

February 1999

## TCMA Activities Newsletter

Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA)

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# Texas Cave Management Association

Jan / Feb 1999

P.O. Box 202853 \* Austin, TX 78720

## NEWSLETTER

### Annual Membership Meeting Texas Cave Management Association

January 30, 1999

The Texas Cave Management Association's Annual membership Meeting has been scheduled during the weekend of the Texas Speleological Association's Winter Board of Governor Meeting, 13-14 February, at Colorado Bend State Park.

Agenda items include reports of TCMA activities in the Austin and San Antonio areas, management plan for Whirlpool Cave, and other business.

All TCMA members are invited to attend what is envisioned as a short meeting, to start Saturday, February 13, at the **main** pavilion in camp. An alternate meeting site, if the first one proves inconvenient, is at the San Antonio/Bexar Grotto cavers' camp. Please bring extra **lawn chairs**.

A board meeting prior to the membership meeting will be held, as needed, Saturday afternoon at the San Anbnio camp.

Other agenda items should be sent to Secretary Julie Jenkins at 10005 Childress Dr, Austin, TX 78753. She may be reached at 512-832-1965 or <jjules@ccms.net>. For any more information contact Jay Jorden, TCMA president, at 972-382-2458 or <jjorden@texoma.net>.

Colorado Bend is located west of Lampasas, Texas. Directions are given in the TSA Newsletter as well as the TCMA Activities Newsletter and/or posted to the World Wide Web. "Jus' foller the dang signs!" (A Gilligerism)Ed.

We'll see you there!

### PROPOSED AGENDA TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT Weekend of February 13-14, 1999

1. Call to order, adoption of agenda.
2. Approval of notes/minutes from last meeting.
3. Officer Reports:
  - a. Treasurer  
Adoption of financial statements.
  - b. Reports of president, vice-president.

4. Standing Committee Reports:
  - a. Publications  
Latest TCMA Activities Newsletter.  
Updated brochures, letterhead.
  - b. Site managers reports:
    - Whirlpool
    - Lost Oasis
    - Buttercup
    - Robber Baron
    - Amazing Maze
5. Old Business:
  - a. Site management reviews, Austin and San Antonio Areas
  - b. Membership
  - c. Fund-raising
  - d. Other
6. New Business:
  - a. Insurance
  - b. Fire ant control, related issues
  - c. Draft management plan. Whirlpool Cave  
Signs for Austin area preserves
  - d. Grants coordinator reports  
Dan Hogenauer  
Carl Ponebshek
  - e. Other
7. Any Resolutions
8. Next meeting: date, place
9. Adjournment

### TCMA FINANCIAL STATEMENT DECEMBER 1998

Beginning Balance:		\$2,646.90
Total to be accounted for:		\$2,646.90
Ending Balance:		\$2,646.90
Norwest Bank Balance 12/31/98	\$2,646.90	
Grant Balances:		
Buttercup Monitoring	\$ 636.00	
Wrey Trust	41.47	\$ 677.47
Total Grant Funds:		\$1,969.43
Balance of Funds in General Acct:		
Respectfully submitted.		
J. Bruce Anderson Treasurer		

# TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION NEWS

by Jay Jorden

It's a Texas-size challenge to help preserve underground resources of a state that has just under 10 percent of the nation's total land and water area. But the Texas Cave Management Association is trying to do just that through conservation, landowner relations and scientific study.

Most recently, TCMA representatives in Austin and San Antonio -- the two most populated urban centers of Texas caves and caving -- have been negotiating with government agencies and private developers to receive donations, management contracts or conservation easements on significant subterranean resources.

Youth groups and others interested in speleology are also continuing to visit two of TCMA's caves: Whirlpool in Austin and Robber Baron in San Antonio. Additionally, TCMA has organized visits to 0-9 Water Well in far West Texas, River Styx in the northwest and other managed properties.

At the last National Speleological Society Convention, a TCMA director and founder of the Association for Mexican Cave Studies was honored for his achievements in conservation and exploration.

William H. Russell of Austin received the Honorary Member Award for his achievements. The award of one of the NSS' highest honors came during the society's annual awards banquet at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.

Russell, NSS 4357, is also a founder of the Texas Speleological Survey. He has been an active caver in the state and in Mexico for almost a half-century. Editor of the Capital Caver, his digging expeditions are legendary. The NSS award recognized Russell's accomplishments in cave discovery, exploration and conservation.

'He has been said to have the fastest mouth in the West he talks faster than anyone can understand, it's been said, and faster than the speed of light,' Mike Hood, the awards chairman, told about 1,700 cavers and their families. 'He's also known for setting lightning trip records. His comments were, 'Caving keeps one young -- and sane.' ''

'Before this convention, I was a little worried about cavers that somehow, in their zeal for exploration, that their zest for discovery had abated,' Russell said. 'However, I've now found that this is not the case. This has renewed my faith in cavers. They're out there finding new things, discovering and documenting what they find.

'Again, I'm deeply honored,' he said. 'And I think that cavers will go out there and provide a future, forever going caving.' ''

Increased education and research by TCMA and other conservancies of the Huntsville, Ala.-headquartered NSS, affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement

of Science, have played a vital role in raising public awareness and appreciation for nonrenewable cave resources.

Founded in 1986, the Austin-based TCMA is Texas' first organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of underground resources and their biological, paleontological and other contents. The nonprofit organization owns three caves in Central Texas and manages more than dozen others.

The purposes for which TCMA was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization include cave acquisition and general goals of preservation, conservation and study along with supporting educational and scientific programs.

The TCMA also owns Whirlpool and Lost Oasis Caves in Travis County, Robber Baron in San Antonio and has management contracts for more than a dozen others, including Amazing Maze Cave and 0-9 Water Well in Southwest Texas and Marigold and Pebblebrook Caves, in Cedar Park, Texas. Whirlpool and Robber Baron, in the years since their acquisition, have become educational resources and focal points for neighborhood and caver cooperation.

Whirlpool, which is the subject of an updated draft management plan by preserve manager Nico M. Hauwert of Austin, has been visited by more than 600 people over a one-year period. Visitors are from college classes, church and scouting groups, among others.

The property is part of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve and member groups including the City of Austin Nature Preserves, Travis County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department have helped coordinate cave protection efforts and share strategies in the area. Biological survey stations and protocol were established in Whirlpool, consistent with other BCCP surveys.

Both Whirlpool and Lost Oasis are listed in the USFWS endangered species permit of the City of Austin and Travis County. Following vandalism of both the gate and preserve sign at Whirlpool, work crews have repaired damage and installed new equipment.

An annual TCMA membership meeting was scheduled for February in conjunction with the Texas Speleological Association's winter Board of Governors' meeting at a state park near Lampasas. Members are kept informed of current projects through the \*TCMA Activities Newsletter\*.

The TCMA board of directors has appointed Barbe Barker of Irving, Texas as vice president. Barbe has extensive experience in nonprofit organizations such as TCMA. She is a past patient services director for a Dallas doctors' group and has worked for a state medical foundation, where she gained experience in nonprofits and fund-raising. ♦♦

**TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION  
LIST of DIRECTORS and OFFICERS**

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# Report of TCMA Membership Meeting Texas Cavers Reunion, Wimberley, 1997

Reported by Julie Jenkins

*Editor's note: The 1998 annual meeting, originally scheduled for the fall TCR near Uvalde, was postponed until early 1999 because of massive flooding in Central and South Central Texas. Our thanks to Julie Jenkins, secretary, for the following.*

With all but three officers and directors present and more than two dozen members in attendance, an agenda was distributed and adopted. Minutes from the spring TCMA meeting at Brownwood, Texas were reviewed.

Under the president's report, Jay Jorden reported that the TCMA insurance premium had increased to \$700 per year. In 1996, liability insurance was \$500 -- itself an increase from previous years when the premium had been as little as \$150. Additional needs for income to cover such expenses as insurance were discussed, along with the possibility of reviewing quotes from other carriers. Barbe Barker, vice president, said that Cave Research Foundation's insurance had tripled and that organization was in the process of reviewing its policy. As one who has worked with other 501(c)(3) organizations, she said she would research what larger nonprofits do in their search for alternative insurance.

In her report, Barbe discussed the need for greater TCMA visibility, faster dissemination of information and alternatives for generating income to fund projects. She said that grants often involve delays and bureaucratic hurdles.

In publications, \*TCMA Activities Newsletter\* publisher Noble Stidham had a status report. He's also been updating the organization's brochure.

Site reports included William Russell's recounting of Whirlpool Cave activities. Register data shows more than 500 registered visitors to the Travis County cave in 1997. On-site sanitation would be a possible issue with continued high visitation and heavy use. A new sign has been painted and mounted at the preserve. An information kiosk is also needed. One of the local television news teams filmed the manager, Nico Hauwert, at Whirlpool discussing recharge flow to the aquifer. The cave has become an educational resource on speleology and groundwater/hydrology in the Austin area.

Fire ant control has been instituted at Whirlpool.

Earlier in the summer, the deadly tornado that struck Jarrell and dipped down into Cedar Park also caused major damage at the subdivision that includes the Buttercup Preserve. Damage was sustained to the fencing at both Buttercup and Marigold caves, which manager Mike Warton and others worked hard to repair. There is a possibility for an increased TCMA role in the area.

In an update on Robber Baron's Cave, Carl Ponebshek said a cleanup was scheduled. A proposal had also been made to sink an air shaft into the cave to increase circulation. A seven-foot cyclone fence has been donated and will be installed. A TCMA member is required for every trip to Robber Baron's. Carl said he would research visitation at the cave. The Bexar Grotto helps manage the cave and will continue to do so. Carl

has moved to apply for a grant that would provide signs and an informational kiosk at the cave.

San Antonio caver and karst geologist George Veni gave a report on a biological study at Robber Baron's for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This was a TCMA-sanctioned study. The report was submitted to USFWS in July 1997. It should contain the report text, some revised maps based on new survey data, hydrogeologic information and more.

Visitation is brisk at two other TCMA-managed caves, Amazing Maze and 0-9 Well. Because of a problem recounted by the managers of some no-show groups at the caves, they may begin requiring a non-refundable fee for setting up the trips and being on-site for management. Board members told the managers they already have this ability and, if necessary, they may establish such a charge.

The dues structure at TCMA was re-examined. The organization has been moving away from its traditional lifetime membership arrangements, although honoring those already in place. Realities of funding ongoing cave management projects make that system problematic for the future. The following dues structure was established:

Regular annual membership: \$15  
Family membership: \$22.50 -- \$15 plus \$7.50  
Student membership up to age 18: \$5  
Maintenance fee for sustaining membership: \$10

Dues renewal was scheduled for Jan. 1 of each year.

Among other topics that were discussed by the membership were a possible new management opportunity in Travis County, fire ant control, fund-raising projects including grants and trusts, and logistics.

◆◆



# TCMA UPDATE ON SOUTH AUSTIN CAVES

by Nico M. Hauwert

## I. Update on Whirlpool Cave Preserve, Texas Cave Management Association

1) Maintaining and recording registry of cave use. From ~~Sept.~~ 19, 1996 through November 1997 (about 14 months), there were 603 entries on the registry in the Travis County Room or called in at registration. The original registry in the Travis County Room was unusable for about one month -- due to moisture -- and was replaced by a plastic case registry in the entrance room. Many entries are incomplete or unreadable. Estimated annual visits: about 700 to 1,000.

2) Development of Draft Cave Management Plan. Meetings with Balcones Canyonlands Preserve member groups continue to coordinate cave protection efforts and share strategies. Members are the City of Austin Nature Preserves, Travis County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. A draft management plan is being developed. A draft copy is available.

3) Outreach and cave education. Leading groups on cave ~~tours~~ with assistance of other volunteer guides -- Ami Beveridge, Justin Shaw, Julie Jenkins and Bill Russell.) Including scout groups, church groups, college classes and other grottos.

4) Cave maintenance. Bill and Julie installed a new sign for the preserve with a contact number. The sign came off once, but was re-installed. Nico rebuilt a fallen guardrail along Brush Country where people had been driving onto the preserve. Gill Ediger installed a new cave gate after the original gate was broken by vandalism. The cave ~~key lock~~ was replaced with a new lock.

Nico installed a new ladder at the entrance of Whirlpool, since the original ladder was too short and somewhat scary. Cave maps are being re-stocked. Registry was replaced. Also, maintaining cave fund accounting. Cutting grass and trimming trees is performed by Nico twice a year. Trips, tours and information are being coordinated. The city of Austin Parks and Recreation -- through Mark Sanders -- has surveyed the property with Nico for fire ants. We utilized their new portable water heater to treat the fire ant mounds on June 22.

5) Biological survey. Mark of Austin Parks helped us put together survey stations and protocol consistent with other BCCP cave surveys. We performed a survey of the entrance room and Travis County Room on Nov. 28, 1998. A copy of our survey is available. In the future, we will typically not survey the entrance room, but an underlying room instead (see draft management plan.)

6) Restroom facilities. Examined the possibility of installing restroom facilities on the preserve. The option of tying onto the wastewater line crossing the site was estimated to cost about \$40,000, based on City of Austin Parks experience. A composting toilet such as the city has in some parks might fail due to infrequent use. The city staff claim that it needs a least one use per week to feed the bacteria. They recommend

getting a bathroom kit for about \$7,000, which would need to be pumped out about each year or two. The cost of bathroom facilities seems to be too high to pursue further at this time, but worth considering.

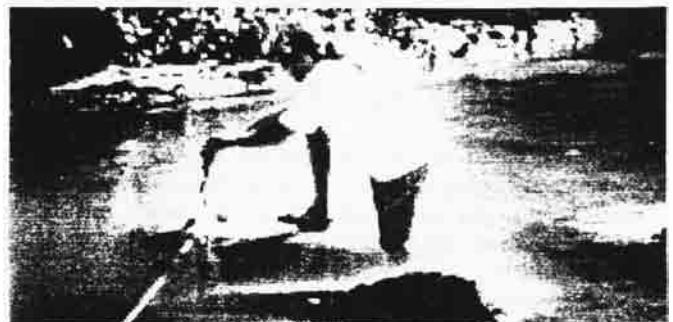
## II. General

### Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan

Both Lost Oasis and Whirlpool Caves are listed in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife endangered species permit of the City of Austin and Travis County. Because both caves are listed to contain karst species of concern (*Speodesmus* N.S., and *R. austinica*) within the jurisdiction of City of Austin and Travis County, both agencies are charged to "acquire and manage, or implement formal management agreements ... adequate to preserve the environmental integrity of the ... caves that support federally listed karst invertebrates." Dr. William Elliott, who represented Travis County in developing their plan before leaving for Missouri, has raised concerns of the effects of traffic on cave life. I am attempting to create a memo of understanding with the city of Austin to help us conduct bi-annual surveys so that there is some basic information to establish if and when possible impacts to the invertebrate populations are occurring. Based on my observations, there are no impacts from the level of visitation we have, and the *Rhadine austinica* are thriving in the cave. I hope to finalize a management plan for Whirlpool Cave which, after approval by the TCMA board and review by the BCCP groups, that can answer these concerns and scope our plans with the cave. Once we collectively determine what we want to do with the cave, we may want to apply for grants to fund projects.

### Proposed Village of Western Oaks Cave Preserve

Bill and Julie have represented TCMA at roundable meetings with a local developer, Lumberman's Investment Corp., regarding the management of a proposed cave preserve at the Village of Western Oaks, that includes Get Down Cave, Senatorial Sink, and Survey Line Cave. A management plan is being developed for the preserve as coordinated by the city of Austin (Sylvia Pope.) Mike Warton has gated the caves and has also consulted in the meetings. Nico is participating on behalf of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.



# CAVE VANDALISM AND RESTORATION AT MAPLE RUN CAVE

by Justin Shaw

## THE VANDALISM

At the end of July 1996, vandals entered Maple Run Cave and did damage to over one hundred speleothems. Maple Run cave is owned by the City of Austin and is on a nature preserve, known as the Karst Preserve. Three other caves lie within the Karst Preserve. Maple Run Cave was unguarded and only approximately 10 meters from the nearest residential house.

## IN RESPONSE

Immediate response was needed. The local media was contacted and taken into the cave. This was an event in itself. Mark Sanders of the City of Austin organized the media blitz. Mark Sanders (City of Austin), Chris Thibodeaux (Caver), Jane Kane (City of Austin), and myself assisted taking three television stations, each with a reporter and a camera person, as well as a reporter and photographer from the local paper into the cave. One must understand the nature of Maple Run Cave to appreciate what an endeavor this was. It is not your friendly walk in cave; it consists of many meters of low crawlways, tight squeezes, and odd contortions. While we did warn them, I don't think those makeup-wearing TV reporters quite knew what they were getting into.

We contacted the N.S.S. ahead of time and were able to make a \$250 to \$1,000 reward offer for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandals. We publicized the information that the vandalism was in violation of the Cave Protection Act on every TV station in Austin and in Austin, Houston, and Dallas newspapers.

## THE PUBLICITY PAYS OFF, SORTA

Our suspicion has been that local teenagers did the vandalism, and it turned out to be true. One local 16 year old boy made a call to city police regarding the possible consequences of such acts and ended up admitting to having some of the formations. He feared that friends he had bragged to would turn him in for the \$1,000 the N.S.S. was offering. Apparently the vandalism had occurred with an older cousin who had a record. The police confiscated the formations and since the boy was only 16 they went after his older cousin. Unfortunately the police were soon burdened by other items and the case fell through the cracks.

## CONFISCATED CAVE FORMATIONS

Those dozen or so cave formations the police confiscated ended up on a long strange trip home. It went like this. First, the vandals removed them from the cave. They were probably shown off at school and at home. Then they were confiscated by the police and held as evidence. The police then turned the formations over to the City of Austin Nature

Center, the wrong branch of the city. They changed hands again to the City of Austin Nature Preserves and Trails; the branch of the city that oversees all city owned caves. Then the City turned the formations over to me. They were in poor conditions, very, very, very dry. One of the formations smelled as if it had been used to smoke marijuana through the central canal. I cleaned them off, and began reviving the formations. I needed to keep the formations damp and cool until they could be returned to the cave. So I kept them in the crisper of my refrigerator wrapped in moist towels. The formations "drank" a surprising amount of water and regained their lustrous shine and colors in the crisper. Their last stop, after over a year out of the cave, was finally back into the cave environment.

## PUTTING THINGS BACK TOGETHER

After the vandalism it took nearly a year to get things organized for a restoration project. The cave could not handle large amounts of traffic for the restoration trips, so groups had to be kept small. Even so, it proved to be hard to find participants for the project. Trying to get everyone's schedules to agree so we could do project days was a slowing factor in the restoration process. The restoration took about one and a half years to complete and around a dozen trips into the cave.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on the processes used to repair the formations because so much literature has been published on the subject. I used the methods taught to me by Jim Werker. You can see the 1996 News conservation edition and read the article "Formation Repair" by Jim Werker. I do still want to cover a few of the highlights of the project.

There was one fairly large stalagmite that had been broken at the base and attempted to be removed from the cave. The vandals gave up fairly quick though, leaving it 8 or 9 meters below where it belonged. Extracting it from the crack it was down in (what we call a passage in these parts) was not the easiest task. The formation was a little over a meter long and probably 20 cm across at the base. Once out of the crack it was held in place by a stainless steel rod and Epon 840 epoxy with a V40 hardener.

We also had a drapery area about a meter across that had several (8 or so) stalagmites hanging from it. This area could only be reached by one person, perching on a small ledge, above a 4-meter drop. These were repaired with the same epoxy. While the epoxy dried the stalagmites were held in place with PVC piles cut to just under length, then pressured upwardly with wood shims placed under them. Getting all this into place was a bit tricky.

And I think the best highlight of all was that all of the dozen or so speleothems removed by the vandals were matched to their stubs and epoxied back into place. This is possibly the

first ever incident where speleothems were removed from a cave by vandals, confiscated by police, and then restored to their natural condition.

The project was completed in June of 1998. In the end, about 75 percent of the damage done to the cave in this incident was repaired. Many formations still remain missing, probably in the hands of the older cousin.

## THANKS

I would like to thank all the people who helped this project to be so successful. Especially the N.S.S. for offering the reward. Without that the vandals would have never been found, and we never could have recovered the formations stolen from the cave. I would like to thank Jim Werker for teaching me how to do speleothem repair and for donating the epoxy used in this project. I thank the media for their time in this story. Thanks to Mark Sanders for helping me lead the project. And thanks to everyone who actually came out and helped to do the project.

Restoration Project Leaders:  
Justin Shaw and Mark Sanders

Restoration participants:  
Jay Kane,  
Carlo Abbruzzese

Project Photography:  
Vicki Smythe,  
Mark Sanders



## How To Join TCMA

At TCMA, we encourage cavers to join and participate in the state's oldest cave conservation organization. Because TCMA's goals of cave conservation require support, our members do that in many ways. They are volunteers at cave preserves and ongoing management projects...and they pay dues. Preserving cave resources and maintaining the projects for which we have responsibility requires funding.

Our annual dues structure is as follows:

Regular membership: \$15  
Family membership: \$22.50  
Student membership (up to age 18): \$5  
Maintenance fee for sustaining membership: \$10

Effective Jan. 1, 1998, TCMA began moving away from offering lifetime memberships. That formerly involved payment of \$100 in four installments. While those commitments are honored, we are currently requesting a voluntary maintenance fee of \$10 because of ongoing needs at preserves.

Please send your dues to:

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