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The Hope/Gull Rock Cave Area

NEW MEETING TIME AND PLACE!!!!

SLIDE SHOWS ON GLACIER CAVES!!!!

Glacier Grotto meetings will now be held on the third Thursday of each month in room 212, Grant Hall at the Alaska Pacific University. At our November 15 meeting, everyone is asked to bring any glacier caves slides so we can usher in the glacier caving season. And if the weather continues like it has with little or no snow it should be a fantastic season! So if you've never been to a meeting, or you're interested in trying some glacier caving, stop in for the Nov. 15 meeting.

EDITOR'S NOTE

My apologies for waiting so long since the last issue of the Alaskan Caver. Summer things can only be done while the too-short summer lasts but the cool September rains have brought me back to my senses. I won't promise that this periodical will come out in any frequency other than periodically, as time and material allow.

In this issue I have focused on the Caves of Hope, probably the most accessible caves to Anchorage. The Alice Iliff article and Jay Rockwell's "Chairman's Corner" were written in 1975 and never published but are as useful today as they were then. Actually, the Hope area is not the only place nearby that these seacaves exist. I have seen them in Kachemak Bay and around Prince William Sound. Resurrection Bay, out from Seward, has many beautiful large sea caves which could only be approached from the water including some tunnels that you could probably get a small boat through.

I recommend that everyone check out these "different" caves sometime and request that when you do, you write a report on where you went and what was there and send it in to me. Articles on caves and any aspect of caving are of course always welcome.

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Publisher: David Moll

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Treas. Sydney Jenkins
At Lrg. David Moll

GLACIER GROTTO MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

The following list includes full members (those members who maintain a current membership in the NSS) designated "***", associate members (all others who have paid their annual dues) designated "**", and friends. "Friends" includes ex-members and others who have shown an interest in caves and caving in Alaska. If you know anyone who would be interested in becoming a member or to correct any of the listings please contact Jay Rockwell or Rich Hall.

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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Alaska Cave Area No. 1

The caves of Hope are situated on the north shore of the Kenai Peninsula. At low tide, a handsome beach of sand and pebbles extends from the waters of Turnagain Arm to the rocky cliffs in which the caves are formed. At high tide, the waves wash against the cliffs and into the caves. The Arm, a fjord of tremendous tides, has been largely filled with sands of glacial streams; waters going in and out roar and appear like rivers. Under certain conditions of wind and tide, a tidal bore occurs. For obvious reasons, boating is practically non-existent and the beach remains in its unlittered, pristine state. At its closest point the corridor (power, pipeline, rail, and road) is four miles away across the Arm.

It would be nice to feel that the beaches and caves will remain unspoiled forever, but this is not necessarily so. Building a bridge across the Arm at its narrowest point will soon make good sense economically, substantially reducing the distances between Anchorage and Seward, and Anchorage and Kenai. The former route would traverse the general area of the caves and beach described here; the latter would run to Burnt Island through a similar area and then to the oil fields north of Kenai. If these two forks of the road were built a hundred or more yards back from the tops of the cliffs, as was done with the road from Sunrise to Hope, there would be no problem. Both beach and caves would be undisturbed. But, the modern way to build highways is right on the beach: cutting through the little points of rock that jut out, filling in the caves with talus, and creating impoundments which will gradually be filled with silt. Such has been the fate of most of the beach and caves on the north side of the Arm, and more recently, on the southeast side of Point Valdez.

The caves are owned jointly by Federal and State agencies, the dividing line being the mean high water mark. Below the high water is all State land, and a highway department less appreciative of the scenic and recreational resources of the State than the present administration could push the road to completion without public hearings, provided Federal funds were not involved. A highway on Forest Service lands, the preferred route, would require public hearings, and the beach route would, of course, have to be considered.

The most logical solution now is to establish an undeveloped sea-shore park between the most suitable tentative highway centerline and the low tide mark of Turnagain Arm. Concurrent recreational development could be served adequately by enlarging Porcupine Creek Campground and creating a new campground in the Burnt Island or Burnt Island Creek area. Interconnecting trails with shelter cabins would enhance the already quasi-wilderness setting and would maintain the beach and littoral caves in their present setting.

SPRING VISIT TO GULL ROCK CAVES

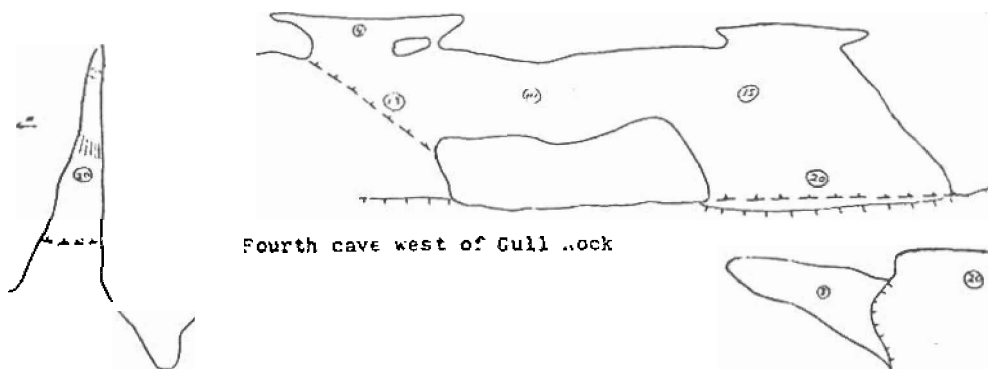
On the weekend of May 9th, Jim and I went on a hike to Gull Rock with other members of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska including Dave Klinger. Dave is also a Glacier Grotto member though he has since retired to the Pacific Northwest to enjoy the sunshine. We left town early, arrived at Forcupine Campground just west of Hope about 11 am and took our time hiking the 4 to 5 miles to Gull Rock. Gull Rock is a peninsula which juts a thousand feet into Turnagain Arm from about the northernmost point of the Kenai Peninsula.

With the sun due west and the tide out we set about my real reason for being there - to look for sea caves. We set off to the west and it didn't take long since the first cave we found was in Gull Rock itself. It was only about 20 feet deep (I refused to call the numerous holes less than 10 feet deep caves) and 20 feet high with a width at the entrance of 6 feet, narrowing as it went back. This is an example of the typical sea cave in the area. A short way along the beach was a second, very similar cave. The third was similar too, although it had a bit more character with a low, wide entrance and a taller room behind it. Still less than half of a mile down the beach, we found number 4. It was a tunnel, about 70 feet long and 10-15 feet high and wide with two small side tunnels which would require a light source to investigate. Within the next quarter mile there were four more caves; two 40 footers and two 15 footers. All told I sketched about 250 feet of cave and returned just as the tide was lapping the rocks of our escape route.

Not content, I awoke early the next day and headed east as the tide was going out. I soon came across a nice Y-shaped double-entrance cave with about 50 feet of passage and a nicely vaulted ceiling. It was followed by two more tunnels and seven other caves in the next mile of beach. There seemed to be no typical place to find them, some were at the tips of rock points and some were at the furthest distance from the shore; one had roots in its roof and probably won't be there the same time next year. I had come to a place where there was no way to go farther without climbing way up the slope or getting wet so I returned to Gull Rock. It being extreme low tide, I was able to enter two beautiful caves under Gull Rock itself which I couldn't have approached two hours before. The first of the two probably had the largest volume of all the caves I entered that day as it was rectangular in the back rather than coming to a point, and measured 40 feet deep by 15 feet wide by 20 feet high. All in all, I sketched about 300 feet of cave that morning.

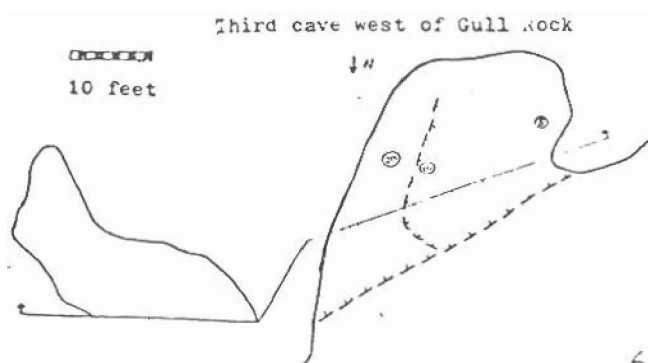
My conclusions are several: 1. I've been in some Maryland and West Virginia caves that were less interesting. 2. I should always carry a flashlight, compass, tape measure and camera for documentation. 3. My sketches didn't show enough detail for the size of the caves when sketched at 1000 or 500 feet to the inch. 4. These caves are the most accessible caves to Anchorage being only 90 miles away and open at low tide for at least half the year. (Actually this conclusion has only come to me while trying to get trips organized to cave areas in other parts of the state. 5. Access from the water would be a lot easier than hiking in and climbing through the brush to get to the beach. 6. It's a fun hike whether or not you go caving although any cave-starved spleeholic shouldn't pass up the chance. 7. I really should go back but haven't yet.

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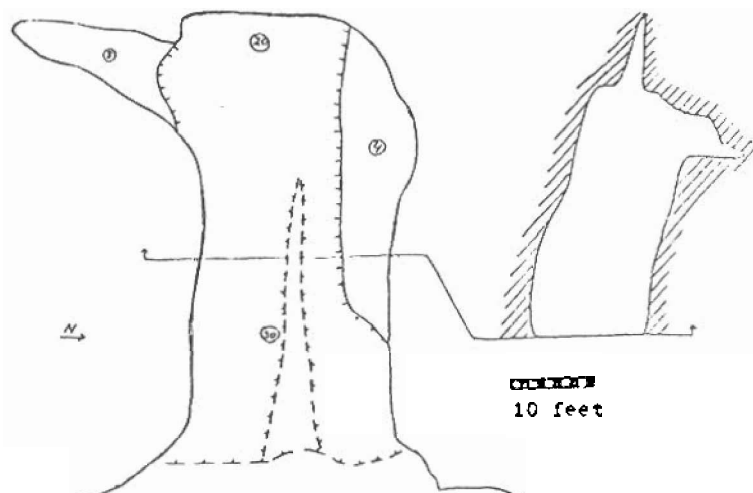


Fourth cave west of Gull Rock

First cave on west side of Gull Rock



Third cave west of Gull Rock



Large cave on east side of Gull Rock

THE CAVES OF HOPE

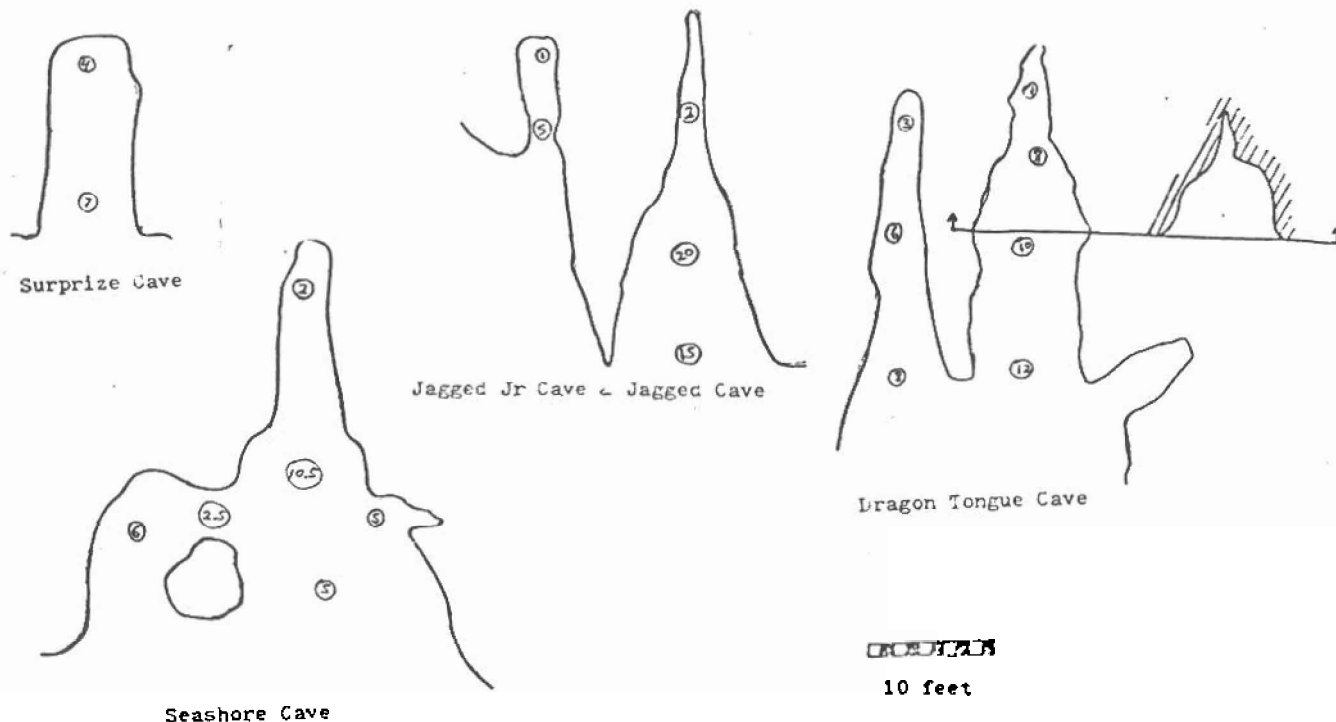
On July 4, 5, and 6, 1975, six NSS members found and mapped 11 new littoral caves in the rocky cliffs within 3½ miles to the northwest of Hope, Alaska. Total passage length was about 400 feet. Nearly all the caves were in Chugiak graywacke. Cave reports and photographs of several caves are included. The Hope trip should be annual, at least until the entire rocky portion of the north coast of the Kenai Peninsula is checked out for more caves.

Hope, Alaska, is reached by driving 70 miles south from Anchorage on the Seward Highway, and turning right on the well-maintained gravel Hope Access Road for another 17 miles. The town was founded in 1896, by gold seekers, and has a post office, a general store, and a gas station. The U.S. Forest Service's Porcupine Creek Campground (24 sites, picnic tables, tent spaces, and drinking water) is 1.5 miles past the town, and is the logical base for exploring the cave and beach areas below the Gull Rock hiking trail.

The caves at Hope are small, littoral openings formed along weak joints in the intertidal zone. Because of high tides in Turnagain Arm, it is imperative to be aware of high and low tides before hiking on the beach. Not only does high tide cover the beach and fill many of the caves, but the cliffs along the beach are quite steep and smooth, with few exceptions. Gull Rock Trail is as much as a quarter mile from the beach and as high as 700 feet up. The mountain sides are covered with dense growth of alders, devil's club, spruce, birch, poplar, and insects. The beach sand is fairly firm to walk on but tends to be "quick" in spots. Good hiking boots, a hard hat, and flashlights are suitable equipment. Most of the caves run NE/SW in the rock, and contain flora and fauna typical of northern intertidal zones.

On July 4, 1975, Alice and Chuck Iliff, and Jay, Liz, and Tad Rockwell explored a quarter mile area of beach near the campground containing three caves (Surprise, Seashore, Dragon Tongue). Tape measurements and photographs were taken. The weather was ideal for camping and exploring. On Saturday (July 5), this same group began hiking along the beach at low tide, again looking at the first 3 caves, then proceeding northwest up the beach. The rock faces contain many cracks, indentations, and fractures, which often can be confused with actual cave openings from a distance. The rock primarily is Chugiak graywacke, with quartz and some calcite intrusions. Some caves show evidence of prospecting attempts to remove the quartz.

Halfway Island (see quadrangle map on cover) may be accessible at low tide by rubber boat. There are similar rock features as on the mainland, with the possi-



bility of more caves. After taping Jagged Cave and Jagged, Jr. Cave, which are 1 3/5 miles NW of Dragon Tongue Cave, we continued northwest on the beach for 3,000 feet to a cliff face containing 5 caves. We ate lunch here in the sun (later naming the area the Lunch Caves). These 5 caves appeared to have less rockweed in them, suggesting that the caves do not fill entirely at high tide (though the beach becomes inaccessible). Terraces of gravel on the floors suggest storm tide and wave action. At the northwest end of the Lunch Cave area, there is a rock structure resembling the eye of a needle -- a window in the rock. About 120 feet northwest up the beach from the eye we found Rockweed Cave, in a rocky section covered with slippery seaweed. Near the back of the cave we found a luminescent, wet moss (or mold), suggesting the high water line seldom covers the entire cave floor.

After taping and more photographing, the tide was getting too high to proceed any further on the beach. The quarter mile of bushwack/climb up through the swamp alders to the 700-foot high Gull Rock Trail made us appreciate the beaten path. There was evidence of Dall sheep hair on the bushes. After reaching the trail, it was a pleasant walk back to the campground. On the way, Sandy and Harvey Bowers joined us. We all shared one campsite, due to holiday crowds. After a camp dinner, Sandy, Harvey, and Jay returned to the first 3 caves and did more extensive taping in Dragon Tongue.

For the record, total passage length measured was about 400 feet. All 11 caves were within a 3 1/2 mile stretch of the beach.

On Sunday, it was decided to end the beach walks and go to Byron Glacier to check snowslide cave entrances. We broke camp and made a short, futile attempt to catch humpback salmon in the creek. A local resident thought he remembered a cave on Gull Rock itself, leaving more exploration open for the area.

For anyone going to the Hope area to visit these caves, we recommend referring to this article, individual cave forms and maps, and photographs. Hope is a beautiful area of unspoiled beach and spectacular mountain scenery, that when mixed with the fun of exploring the sea caves, provides a most enjoyable weekend trip.

-Alice Iliff

The maps, cave reports and photographs not printed in this issue are available from Jay Rockwell.-Ed.

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News - Dated Material

DON'T FORGET TO COME TO THE NOV 15
MEETING AT GRANT HALL, ALASKA
PACIFIC UNIVERSITY! AND BRING GLACIER
CAVE SLIDES!