wadley River, in the strip shopping center, East of Midkiff Rd. and Texas Burger. The meeting starts at 7:00 PM sharp and the usual caver gossip and chow down starts at 6:30 PM and is optional.. Your

## Happy Caving.



**Inside This Issue:** \* Trip Reports \* PBSS Meeting Notice \* Upcoming Trips \* Caving Cartoons \* The Ever Popular Howling At The Moon Column \* Exciting PBSS News And Events \* Bat Hotels \* Cave Rescue Trip Report and Much Much More \*

## Future Cave Trips: And other events from PBSS and other Grottos.

September 10th and 11th, 1994 Hidden ,Hells Below and Virgin caves, contact: Allen Laman @ 915-550-0910. \*  
 September 24th, 1994 Montgomery Gypsum cave limited to 35 cavers, contact: Bill Bentley @ 915-697-3079.  
 October 1st - 2nd, 1994 Gypkap Project maybe at Carcass cave, contact: Steve Peerman @ 505-523-2167.  
 October 1st - 2nd, 1994 Government Canyon Karst Project , contact: George Veni @ 210-558-4403.  
 October 8th, 1994 Three Fingers cave, Lower section of Cottonwood cave, contact: Allen Laman @ 915 550-0910. \*  
 October 8th,1994 Dry cave Expedition, contact: Pat Helton in writing @ 3517 77th Dr., Lubbock, Tx. 79423.  
 October 10th - 14th, 1994 CRF Fall Expedition Lincoln National Forest, contact: Bryan Holcomb @ 505-842-5156.  
 October 16th, - 21st, 1994 Cavers Reunion UT Grotto from 1954-1961 Mayfield cave, contact: Mona Hannah @ 414-273-1535.

October 21st - 23rd, 1994 Texas Cavers Reunion at Perdinales Falls State Park , more info to follow... stay tuned...

October 22nd, 23rd, 1994 Powells cave Resurvey Project, contact: Terry Holsinger @ 512-443-4241.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY CAVING TRIPS PLANNED LET ME KNOW AND I WILL PRINT THEM IN THIS SPACE....**

Most all of this information was stolen from the "TSA Activities Newsletter", Pajarito Grotto's "Windy Passages" and the NTSS "Caver's Echo" .....\* denotes PBSS club trip.

## Bat Hotels provided luxurious accommodations in



Dr. Charles Campbell's Malaria-Eradicating Guano-Producing Bat Roosts contained inclined shelves for bats to hang from and a hopper at the bottom to gather guano (in bags on the wagon). Here he stands beside his first successful roost, which sat at Mitchell Lake South of San Antonio.



San Antonio doctor Charles A.R. Campbell (1865-1931) made promotion of the bat's disease-fighting virtues his lifework. Having learned the "transcendent little creature" had an appetite for malaria-

spreading mosquitoes, Dr. Campbell designed and built tall, wooden towers to attract and house the skeeter-eaters. The first successful bat hotel rose in 1911 at Mitchell Lake in Southern Bexar County. By 1914, malaria in the area had virtually disappeared.

Impressed, city officials engaged the doctor to build a municipal bat roost and made it illegal to kill a bat; the state legislature passed a similar law in 1917. Other bat roosts using the doctor's design went up in Florida and California and near Rome, Italy. Medical societies and health boards lauded Dr. Campbell's work, as did Theodore Roosevelt.

U.S. Surgeon General W.C. Gorgas, the *London Illustrated News*, and *Scientific American*. The Texas legislature recommended him for a Nobel Prize. As the doctor explained in his 1925 book *Bats, Mosquitoes and Dollars*, the roosts paid for themselves quickly, as bat guano brought good prices on the fertilizer market (\$117 a ton in 1919) because of its bounty of nitrogen, phosphoric acid, iron, potash, and sulphur. Today, Dr. Campbell's only remaining bat roost in Texas, built for San Antonio mayor Albert Steves, stands near Comfort on private property. —Gene Fowler, *Austin*. (also Eva Jolene Boyd, Ingram and Carolyn Shields,

# Trip Reports: And other lies and stories...



## Cave adventure turns into rescue mission by Walt Green

"Meet us at the Dragon's Teeth at 5:30 on Saturday. We've got a permit for Three Fingers on Sunday." My last weekend of wild single life without children was drawing near and this was exactly the kind of phone call I had been hoping for.

Because I would be returning to Artesia from Midland on Saturday morning (you've got to go to Summer Mummies at the Yucca Theater. There is nothing like a night full of melodrama, popcorn, Texans, and beer), Tony Canfield and Mike Wittnad agreed to set up camp on Saturday and have sodas, lawn chairs, fire and food waiting for me. There is also nothing better than good friends.

Cavers have names for everything. The Dragon's Teeth is a section of sharp-rock-infested road east of Dark Canyon lookout tower (Southwest of Carlsbad). Three Fingers is a cave further east and north. The foot-path to the cave is only accessible by high-clearance vehicles.

After finding a semi-level spot to park the green monster Ford, I began to stretch and look around. I walked away from camp to look at the trail and was startled by a bizarre sound of distress from the direction of the bottom of the canyon. A young woman was walking up the trail toward me. Thinking that this was little better than spying a Texan in a Cadillac, I turned back toward camp in hopes of appearing busy and allowing her to confront Tony or Mike instead of me.

HEELLLLLPP! she cried out I knew I had been spotted and walked down the trail to meet her. "Are you a caver?" she asked, I allowed a semi-affirmative nod of my head and a vaguely coherent Um-hmm.

"We've got a woman in Three Fingers with a broken ankle," she said. "She's past the Medder-Pincher close to the Room of the Fiery Cave Gods."

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I figured it was best to appear confident since the young lady was quiet upset. "How's she doing?" I asked. "A rock fell on her ankle ... She's screaming her head off ... Do you have a cellular

I finally made the transition from indifferent Neanderthal to fellow caver: "Yes, I have a cellular phone in camp."

Tony and Mike had heard the call for help and came walking down the trail at about the time that another young woman appeared on the trail below. We discussed the situation all over, and Tony reassured the women that he and I had taken a course in rope rigging and rescue and we headed for the phone.

There was a number on the cave permit to be used in case of emergency. I attempted to communicate with some sort of voice mail apparatus for some time and eventually got through to a human being at the Department of Public Safety. She was cordial, but I soon realized that I would be better off getting hold of some fellow cavers who would know the location and level of difficulty of Three Fingers cave, I called information to get numbers for an EMT and rappelling Instructor I know in Carlsbad. I was listening to a mechanical-sounding "The number is:...." and my phone went dead. I set the phone up to charge for a few minutes (Oops) and Mike and I began putting on some gear and packing some supplies to take down and attempt to treat the woman for shock. Tony agreed to stay in camp and get hold of somebody as soon as possible on the phone.

I suspected the cave was bigger than I had thought when we reached the bottom of the second drop and couldn't hear anything. We searched around a bit, and heard voices down a passageway I had been previously unaware of. Talk about an awesome woman! Sondra's fellow cavers had dismantled a backpack for a frame member and fashioned a splint for her ankle. She had been making her way as best she could with one leg, and I heard some moans of pain, but no whining. So much for us treating a woman in shock. I watched two men help her up through the Medder-Pincher and decided that these folks had more caving experience than I did. The Medder-Pincher is a very tight chimney on a slope that offers very few footholds and extremely limited movement. The story is that a man named Medder slipped there and broke several

ribs there. (Editor note: I knew and was able to talk with Tom Medder before he passed away.) Ascending it with a broken ankle is a feat and those of us who were there are Proud of you, Sondra! Mike and I had been in the cave for about an hour and a half when we looked up to see an EMT walking toward us. Although he lives in El Segundo, Calif., Chad happened to be driving in the Guadalupes looking for a campsite for the weekend with his parents when he was almost run off the road by two women seeking help for a friend who was lying hurt in a cave. Apparently, Tony had gotten through on my cellular phone to his wife and quickly instructed her as to the situation prior to the phone dying again. The two women at our campsite decided not to leave anything to chance and left to drive toward Queen in hopes of finding a conventional telephone. Of course, we let Sondra know just what a lucky woman she was to have broken her ankle at such a time, what with EMTs roaming the countryside and all.

Tony had accompanied Chad into the cave and the two had managed to bring lots of rescue equipment with them. We all worked together to get Sondra as comfortable as possible in a rescue litter and moved her to the bottom of the entrance drop, I went up to signal any additional rescuers who might show up and the others talked with Sondra and rigged another rope to run down the longer entrance drop.

As the night wore on, local cavers started showing up with more food, water, and equipment. They began rigging a haul system and preparing for the task of bringing Sondra up a mostly vertical ascension of 125 feet or so, much of which was in very tight quarters.

Mike and Tony and I decided to haul some unnecessary equipment back to camp and eat dinner. We hiked back and Mike threw a Couple of steaks on the fire. We realized it was late when we noticed the first hint of the sun coming up, and decided to call the steaks breakfast. Mike headed back to the cave entrance, while Tony and I took a nap in his tent, which now seemed to be located in the middle of rescue central. Around 7 AM, we headed down to see if there was anything else we could do. Sondra was now out of the cave and rescue from this point

## "KILLER" BEE TAKEOVER PREDICTED

### IN CAVE AREA OF NEW MEXICO

In the July 30, 1994 Albuquerque Journal, an Eddy County agricultural extension agent warns us that Africanized honeybees have been found in three NM counties. Woods Houghton said, "We have lots of feral hives around Carlsbad... The Guadalupes are a good bee habitat, with lots of cliffs, overhangs and caves. There are a number of feral bee colonies up there, "

The latest batch of bees was discovered July 8, When a beekeeper found a 25 to 30 pound swarm on a two by four board. This was six miles south of Carlsbad. Houghton warns that people who locate bee swarms around Carlsbad should contact beekeepers to take care of them. The honeybees were also located under the eaves of a ranch house near Las Cruces in May. Be forewarned that these bees, if provoked, can and will sting 'en masse, and can kill humans and animals. And they are easier to provoke than domestic honeybees. Be especially careful when entering caves, where there may be no easy escape route. Suspect areas would include entrance areas, gates, crawls, and possibly exposed Vertical entrances. What could be worse than to excite killer bees while ascending on rope.

## BINERS, BEANERS, OR CARABINERS?

(This came over Internet in the Cavers Digest) The following is a summary of a (non-drunken) campfire conversation at Indiana Cave Capers (August 13, 1994). Contributors include Anmar Mirza, Amanda Clark, Don Paquette. Frank Reid and others. U. S. cavers often refer to carabiners as "biners." The term has caused confusion in regions where "beaners" is a pejorative term for Latinos. More-humorous confusion has resulted when US cavers encountered Brits who call carabiners "crabs," which in US English connotes pubic lice-infestation. In cave rescue, a litter rigged for vertical hauling may have its various attachment points connected to a single carabiner colloquially called the "Jesus biner." Since it is a critical point upon which the entire system depends, the Jesus biner is an extra - large steel type having great safety-factor. Someone asked if smaller carabiners are Apostle biners. The consensus was yes, including Judas biners made of plastic. Someone opined that other deities should have biners too, and things went downhill from there, so to speak:

Allah Biners - Made of Allahmin(i)um. of course. Being lightweight. they are easy to transport to the mountain. Available with locking and non-locking Allah - gate'rs.

Buddah biners - Alliterative virtual hardware for computers simulations.

Holey Ghost - multi aperture rigging plate.

Mexican Jumping Biners - Bungee and parachute equipment manufactured in Mesoamerica.

Kidney Biners - Oddly-shaped oval/D types.

Navy Biners - Non-corrosive, very expensive. Marked "For Marine Use," i.e., they are extremely simple to operate.

Pork 'N biners - Especially strong, for overweight cavers, Also usable as can openers.

Haz - Biners - Obsolete types used by old cavers.

Concubiners - Rings that don't engage. If you fall, it wasn't legally binding.

How-You-Biners (a.k.a. como frijoles) - Brightly colored, often made of titanium, these are

worn as jewelry at caver social-functions by biner weenies.

## HOWLING AT THE MOON BY

Walter has a new "Titanic Rack" that he purchased at the convention and has been seen on several occasions trying to rappell from the ceiling fan while it was turned on high with the rope hooked to one of the blades. NASA is after him for possible placement in the Mars Cave Probe slated for some time this century. JD Fincher has reported that right in line with the natural regression of things that there has been a gate installed on "F" cave. I have pirate map of "F" cave that was aquired through the proper bribe of secret cave locations and I will show it at the next meeting. It has such names as "The Vanilla High Section" and "Kamon's Connection". This sounds a little fishy to me! The PBSS has recently been told that it now owns a cellular phone and will be housed at Galin

Coffin's home and will be available for all members to use with a small "\$1000.00" deposit. PLEASE bring your input to the next meeting on these topics, Should the PBSS: Host another SWR Regional? Montgomery or Fort Stanton caves? Buy a club first aid kit? Have a Vampire Blood Drive for new members? Start a database for information on members? Have a club rescue gear cache? Increase the yearly club dues? Vote Allen for 1995 PBSS President? Keep Bill editing the newsletter? Send Walter to one of those self help groups? Keep paying Ken to keep quiet? Open "F" cave to the general population? Remember what we did with location to Glow Worm cave? Remember which trip we lost Tom Hill on ? Try to find Tom Hill? Try to find Terry Hill? Help remove the lunchroom?



## Where When and How!

Texas has several public viewing areas where people can watch spectacular viewing bat flights or learn more about the nocturnal creatures. Call in advance for information an wheelchair accessibility.

**Congress Avenue bridge**, a mile south of the Capitol in Austin. offers and of the best places in the world to view bat flights, especially during August. Go to the sidewalk along the east side of the bridge; the bats exit from below. Other prime viewing locations include the north side of the Town Lake hike-and-bike trail along the Colorado River, the Austin American Statesman's park on the South bank of Town Lake. The Four Seasons Hotel, and other hotels and restaurants east of the bridge. (The Four Seasons Hotel holds an unofficial "bat-flight ceremony" evenings when large numbers of bats emerge from the bridge. Waiters at the Shoreline Grill and The Cafe at The Four Seasons announce the departure of the bats as they fly by the lakeside hotel. For information on the hotel's bat watches, call The Four Seasons concierge at 512/478-4500.)

Timing of bat flights varies according to the season and weather conditions. It may occur from an hour before to an hour after sundown. It usually takes place earlier during hot, dry weather, and later during the cooler, rainy season. A few bats return within an hour or two, but many feed all night. Learn more about bats from information signs pasted on kiosks on the north side of Town Lake and near the *Austin American Statesman's* parking lot on the river's south side For information, contact BCI at the address below or the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, 200 S. Lamar St., Austin Texas 78704;

512/499-6700.

**Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area**, between Fredericksburg and Comfort near the Old San Antonio Rd., offers bat-watching tours Thursday and Saturday nights from early June through October. All visitors 17 and older must have a \$25 Texas Conservation Passport, available at any state park. Tour cost: Free. More than 2 million bats depart from the abandoned 920-foot Fredericksburg & Northern Railroad tunnel. The largest number of bats can be seen from July through September. Wildlife/recreation specialist Rob Trippet limits the tour to 45 people. For reservations and to check on the time of the tour, call Pedernales Falls State Park at 210/464-7304. or write to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin 78744.

**Colorado Bend State Park**, 10 miles north of Lake Buchanan near the community of Bend, offers one 2 and a half hour guided tour of Gorman Cave at 9:15 a.m. each Saturday and Sunday year round. Bend is north of Llano via Texas 16 and west of Lampasas via US 185/190. To avoid disturbing the bats, visitors don't go into the roosting area, but the tour guide describes conditions in the cave that attract the mammals. Cost: \$8 per person.

Bring your own flashlight, and wear sturdy walking shoes, a long-sleeve shirt, and long pants. The park furnishes hard hats. **Note:** Reservations recommended: each tour limited to 10 people: advance payment required. Write to Colorado Bend State Park. Box 118. Bend 76824; 915/628-3240.

**Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve**. 18 miles southwest of Mason on Farm-to-Market Road 385, offers interpretive tours

Thursday through Sunday from mid-May to mid-October. This maternity cave houses up to 8 million bats after pups are born in early summer When tours are offered, the preserve opens about an hour before sundown and closes following the bat flight. Group tours can be arranged Monday through Wednesday Not wheelchair accessible. Write to the Nature Conservancy of Texas, Hill Country Office, Box 164255. Austin 78716: 915/347-5970.

**Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area**, 22 miles north of Brackettville on Ranch Road 674, has bat flight-watching tours of Green Cave. Park manager David Stuart also offers occasional tours of **Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area**, 50 miles northeast of Kickapoo Cavern near Rocksprings. Call for directions. All visitors 17 and older must have a Texas Conservation Passport. Check the passport holders' quarterly newsletter for scheduled bat flight tours, or call to arrange one. More than 1 million bats depart from Green Cave from around mid-April to mid-October, although the number drops in June and July, when some of the females join nursery colonies in other areas. Nearly 4 million bats leave Devil's Sinkhole in the evening during the fall. Write to Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area. Box 705. Brackettville 78832; 210/563-2342.

**Big Bend National Park**. 100 miles south of Fort Stockton, offers an educational slide show called "Wings In the Night, A Program on Bats," delivered by park ranger Mary Kay Manning. She discusses the area's 19 bat species that live in canyon walls, crevices, trees, old bridges, caves, and abandoned buildings. Call a week or two before your visit for the time and date of the next presentation. The show is free, but visitors pay a park entrance fee of \$5 per vehicle or \$3 per person on a motorcycle. Write to Big Bend National Park, Panther Junction, Big Bend 79834: 915/477-2251.

### Bat Information

Bat Conservation International offers educational materials, workshops, and ecotours. BCI's annual membership costs \$30 and includes the organization's **See Where When and How continued on page 8.**

## PBSS Officers 1994

*President: Chuck Anderle*

*Vice-president: Noel Pando*

*Secretary/Treasurer Don Carlton*

*Newsletter: Bill Bentley*

# On warm Summer nights, Texans enjoy Hanging Out Bats'

**S**wirling into the distance like giant spirals of smoke, thousands of bats emerge from underneath Austin's Congress Avenue bridge in a flurry of activity and fly Eastward over Town Lake. Bat-watchers on and near the bridge hear the rustling of wings and the high-pitched squeaks of the small creatures as they depart for their nightly pursuit of

mosquitoes and other insects.

On warm, dry summer nights, crowds gather on the bridge's walk way, on the Town Lake hike-and-bike trail, and in riverside hotels and restaurants to watch the flight of the colony, which roosts a mile south of the Capitol. The emergence of more than 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats--the world's largest urban bat colony--continues for up to 45 minutes as onlookers marvel at the sheer quantity of winged mammals.

Just a decade ago, no one would have suspected that bats would become one of Austin's biggest tourist attractions. When reconstruction of the 947-foot Congress Avenue bridge was completed around 1980, bats found the underside vertical crevices, 16 inches deep by three-quarters to one-and-a-half inches in width, a perfect spot for hanging out. The bridge absorbs heat during the day and radiates it at night, providing 87- to 92- degree temperatures

that mother bats find ideal for their babies, which are born in early June.

Many Austinites were less than hospitable when

the bats first arrived, recalls Dr. Merlin Tuttle, founder and executive director of Bat Conservation International (BCI) in Austin. Sensational newspaper headlines like "Bat Colonies Sink Teeth Into City" heightened fears during a petition-signing drive to exterminate the furry creatures.

Attitudes began to change after BCI launched educational campaigns in public schools and elsewhere in the community. BCI believes in a very low-key approach to conservation. "All I do is tell people how bats help us," Tuttle says.

"People are astounded to find out how valuable bats are," Tuttle notes. One bat alone may eat up to 3,000 insects a night, including crop pests and mosquitoes. Bats also pollinate or disperse seeds for many of the world's most valuable plants, including banana, avocado, fig, mango, and peach trees. And margarita drinkers may be especially interested to know that the southwestern agave plant, the source of tequila, relies on bats for pollination.

**S**lowly, people are beginning to understand bats' important role in the balance of nature. But many people still fear that bats carry rabies or pose other dangers, which has led to the extermination of large colonies.

"Bats have been the 'whipping boy' of [people who fear] rabies," Tuttle says. However, less than one-half of one percent of the animals contracts rabies, and, generally, even those bats that become infected bite only in self-defense if handled. "Just leave them alone, and you have nothing to fear," Tuttle adds.

Tuttle became interested in bats during high school when he lived near a bat cave in

Knoxville, Tennessee. In graduate school, dissertation to studying what he calls "some of the world's least-popular animals." When someone torched one of his favorite research caves in northern Alabama, killing more than 250,000 bats, he turned to conservation.

In 1982, while working as curator of mammals at the Milwaukee Public Museum, he founded BCI and ran the non-profit organization in his spare time. Four years later, he moved BCI's headquarters to Austin and began devoting all his efforts to bat education and preservation. Today, BCI has 18 employees and enjoys the support of more than 12,500 members in 56 countries.

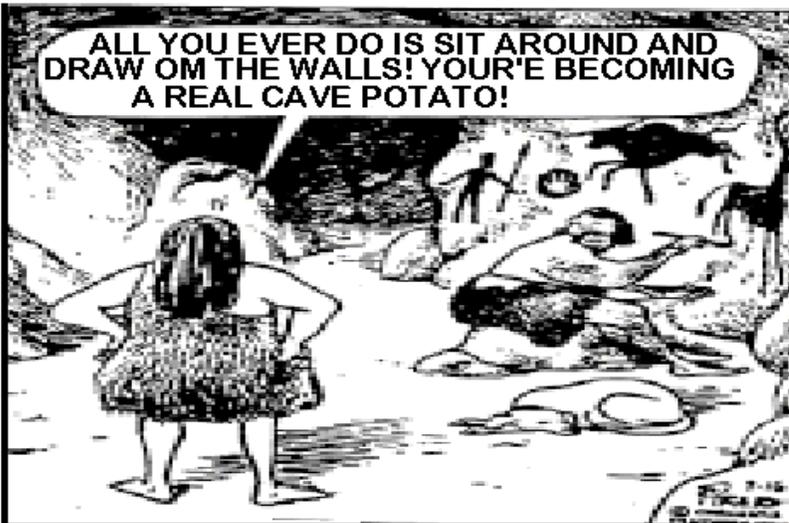
The presence in Central Texas of some of the world's largest remaining bat colonies helped convince Tuttle to move to Austin. Of the 40 bat species in North America, Texas has 33, and it boasts more bats per square mile than any other state.

**T**uttle helps BCI promote bat con-  
**See Bats' cont: on page 7**

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BIZZARO

By DAN PIRARC



### Carlsbad Caverns News:

Chuck says that there is no date set as of yet for rock hauling, but keep your shovels ready as we are waiting for the NPS to give us the go ahead.

Caverns of Sonora Restoration is set for November 19, 1994 and if you are interested in helping then contact Gralin Coffin at 915-682-1904 Confirmation is required!! Limited space and always a waiting list. More details at the meeting.

## Bats' continued from page 6

servation by appearing on numerous news and talk shows and by publishing articles and photographs in magazines around the world. In 1988, the director published his first book, *America's Neighborhood Bats*, one of the most popular books ever published by the University of Texas Press.

Tuttle illustrates his books and articles in *National Geographic* and other publications with his own photographs. He began taking his own shots because so many pictures showed bats that had been tormented into baring their teeth. (Most shots were taken by holding the bats' wings apart and blowing on the animals' faces.) Tuttle seeks to capture another dimension of bats on camera. His close-ups depict bats with endearing faces that resemble those of puppies or young deer.

Most Texas bats, including those at the Congress Avenue bridge, are Mexican free-tailed bats, easily recognized because at least a third of their tail protrudes beyond the membrane that connects the legs and tail. They're small enough to fit into the palm of a hand. Other bats range

from the world's smallest mammal, the bumblebee bat of Thailand, which weighs a third less than a penny, to the giant flying foxes of Java, whose wingspans reach up to six feet.

More than 100 million Mexican free-tailed bats live in a dozen or so caves and structures in Texas' Hill Country. Bracken Cave near San Antonio, which lies on private property owned and protected by BCI, supports 20 million bats, one of the largest known colonies of freetails--and mammals--in North America.

Large crowds of people can seriously disrupt some bat flights, so Bracken Cave is off-limits to the public. But visitors have ample opportunity to see bat flights or take bat-cave tours at public sites, including the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area near Comfort; Colorado Bend State Park near Bend; Eckert James River Bat Cave near Mason; Kickapoo Cavern State Natural Area near Brackettville; and Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area near Rocksprings.

Big Bend National Park also has an educational presentation that describes the 19 species of bats in the area--one of the

highest number of bat species in any one place in the nation. The park is one of the few known U.S. locations of the endangered Mexican long-nosed bat, which lives in the Chisos Mountains. Unlike most North American bats that feast on insects, Mexican long-nosed bats sip flower nectar, almost like hummingbirds.

Of all the places to see bats, Tuttle ranks the flight from the Congress Avenue bridge as "one of the most impressive urban wildlife spectacles in America." For prime bat viewing, he recommends a visit during hot, dry weather, especially in August.

"The hotter and drier it is, the more likely you are to see a spectacular flight," he says. Arrive up to an hour before sundown in mid-August in case the bats decide to fly out early. The four or five columns of bats streaming out from the bridge can sometimes be seen for miles.

**B**ats fly as high as 10,000 feet at cruising speeds of more than 30 mph. The Austin colony consumes from 10,000 to 30,000 pounds of insects a night, helping to reduce crop pests in hundreds of square miles of surrounding towns, farmlands, lakes, and rivers.

Although some bats call Austin home all year long, most colony members begin arriving as early as February and stay until the first cold front blows in around early November. Then they head for warmer quarters in Mexico.

Austin's bats differ from other Mexican free-tailed colonies because many males remain with the females and their babies, or pups. Each year, female bats produce

only one pup, which at birth weighs about one-third as much as its mother. That's the equivalent of a human mother giving birth to a 40-pound baby! The pups learn to fly in about five weeks and live more than 15 years.

Tuttle says he's gratified by the change in public opinion in Austin. "Now, many people are extremely protective of bats," he says. "Austinites immediately stopped an effort to put decorative lighting on the [Congress Avenue] bridge because it might upset the bats."

Tuttle also appreciates the support from Austin organizations that work with BCI in finding more homes for bat colonies.

For example, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) bridge designers are studying how to build more "bat-friendly" bridges. After Tuttle spoke to Tx DOT's 1994 Bridge Designers Conference in February, employees began

looking at ways to build bridges and install bat houses to draw more bat colonies, says Mark Bloschock, a Tx DOT bridge supervising design engineer.

**C**onsidering bats' effectiveness in reducing crop pests, Bloschock enthusiastically supports an economical way to encourage more bats to live in bridges. "If we can help in their conservation, it's a good deal for everyone," he says.

Other bat-conservation projects have sprung up around the state. In Mineral Wells, business owners have erected bat houses near their down-town buildings in an effort to relocate hundreds of displaced bats that once lived in the upper floors of old structures. After bats flew into a local funeral home and circled some coffins, Amanda Lollar, known as "The Bat Lady of Mineral Wells," stepped in to install bat homes built by her father. So far, she has erected 21 houses, including one over the door of the funeral home. Bat houses installed at some businesses, including the historic Baker Hotel and First State Bank, sport signs like "Baker Bats," and "First State Bats."

Amanda also has started a nonprofit bat organization called Beneficial Animal Teaching Society (BATS), and she operates an education center in her downtown store, Furniture Etc. She offers visitors a chance to view several species of bats, all of which are unable to return to the wild for one reason or another.

Merlin Tuttle is delighted but not surprised by this surge of interest in bats. Most people who study them find them fascinating, he says. And he adds, with a touch of pride, "People are starting to like bats."

*Elizabeth Hudson of Austin writes regularly about the Southwest for The Washington Post.*

**Continued from page 5 Where When and How...**

quarterly magazine, titled, well, *BATS*. For information on how to join BCI, help bats, or obtain a free catalog of educational materials and items that the organization sells, including bat houses, jewelry and T-shirts, write to BCI, Box 162603. Austin 78716: 512/327-9721.

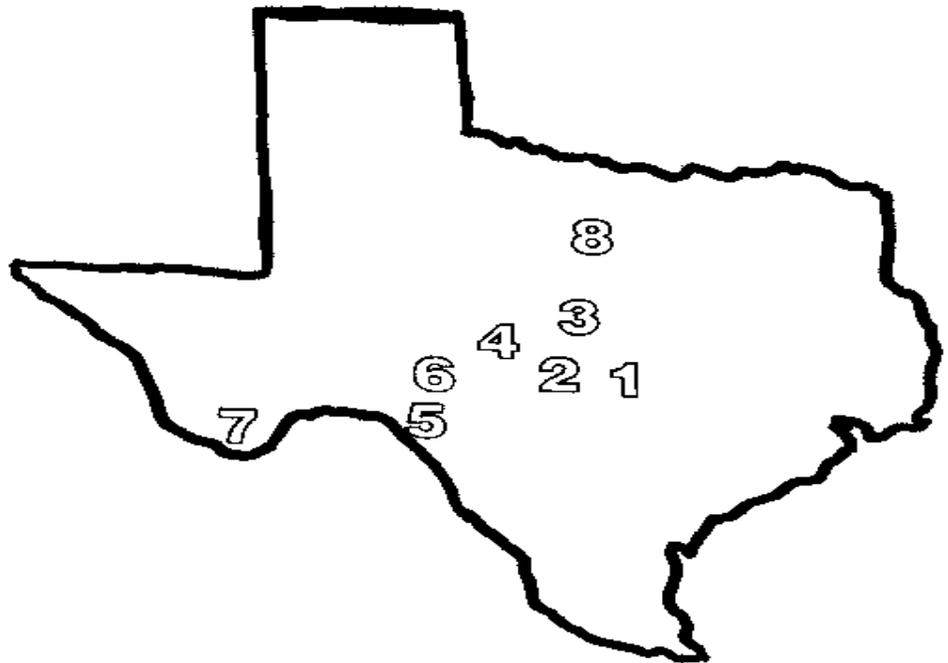
BCI has an "adopt-a-bat" program. For a \$25 donation, you receive a one-year BCI membership, a color photo of your bat, species information, an adoption certificate, and a "Batty About Bats" bumper sticker.

BCI sponsors the North American Bat House Research Project, which promotes setting up bat houses. For information on building your own bat house, read the *Bat House Builder's Handbook* by Merlin Tuttle and Donna Hensley. BCI and bookstores sell the handbook for \$6.95.

Amanda Lollar of Mineral Wells offers guided tours of her educational center, called the Beneficial Animal Teaching Station (BATS). The center is in her store, Furniture Etc., at 217 N. Oak Ave. Call to schedule a tour. Admission: \$5 age 13 and older, \$3 ages 4-12, free age 3 and younger. (Proceeds will help build a larger bat rehabilitation center and teaching station.) Write to 217 N, Oak Ave., Mineral Wells 76067; 817/3253404.

*The Bat In My Pocket*, by Amanda Lollar, describes her experience with Sunshine, the first injured bat she nursed back to health. The book is available for \$9.95 at bookstores, or you can order it from the publisher. Capra Press, Box 2068, Santa Barbara, CA 93120.

Submitted by Don Carlton from the *Texas Highways* August '94



**Legend**

- 1. CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE, Austin**
- 2. OLD TUNNEL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, between Fredericksburg and Comfort**
- 3. COLORADO BEND STATE PARK, near Bend**
- 4. ECKERT JAMES RIVER BAT CAVE PRESERVE, near Mason**
- 5. KICKAPOO CAVERNS STATE NATURAL AREA, between Brackettville and Rocksprings**
- 6. DEVIL'S SINKHOLE STATE NATURAL AREA, near Rocksprings**
- 7. BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, South of Fort Stockton**
- 8. BENEFICIAL ANIMAL TEACHING STATION, Mineral Wells**

Hey the editors of the Texas Caver sent me a nice t-shirt for submitting a trip report to them. It was easy so I suggest that you do the same!

Contact Noble Stidham PO Box 1094, Lubbock, Texas 79408

**Colorado Bend State Park.** Ed Young is leading trips each week end for visitors to the park and if you are interested in helping out contact him at 214-262-8188

**See Cave Adventure continued on Page 8.**  
**Cave Adventure continued from page 3.**

forward consisted mainly of a lot hard work in the hot sun, hauling packs and ropes from the bottom of the canyon back to our campsite at the top. A helicopter showed up shortly before noon to take Sondra out of the canyon and to Guadalupe Medical Center in Carlsbad. She was treated and released on Sunday. On Monday, I felt as if something were missing, as if I should be doing something, I guess I was missing the camaraderie that goes along with working with others toward a difficult goal. (Editors note: as I experienced this feeling in the days following the 1987 Jessica McClure rescue here in Midland). It was a great weekend. Side note: A bird landed on Sondra's chest about 45 minutes before the chopper landed. It hopped around and entertained everybody for some time, putting Sondra a little bit more at ease during a tense situation. The bird hopped on Mike's shoulder and then allowed him to hold it while the chopper was overhead. It then flew several hundred yards away. Truth is always stranger than fiction. This story was sent in by Mike Huber from Carlsbad and was