

February 1990

## Intercom, Volume 26, No. 1, January-February 1990

Lowell Burkhead

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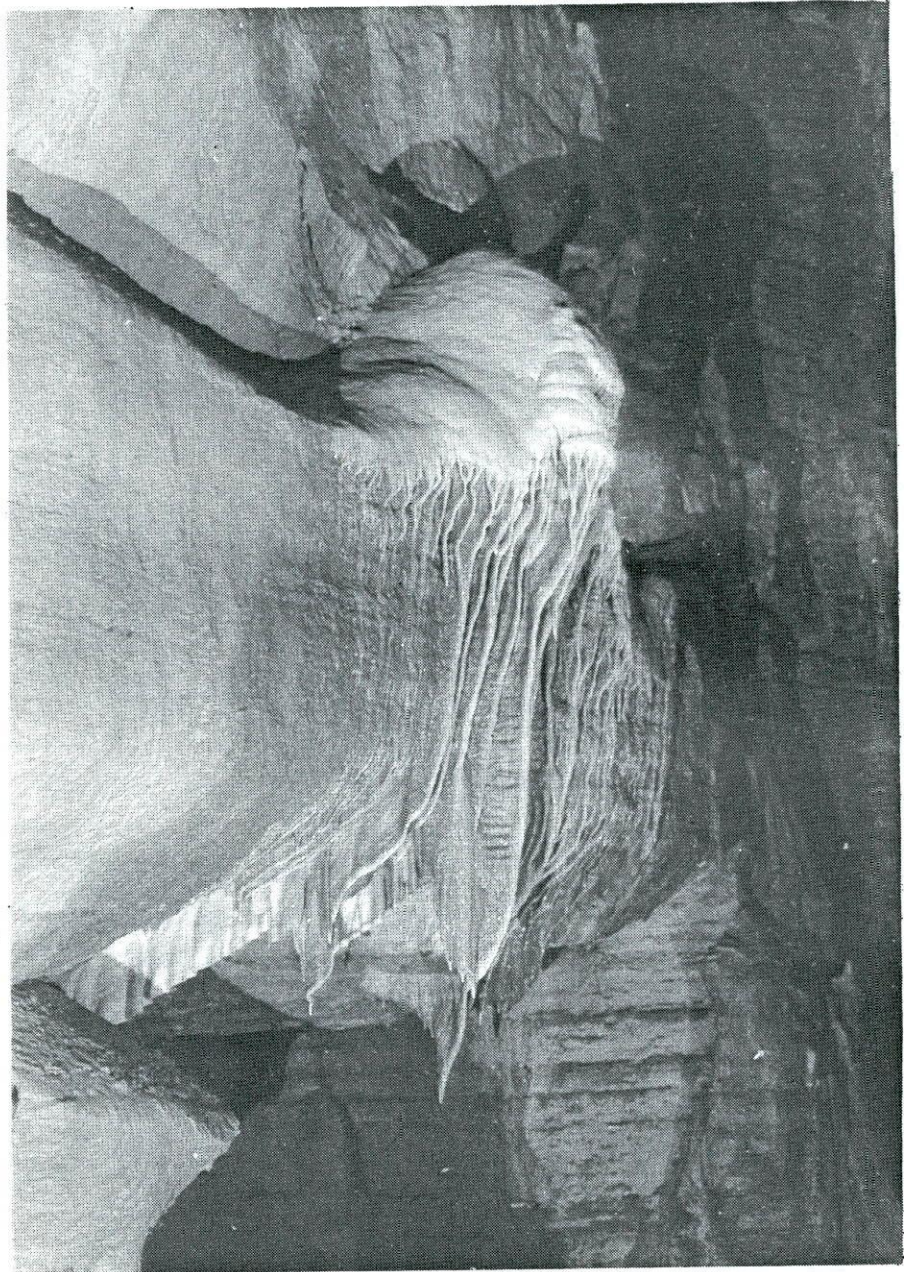
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Published Semi-spasmodically By

THE IOWA GROTTO

*National Speleological Society*

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Volume XXVI Issue 1

January - February 1990



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Volume 26 No 1

The INTERCOM is published semi-spasmodically by the Iowa Grotto, P.O. Box 228, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. The Iowa Grotto is affiliated with the National Speleological Society, Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35810, and is dedicated to the exploration and study of caves. We will exchange publications with other organizations with the same dedication. Subscriptions to the INTERCOM are \$10.00 per year. Reproduction of material appearing in the INTERCOM by other caving organizations is encouraged as long as credit is given the author and the INTERCOM and a copy of the publication is sent to the Iowa Grotto. Material for the next issue of the INTERCOM is due by May 14, 1990. Send articles and trip reports for publication to:

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The Iowa Grotto meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in room 125 of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.

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Cover: Nice formation in upper level off of Bert Falls Room, Coldwater Cave,  
Winneskie County, Iowa. Photo by Scott Dankof February 17, 1990



IOWA GROTTO  
National Speleological Society  
P. O. Box 228  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Chairman - - - - - Mike Lace  
Vice-Chairman - - Lowell Burkhead  
Sec'y-Treas. - - - Stacey Cyphert

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## IOWA GROTTO MEETING MINUTES

Regular Meeting January 24, 1990

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:30 p.m. Sixteen members were present. The December minutes were read and approved as read. The treasurer reported a balance of \$425.24 in the club treasury. TRIP REPORTS: Mike Bounk reported on survey work in the Spong area of Coldwater Cave. Jay Wells also reported on a survey trip in Coldwater Cave; his trip was in the downstream section. Mike Lace noted a couple of parties were involved in surface lead checking Coldwater weekend and that the location of the Priest's Pit was re-established. He also reported on an off-weekend survey trip in Coldwater Cave that involved side passage survey in the Mystery-Is-History passage. Marc Ohms described a trip to Searryl's and Hatfield Caves. Greg McCarty reported a new sinkhole in Clayton County and on trips to Mushroom Cave and Peterson Cave among others. This was a breakthrough trip in Peterson Cave resulting from a major dig by Greg and John Fuhrman. Over 2,000 feet of stream passage was explored all of which will be inaccessible when the drought breaks. FUTURE TRIPS: Coldwater, Feb. 17. Greg McCarty announced a trip to Peterson Cave. The Friends of Karst meeting April 5-7 was also announced. OLD BUSINESS: A map of Tourist's Delight Cave has been sent to the Department of Natural Resources. Warren Netherton will also write the DNR on behalf of Tourist's Delight Cave. The NSS now has four copies of all the INTERCOM's that have been published. The membership in attendance decided to support Dr. Gonzolas' research in Coldwater Cave only, subject to approval of the owners. Grotto members would also like to supervise the specimen collection in the cave if this is also acceptable to the cave owners. NEW BUSINESS: The grotto annual report has been filed with the NSS. Map file cabinets for the grotto library may be available from Knox Collage. A beginner trip to educate new cavers was suggested as a future activity. To avoid any potential damage to landowner relations, an editorial policy will appear in the November-December issue of the INTERCOM.

Regular Meeting February 28, 1990

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Lace at 7:37 p.m. Due to the absence of the Secretary-Treasurer, there were no minutes or treasurer's report. I, the Vice Chairman and Editor took minutes under protest because this isn't something that I can do properly and still participate in the meeting. TRIP REPORTS: Mike called for trip reports and no one had been on a trip. Mike did a second hand trip report on doings at Coldwater. Mike Nelson, Randy Kwiatkowski and Bill Nelson went upstream to dive the last sump. Randy's dive was a failure but Mike Nelson hasn't given up on it for sure. The party did 500 feet of difficult survey in the area to where the side passage started opening up. The survey total for the weekend surpassed the surveyed length of Mystery Cave of 13.24 miles and is now the largest cave in the upper midwest. Scott Dankof led a photo trip upstream. Marc Ohms reported on a trip to Doll Cave and on lead checking in Jones County. They checked the Ozark wildlife area near Ozark Spring and found a small cave with good formations. FUTURE TRIPS: March 17, there will be a ceremony at Coldwater Cave as the cave becomes a National Natural Landmark. All of the region's cavers are invited. It is also possible that Mike Bounk announced a future trip. There was no old business. NEW BUSINESS: We continue to receive correspondances complementing our publication revival. The D.C. Speleograph copied Greg McCarty's winter caving article. Mike Bounk reported on the problem with the Coldwater stream level recorder and his plans to recalibrate it. Our printing costs went from 2¢ to 3¢ per page. This will make our finances extremely tight for the coming year. There was a lengthy discussion. We have two new members since the last meeting. Other future trips: Mike Lace and Larry Welch are planning a surveying training trip to Hatfield Cave. A trip to Dubuque is in the planning stages. The meeting adjourned early but I didn't get the time since discussions continued for some time after the meeting. More newly published back issues were available after the meeting also, volume 9, issues 3 through 6, completing 1973.



A summer picnic was discussed. After the meeting, maps were searched for a location for it.

#### SIDE LEAD SATURDAY

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
January 6, 1990

by Larry Welch

Larry Welch, Mike Lace, Jay Wells, and Mike Nelson

The winter conditions had eased from the bitter cold of December but the ground was still safely frozen at Coldwater and a trip to the Mystery Is History Passage was a safe option. Plans were made for an early start on Saturday. However, when Jay showed up at the cave shack, the rest of the crew was still in bed (oops). Jay didn't mind a trip to Harmony anyway since his breakfast of burritos needed some supplementation.

We were in the cave at 11:00 or so, and we headed upstream without a precise agenda. When we reached the Spong, I was relieved to rediscover Sue Ecklund's wetsuit hood that I had lost on the last upstream trip. My hood felt like a vise grip and my memories of Sue's comfy hood taunted me, and I finally succumbed and swapped. It couldn't get any more dirty than it already was. Mike Nelson took the fore traveling past the Spong and I found myself panting soon afterward. He could see that I was going into oxygen debt before long, so slowed the pace a bit. Mike was carrying a tiny cave pack which I had described as "wimpy" in the cave shack until I picked it up and found it weighed considerably more than mine did. Packed with steroids, no doubt.

Once we got to the Iguana Crawl, we slowed to a snail's pace while moving steadily onward since there isn't anything resembling a comfortable resting spot in the area. Once we got past the Bath tub and into the Mystery Is History Passage, we held a council of war. Everyone was feeling OK, so a number of trip options could be considered. The group decided to pursue some of the larger side leads further ahead, and everyone was committed to upholding the "survey as you go" caving style that had been used on the prior trips to this area.

Ahead in the White Nodule Crevice, Mike Nelson had major light problems. We stopped for the repair job and Jay took out the camera and snapped a few shots. I was amazed when Mike pulled a Phillips screwdriver out of his pack to work on the light. He said he had gotten the idea from Stacey Cyphert, who had to miss this trip due to commitments at school. Jay kept his camera handy and took a number of photos ahead in the beautiful area by the Stage Curtains. Both of the Mikes were enjoying their first stroll through this pristine tunnel laden with white formations. Mike Nelson couldn't get over how the cave had kept going and returned to such a nice size once past the Iguana Crawl.

We finally stopped at a passage that had been dubbed, the Monster Oriface, that led off to the left and was, naturally, quite large. The mouth had a nice collection of 'mites and 'tites, and it looked like it might go a ways. The packs were unloaded and we set off into virgin cave. Mike Nelson led the way, Jay handled the other end of the tape, I read compass, and Mike Lace, as usual, was sketching up a storm. The passage started as a roomy stoopway with numerous ceiling crevices. We reached a chaotic breakdown area where we had to snake under a massive hanging block to continue. Unfortunately, the passage beyond was a cobbled, belly-dragging, crawl that pinched two stations past the breakdown. The



best-looking lead had only gone 250 feet! This shouldn't have been a major shock, but I guess we were just used to the passage going and going after the last few trips.

We moved further upstream to a left-hand lead near NTS dome. This passage quickly degraded into a sleazeway and we were having trouble keeping the survey gear clean. The passage led back to a room that was 30 feet wide but very low. While Jay was trying to figure this room out, I spotted an upper level lead in a narrow crevice. I probably wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been sliding on my back trying to keep my hands clean. Mike Lace came up and gave me a boost into the crevice. There was indeed a passage up there and it continued in the same direction as the passage we were surveying (west, in general), small, but passable. There was an abundance of coon tracks in this passage, so the lead is worth a check. The passage underneath continued, but Jay decided we would have to dig to reach a larger continuation visible ahead. Everyone was totally slimed and we headed back to the dome to clean up.

Mike Lace was looking a bit pale as we contemplated our next move. He admitted to being nauseous, but was game to continue. We decided to move back downstream of the Monster Oriface. This passage started as a roomy crawl that had a number of lofty crevices which could probably be chimneyed by a good climber. Mike Nelson commented that some of the rubble at the bottom of one of these crevices looked as if it were frost-fractured. After a few bends, the passage rose into a standing height room. To the right were a couple of lofty crevice/domes. To the left, one could scramble up and into the awesome chamber of the Big Ass Dome. This dome had a large floor area as well as being perhaps 75 feet high in places. One large rock was wedged precariously overhead, and the left side of the dome was partitioned by a wall that did not appear to be well supported. In the back of the dome was a room with some nice flowstone adornment, and rubble slopes led up and out of sight on either side of the room. I tackled the slope on the left, which rose at a reasonable angle but was largely composed of unstable rock. Everyone else moved out of the path of stonefall, and I scaled the slope that reminded me greatly of the Indiana Jones Passage near the start of the Iguana Crawl. When I finally got to the top, I was in the roomy tunnel I had seen from below but I was disappointed to find that it pinched out up ahead. I was at a perfect angle to look into the crevice on the other side of the room, but it was too far away for me to illuminate it. I was glad to get down off the unstable pile and decided not to attempt the other side. It looked to be a much more difficult climb anyway.

Since nothing obvious led off of the dome, we returned to the junction in the Big Ass Passage and continued straight ahead. Water was puddled in this area and the floor sloped downward until the puddles got a couple of feet deep. The water wasn't flowing, but it was easy to suspect we had crossed a drainage divide. We tied off the survey a few shots past the dome with the passage continuing as a hands and knees crawl in about a foot of water where someday, someone will find out if there is indeed a drainage divide. Mike Lace was feeling very sick by this point and was anxious to get out of the cave pronto. We decided to split up, sending speed-burner, Nelson, out with Mike, while Jay and I exited at a more casual (slow) pace. It took us ages to get started because I had snarled the compass cords into a knot and they needed to be packed separately. The Mike's beat us out of the cave by an hour but neither of us minded. On the previous trip, we had returned at a faster pace and I had been totally wiped out upon reaching the shaft so Jay & I slowed down a bit, enjoyed the scenery, and exited feeling much better than last time.

We had surveyed, explored, and photographed, 830 feet of passage which, at the time, led us to believe we had passed Mystery Cave in surveyed footage. We were to find out that Mystery, in the throes of a data reorganization, was still longer. I



don't think any of us were too concerned because we had passed numerous unsurveyed leads on this trip, and Coldwater is far from finished. Besides, a little friendly competition may spur further advances in both of these worthy projects and prove beneficial to all.

#### KILBURG CAVE

Kilburg Cave, Jackson County, Iowa  
January 8, 1990  
Marc Ohms, Eric Winch, and Jeff Francois

by Marc Ohms

We stopped at the Kilburg farm to get permission to enter the cave. After inviting us in, they showed us a map of the cave and gave us directions. After thanking them, we headed to the cave which is 200 yards below the barn. The entrance is 6 feet high in a small outcrop.

The cave is 150 feet long, dry, and consisting of a single passage. After 20 feet, the remaining passage is crawlway. The floor is dry and rough; we were thankful for our knee pads. There are a lot of small (1 to 4 inch) stalactites throughout the cave. The passage keeps getting smaller until it is too small to continue. I took a few photos before exiting the cave. The cave has a bad smell which I believe is barnyard drainage seeping into the cave.

While talking to Mr. Kilburg, he mentioned that only 6-8 people have been in the cave in the past 20 years that he has lived there.

#### SPONG AREA SURVEY TRIP

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
January 20, 1989  
Jim Elliot, Joe Jonakin, Matt Kramar, Nancy Kramar, Randy Waslien, and Michael Bounk

by Michael Bounk

We entered the cave at about 11:00 a.m. and headed upstream to and through the Spong "siphon". There was about five inches of air in the Spong. We continued upstream about 50 feet to where the passage enlarges to a room. At this spot, the stream comes from a passage to the left. A dry tube straight ahead goes to the first large room. To the left of the upstream streamway noted above and almost doubling back on the passage leading to the Spong, is a dry passage with a breakdown floor located about eight feet above the stream. We surveyed this passage which goes back to a dome and a T intersection. The right branch of the T may go with digging. We surveyed up the left branch which comes out over the stream and connects through a hole to near the entrance of the dry passage. Surveyed length is about 240 feet. The right wall of the entire dry passage consists of breakdown.

After some cavers visited the first big room, we exited the cave at about five p.m.

## BITS AND PIECES

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
 January 20, 1990  
 Larry Welch, Jay wells and Richard Ames

by Larry Welch

An unusually warm January put our upstream plans in jeopardy. An incoming storm made any trips very far upstream a dicey prospect, and those of us who were keeping track of water levels eventually decided to pass this time. There is a very real risk here in that someone who is not well-acquainted with the stream level conditions in the area might unwittingly take a gamble on weather conditions. We were aware of the dangers and decided not to take any chances.

Jay, Richard, and I decided to head downstream to survey a few hanging scraps of passage in less flood-prone areas. We were in by 10:30 and on our way. Jay and Richard kept me entertained with their point/counterpoint discussions on the way to the Monument Passage. Once at Monument, we journeyed to near the Pillar of Light before breaking out the survey gear. When the 1980 convention map was made, two side passages were depicted branching off from Monument, but an examination of the survey notes shows that neither was actually surveyed (or a later party surveyed these areas and the notes have been lost).

We surveyed both passages, as usual not entering the chamber containing the Pillar of Light to conserve its fragile domain. The other passage pinched just past a large broken formation, but a dome can be heard ahead. Jay noted that it would be easier digging into this dome than the infamous Wimp Hole. Richard, on lead tape, got his first taste of cave survey here in what was a good spot to learn. Jay read compass and I sketched, which tasks we continued throughout the trip.

Next stop was Sand Canyon, which was reached after a leisurely downstream stroll. The water throughout the cave was very dirty and smelled bad. Foam was abundant, and at one of the dams in Rimstone Country, the passage was choked wall-to-wall with a 7 foot high blob of foam. This sight was ample proof that a good burst of run-off had reached the water table during the previous warm spell. The dirty water probably was a remnant of drainage from the large commercial feed-lots operating to the north of the cave. Recent mapping upstream has proven that the Coldwater drainage basin extends up into this vicinity.

Once at Sand Canyon, we went toward the back of the passage where a left-hand lead splits off and goes back to a dome. In September, Mike Nelson and Jack Decker had joined me in surveying two leads off this dome. We found out later that despite the existence of survey chips in the dome and at the fork in Sand Canyon, no data could be found for the passage leading back to the dome. We went to work and tied the dome into the map. Everyone was up for more so we decided to finish up a few more short stretches in the vicinity.

Next stop was Sue's First Right-Hand Side Passage, named for a passage that Sue Ecklund had mistaken for the First Right-Hand Side Passage which is another three to four hundred feet downstream. There were two survey chips near the entrance. I couldn't remember which one to use so we tied into both just to play it safe. The passage started as a tall, narrow, crevice, but once you go up a flowstone chute, the passage gets much lower and still is narrow. We ended our survey on a flowstone gate just past where a slightly-too-small lead enters from the right. The passage continues about 15 feet past the gate to a point where fill blocks the passage at another flowstone gate. Due to the difficulty encountered while squeezing past the gate, we decided not to survey it. A chip was left for any ambitious future surveyors.



I took a bit of grief for my overestimation of the passage length, which was true as well for the last two items on our menu. They were crevices leading off the main passage about 250 feet further downstream. The first one led up a mud slope to a small room named Dakota Dome. A small drain led out of the dome that obviously wound back to a tiny inlet that fed the mainstream just downstream of the crevice. Jay wasn't making assumptions, so slid into the drain. Sure enough, it did just as I thought, but there was also a fork at the base of the drain and another passage leading away from the mainstream. It was a sleazeway but definitely passable. I made a mental note to quit thinking so much and to check leads using Jay's method instead.

One final crevice pinched out in fill, then we quit for the day. We headed back at a steady pace, renewing the point/counterpoint debate. We were out by 8:00 with about 290 feet of survey. Richard had done very well and will hereafter have to be referred to as an old pro.

#### BACK BURNER AND MOPPING UP TIME

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

February 17, 1990

by Mike Nelson

Mike Nelson, Bill Nelson, and Randy Kwiatkowski

We hauled one solo diving set of gear up to "One More Sump" for Randy to do a push dive. I had been mulling over the prospects of such a dive and came to the conclusion that evaluating and hopefully breaching the sump should be executed in as straightforward a manner as possible. Randy is a more experienced diver. It's almost a mile and a half to the sump. The drought conditions probably won't last forever. Hence, can the ego and get the job done.

Unfortunately, the Monday prior, there had been a record warm day. The water levels had risen slightly, though not enough to interfere with any of the upstream trips but the temperature had dropped a few degrees. Worst though, was that the runoff had tinted the water a deep red.

This coloring didn't dissipate as we had hoped, as we moved upstream. Randy was still comfortable diving with the limited visibility, so we set up and he proceeded. After a few short minutes (which might have felt long to him) Randy reappeared. The line hanging all over him and his gear gave one the impression that he had been diving in a bowl of spaghetti. He described a situation in which he could touch both walls, had his back up against the rock and his front in the mud. This inspired a concern for his back up regulator's ability to function if called upon to do so. After about 25 feet, he turned, picking up the line in a fashion more typical of my style than his, and retreated. He pronounced "One More Sump" to be "a close, dirty, nasty, dangerous sump", and professed a complete lack of further interest in it.

I trust Randy's judgement, of course, but his evaluation under less than ideal conditions did not concur with mine when the visibility was limited only by the power of my dive light's beam. Another trip, with just a mask and dive light will probably be made if the water levels remain low, just to reevaluate things when the water is once again clear.

The lead is a better prospect than the sump in April Cave, dive wise, and the possibility of digging still exists. There is a mud filled joint that rises



above the water level on the right side of the passage. Both of these options will require considerable effort and have assumed a back burner until the mopping up of the "dry" leads and surveying are completed in the Last Right-Hand Side Passage.

Backtracking to the Last Right-Hand Side Passage, we got right to that mopping up but not before running into a photo crew and exchanging a somewhat tired Randy for Jack Decker.

Bill, Jack and I made a bee line for the slot passage at the back of the Sand Room. The water from this area drops into the LRHSP at Burt Falls, and together, they comprise the only side passage in the first couple thousand feet of the LRHSP. The connection between Burt Falls and the Sand Room has been pushed a little from each direction, but a physical link has not been completed.

Sliding through the slot into the stream at the back of the Sand Room, we picked up the survey where we had dropped it on 1-21-89. We surveyed through the squeeze into passage that only Bill's eyes had seen before. We got rather long, straight shots through cave that was larger than it seemed in Bill's report of his push when it was still virgin. Coming to the extent of his original efforts, we had an ideal spot to tie on a chip, at the gate of stalactites that formed at an abrupt drop in the ceiling.

I threaded my way through these and pushed on to where there was a matching set in a cross joint. It was a very low and nasty piece of cave with about 2½ to 3 inches of airspace through most of it. When Bill saw it was all a straight shot, he grabbed the tape again and we got that unsavory 92 feet of survey on the books.

Jack had expressed a desire to call it a day just prior to this last shot. He prevailed on his always good nature to let us take a ten minute look to see what was in store for the next survey trip here. The cave started to rise to good hands and knees passage with more meanders than the nearly 500 feet we had just documented. It appears to be more of a going lead than a mop up operation, for now.

#### UPSTREAM PHOTO TRIP

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
February 17, 1990

by Scott Dankof

Scott Dankof, Doug Schmuecker, Dan Brass, Jack Decker, and Brice Stegner

Another day dawned bright at Coldwater Cave. After breakfast in Harmony, we stocked up on batteries and Tootsie Rolls at the store. Back at the shack, Bryan Bain was trying to fit into his incredible shrinking wetsuit. We waited for a group of Luther Collage students to go down, then we got into our gear, climbed down into the cave and headed upstream at 11:30. We made good time to the Spong Siphon, slipped on our wetsuit hoods and entered the icy cold water. We had decided to go all the way to the Iguana Crawl in the Nelson Section then work our way back taking pictures as we went.

Upon arriving at the Iguana Crawl, we unpacked our camera gear and started taking pictures around the breakdown room. A massive pile of unstable breakdown greets you when you enter this room. We headed back to Bert Falls. On the way there, we met the brothers Nelson and Randy Kwiatkowski. Mike and Bill were wanting to do some surveying off the Sand Room but Randy was ready to head out. We traded Jack for Randy and off we went. We took pictures of the killer foam which



didn't come out and some shots of the upper level passage opposite the falls.

It was time to head out so off we crawled toward the sumps. Everyone commented on how nice it was to float through some of the sumps rather than crawl. We were out by 8:00 p.m.

All in all, I was happy with the results of the pictures. The black and whites were the best. I'm finally getting more good pictures than bad ones.

Also, a big thank you goes to everyone in our group. They all helped greatly, whether it was being a model, helping with flashes, and especially, carrying equipment.



Doug Schmuecker, Brice Stegner, and Dan Brass in the main passage heading out of the Bert Falls Room, Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa, February 17, 1990. Photo by Scott Dankof



## HUMBLED BY COLDWATER CAVE'S LANDMARK FALLS

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa

February 17, 1990

by Bryan Bain

Larry Welch, Stacey Cyphert, Jay Wells and Bryan Bain

Saturday morning found us preparing to push the northern limits of Coldwater Cave. Many moons had passed since I'd been wetsuit caving. I also found out that many pounds had been gained. I struggled, fought, and squirmed to get into my wet suit, which seemed to have lost some of its flexibility. I greased up with vaseline. I grunted and groaned. At first, the others found my plight amusing. But later, the chuckles turned to impatience. Minutes ticked by as I slowly pulled the reluctant neoprene onto my body. Finally, I got the farmer John bottoms completely on. But alas, my jacket refused to be a part of the scheme. Jay rescued me by trading tops and suddenly we were ready to descend.

We headed upstream at a brisk pace and I soon discovered that my sedentary lifestyle of late had made me greatly out of shape. Throughout the entire trip I huffed and puffed, required infinite rest breaks, and generally slowed the others down.

Although I was told that the Spong's water level was up a couple of inches, it was a breeze compared to the last time I had been through. In fact, Scandawhovian Sump and Three Dive Sump were both easier than I expected, thanks to the recent prolonged drought. We continued up the Last Right-Hand Side Passage into some nice walking passage. We stashed cans of Pepsi at the Sand Room and Bert Falls for the trip back out. Next was the dreaded Iguana Crawl, a pain-in-the-rear section that is low and snaggy. Beyond is mostly stoop-walk with sucking mud that quickly sapped what little energy I had left. We passed areas that had nice formations such as the beautiful Stage Curtain.

At last, our objective was in sight. We broke out the survey gear and began mapping the virgin passage that awaited us. The first few stations continued in a northerly direction with plenty of flowstone and formations to enchant us. The cave made a 90 degree turn heading west and we suddenly found ourselves in a narrow but tall canyon/crevice passage that contained a lot of breakdown. We noted several possible upper level leads that will require climbing to check out. The passage forked with both ways ending in a dome. One dome contained a nice 20 to 25 foot high waterfall which we named Landmark Falls. Obvious passage continued on at the top, but we lacked the equipment and skill to scale the falls. We chipped the dome and then surveyed into the other dome where we found another upper lead. Stacey and Larry climbed to the top and announced going passage. We continued the survey up and into the passage. I excitedly proclaimed that we finally found the elusive upper level that had been sought after for so many years. But, after a couple of stations, the passage began to look a bit grim. We ended the survey, although there were still about four virgin leads radiating out. A couple of the leads may require some digging to push.

Larry estimated that we had taped at least 1000 feet which should put us well over the 13 mile mark and slightly ahead of Mystery Cave. We began our march back to the entrance shaft. I was exhausted and floundered zombie-like while attempting to keep up with the others. Fortunately, they were compassionate enough to frequently stop and wait for me to catch up. Past the Iguana Crawl, we found our stashed soft drinks and eagerly sucked them down. Possibly this combination of sugar and caffeine assisted in giving me my "second wind", because suddenly I felt better. However, I began to poop out again just before the sumps, but I wearily struggled on. It sure felt good to be on the downstream side of the Spong Siphon again. There I had problems with my carbide lamp, probably due to dunking it in the sumps.



The old caving adage goes: your carbide lamp will never fail unless you are in the presence of cavers who prefer electric. I fiddled with the lamp while the others complained that they were getting quite cold. Finally, the ding-dang lamp fired and we were on the move again. I must have gotten my "third wind" because we cruised right along, reaching the platform in 30 minutes.

We exited at 2:00 a.m. making it well over a 14 hour trip. The next morning found me stiff and sore. Aside from the bruises, I felt pretty good about our accomplishments, but not quite good enough to go caving again for a day or two.



Dan Brass on top of Mikes Nervous Breakdown, Coldwater Cave  
Photo by Scott Dankof February 17, 1990



## AS FUN AS IT WAS COLD

February 24&amp;25, 1990

by Mike Nelson

Julie Whitfield had been corresponding with Tom Spina from Virginia Beech, Va., since meeting him last summer at Coldwater Cave. They planned a trip to coincide with her birthday, to do some caving in Iowa. We knew he wasn't expecting monster caves here, so a good time was the most we could hope to provide. The fact that this was the only weekend in the month of February that felt like February didn't detract from it.

We started out with a short warm up vertical session at Dutton's Cave. Julie had to perfect a rig with newly aquired gear and Scott Johnson, who had had his initial training last summer in a tree, had to get some more realistic "hands on". Delores and I set things up and tended belays while Wes Whitfield creatively recorded the entire fiasco on Tom's VCR.

We had intended to go out and dink around at Gouldsberg Cave so I could get an insight to mapping from Tom who has mapping experience beyond the norm. However, after a laugh fest that accompanied supper, we were all too shot for various reasons, to do more that day.

Sunday morning, we met up with Doug Schmuecker and Jay Wells and proceeded to use Milke Cave in every way acceptable to the conscientious caver, from vertical training to purely recreational. We dug some at the east end and we mapped it. I can't see how a cave could ask for more attention or how a caver could give it.

Tom volunteered to draft the map, which may even be here before this report goes to print.

Though we initially only dropped one rope, we soon rigged another, considering the potential in the event that the cold caused problems with either equipment or personnel. Every cave must be treated with the same respect we accord our lives. None can be taken for granted, as we had sadly learned on this same weekend, three years ago.

That we accomplished so many varied tasks with so many folks in such a small cave is a tribute to good times, which were had by all, each getting what they individually want out of caving.

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 THE CAVE ANSWER MAN

Yes, even though it's a new year and a new volume of the INTERCOM, continued things will continue, even "The Cave Answer Man". We left off with a question that the editor answered several years back: Why do bats hang upside down?

A. Research has shown that their blood pressure is too low to get enough blood to the brain when they stand upright.

Q. Are raccoons ever a problem in caves?

A. Only if you're using sweet corn to mark the way out.

## CAVE GEOLOGY

Q. What are your theories on Speleogenesis?

A. I prefer to not discuss religion here.

Q. What is the best type of rock for caves to be found in?

A. Rock that is hollow.

- Q. Is it true that older layers of rock have older caves?  
A. No. The proper way to determine if a cave is old is to sniff it and see if it smells musty.  
Q. Why are some caves so wet, while others are nearly dry?  
A. The wet caves invariably have more water than the dry ones.  
Q. What causes breakdown?  
A. Usually, poor maintenance of the car.  
Q. Why are stalactites so pointed?  
A. They are formed by drips of water. Gravity pulls down on the drips of water and makes them pointy, so the stalactites are pointy also.  
Q. Then, why are stalagmites so rounded?  
A. When the drip falls from the stalactite, it leaves the pointy part behind. So, only the rounded part of the drip is left to form the stalagmite.  
Q. Helictites curve and branch so intricately. Can you explain why?  
A. Yes, but you wouldn't understand it. Only cave scientists, such as the Cave Answer Man, can understand such complicated speleophenomena.  
Q. I've heard of a formation called "moon milk". Can you tell me what this is?  
A. "Moon milk" is just a myth. It doesn't really exist. Stories about it come from the time when people thought the moon was made of green cheese. You should know better than to believe such tales.

#### CAVING EQUIPMENT

- Q. Is caving an expensive hobby?  
A. Not at all. Only the commercial caves charge admission.  
Q. Is an army surplus store a good place to shop for caving equipment?  
A. That depends on whether they have any or not.  
Q. Can a caver ever go caving without a helmet?  
A. Some cavers find it quite easy to do that. Others sometimes go without their coveralls or their boots. Check your gear before you leave.  
Q. On a typical days trip, do you always carry three sources of light?  
A. No. I've always found the sun to be a reliable source of light during the day.  
Q. What should you do if your main source of light fails?  
A. Fix it or buy a new one.  
Q. What is the best way to get sticky cave mud out of a pair of coveralls?  
A. Use a solution of detergent dissolved in water.  
Q. Why is an ammo can called a millstone?  
A. Because of the way it grinds on you as you drag it through a crawlway.  
Q. Can walkie-talkies be used in caves?  
A. Yes. If you are careful with them they can be used to temporarily mark survey stations, to hold open a survey book to the right page or to take up extra space in a cave pack that's too large.  
Q. When would the use of a cable ladder be preferred?  
A. When the reception on your regular ladder is poor.

#### CAVING TECHNIQUES

- Q. Is it true that the drive to the cave area is more dangerous than the trip into the cave?  
A. That depends on who you're riding with.  
Q. What's the best way to handle land owner relations?  
A. It's best not to get involved with land owners, because the cave could end up closed if their spouse finds out.  
Q. How can you tell if a caver has been on a really tough trip?  
A. When they have to use Lava Soap on their face before they can be recognized by close relatives.  
Q. What can be done if a sink plugs and fills with water?  
A. Use a plunger. Chemical drain openers only do part of the job.  
Q. Is cave diving safe?  
A. Not unless you are careful to make sure the water is deep enough first.





Beth Welch in the beautifully decorated "Nemo Dome", April Cave, Winneshiek County, Iowa  
Photo by Stacey Cyphert