

CHOUTEAU GROTTO
FORESIGHT:
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The spectacular entrance of Roubidoux Cave (Diana Dawson)

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Introduction: What is this document?

Each time the grotto organizes an outing or event, a trip report is written by one of the attendees. This written record includes information about location(s) visited, members attended, activities undertaken, and any other pertinent information. Information from biodiversity surveys, cave mapping, and cave monitoring can also be maintained in these reports. Reports can be referenced in the future how caves, biodiversity, and landscapes change over time. Every quarter, all the trip records are compiled into one document, the Foresight, and published for grotto members to view.

As some of the information included in trip reports includes full names, cave maps, and exact cave locations, previous editions of Foresight are not shared with the general public. To request access, please contact the current Chouteau President, whose contact information can be found on the grotto website, <http://chouteaugrotto.org/>.

There are 10 Trip Reports in this Foresight.

The 2022 Officer Team included:

- President: Martin Carmichael
- Vice President: Dr. John
- Secretary: BJ Seidel
- Treasurer: Kevin Feltz
- MSS Director: Rita Worden
- Quartermaster: Rita Worden
- Foresight Editors: Shannon Zalos and Kohl Mitchell

Devil's Icebox MSS Meeting & Survey Trips

Editor's Note - No Chouteau members participated on these trips; however, since the MSS meeting and associated caving trips was such a large local event, I elected to include some trip reports from this event for posterity.

10/1/2022 Dan Lamping - BNE001 Devil's Icebox

Our team, consisting of Dan Lamping, Tony Schmitt, DI Institute member Pablo Islas and Rock Bridge Superintendent Ben Nagy was the first of several teams to enter Devil's Icebox on 10/1/2022. Our team was to go furthest into the cave to find and survey Jeannette's Folly. We made it down to the cave around 9:30 AM and into it, up to the boat landing without incident. Tony and I used his personal kayaks which were pretty heavy and awkward to carry down to the cave. Derik also used his own. We entered the cave around 9:30 AM.

From there we made our way upstream. Being most familiar with the cave, Pablo was our trip leader. He made it a point to show landmarks on our way upstream. Both Derik and I had been much of the way up to where we were going, on a mapping trip, two years prior, but I wouldn't quite recall the route very well. We made our way up to and through the By Pass just fine. Pablo had been a little further than that the weekend before, to Chert Bridges in order to become more familiar with the route. But, he hadn't been so far as to make it to our objective.

Once we got through Chert Bridges, it took a little while to find our objective. There were a few domes and small passages coming in on the left side. We assumed one of the them was the downstream side of Jeannette's Folly. What we had been told was that at some point in the past, a woman named Jeannette went into a side passage and came out a big passage. She was briefly excited, thinking that she had found a major extension of the cave, only to realize that she had intersected the main stream again. Spike advised that it would probably be easier for us to head to the far upstream side of the passage to begin survey, which was good advice. We never did determine which input was the downstream connection to Jeannette's Folly.

After a few uncertain stops to check the map we finally found the upstream entrance. It took us about 3 hours to get there. It's a pretty easy trip to get up there. Nothing too strenuous, though a few stream crossings that are waist deep. While the others were getting gear out I poked ahead to see what the passage was like. Pretty quickly it required going through a body sized squeeze to climb into a collapsed dome area which opened back up. I found what I thought was likely the continuation, which looked a little sketchy since there was so much breakdown. I went back to the team and we got out the original survey notes to find a possible tie in. Amazingly, Tony was sitting directly beneath a survey station on the ceiling which was marked with a carbide "X". We assumed the station itself was on a ledge beneath the X and so our first shot was probably 2 ft below the X. From there we began mapping. We did not begin sketching until a few shots in since the passage was already shown on the Deike map and was portrayed quite well.

Once we got into unmapped passage I began to sketch. Sketching was pretty complex since we were in a large collapsed joint. On the first shot that I drew, I began the sketch upside down from the orientation that I originally had put my north arrow. It took several shots to realize this. When I did, I became confused.

It didn't help that we had a few more people than needed for a typical 3 person mapping crew, which wasn't a problem. But, it was getting loud with people talking making it difficult to concentrate on figuring out and fixing the problem, so I had to ask them to quiet down a bit which allowed me to make sense of the blunder I had made. Once I did, all seemed well. Tony and Derik were shooting instruments while Pablo and Ben scouted out the passage. We were using BRIC4s which weren't reading shots correctly. I had to calibrate them both, which helped with the problem, but which slowed us down since each one takes about 15 minutes to calibrate. Eventually we were back to getting good data. Though, fortunately I had brought two Suunto tandems with me and a tape. We used these for a little while before getting the BRICs calibrated. It was refreshing to put my old friends to use again.

Eventually the passage got down to bedrock crawl. After a shot or two into the crawl it was decided that we'd leave a tie-in and wrap it up. Pablo volunteered to try pushing all of the way through the crawl. I agreed to go with him. We landed on a plan of bringing our packs with us. The rest of the group would go out the way we all came in. Pablo and I would try exiting the downstream side to meet up with them. They planned to take some photos on the way out so we knew they'd be moving slow. We didn't want to miss them since we didn't know where the downstream exit / entrance to Jeannette's Folly was. They left and I followed Pablo into the crawl. He made it a little further than he had initially gone and it began to get too tight. We decided to head out the way we had come in and connect with the other group. A team of smaller cavers will have to pick up the survey where we left it to try getting through to where it reconnects with the mainstream. I may have been able to make it through. I don't know. Pablo was wearing a life jacket and had a large, heavy pack. He may also not be very experienced with pushing tight passage. But, it was evident that he was pretty ready to leave and even if I had been able to make it through it would not have been advisable for him to continue through the tight passage. We reconnected with the other team and took some photos on the way out. Ours was the last group out of the cave. We exited the cave around 9:00 PM and made our way back to camp.

Devil's Icebox Survey Trip Report
Alex Litsch
Left Fork of the Left Fork
10/1/2022

At 9:30 am on 10/1/2022, Corey Ellis, Marissa Schorr, Mike Freeman, Sara Hodge, Nathan Mann, and I entered Devil's Icebox Cave with canoes and kayaks. Sara led our fleet of boats through the flooded section of the cave. The water level appeared to be at least 1 foot lower than normal going by what appeared to be the average water level line on the walls. We arrived at the boat landing after about 30 minutes. We beached our crafts and set off on foot with the other group of cavers that entered just before us. Some of us opted to keep our PFDs on for additional warmth as suggested. This proved very effective.

We kept a good walking pace through the trunk line of the cave. When we arrived at "The Anvil", our group split off and headed down the left fork while the other group continued down the main passage. Mike Freeman led us down the Left Fork as he was familiar with the area. The cave became rather sporty in this section. We intentionally skipped the first "WAC" based on Sara's suggestion, but took the second and third. I was attempting to stay as clean and dry as possible for the sake of not soiling my survey paper later, but the passage was not conducive for that.

We finally came to a point where the left fork of the left fork started. Freeman led us down this passage which was even more sporty than the left fork passage. We came to a point where Freeman had become unsure of if we had passed our start of survey or not. He looked ahead while I checked Paul Hauck's survey notes that were given to me. I determined we were sitting at station X9 on Paul's survey and we quickly discovered a carbide dot on the wall right where it showed on the sketch. Freeman returned and said that the cave was choking down ahead and that we might have passed our objective. After some discussion, we decided that we still had some passage to go before the objective. Freeman at this point headed back towards the beginning of the passage to wait for us while we surveyed. The rest of us pushed on.

Just ahead of station X9 we rejoined the stream and had to crawl under a flowstone protruding from the east wall. I was just barely able to keep my stomach and chest above the several inches of water under the formation. The passage returned to an easier hands and knees crawl before coming to a larger room, station X16. We hands and knees crawled from this point over a dry stream bed of sharp chert cobble (not represented on Paul's sketch) before coming to station X21 which we assume was a carbide dot on the bottom of a ceiling ledge. We arrived here at about 12:30 pm. This area was a room of sorts with a large flowstone mound coming from the left (west) side and a small pool of water at the base that had some calcite rafts on it. At the top of the flowstone mound at the ceiling was an opening into the ceiling joint shown on Paul's sketch.

What wasn't shown is there is a stalactite about 3 inches in diameter protruding down into the middle of the opening that is almost joining a flowstone mound below it. This cuts the

opening in half and makes it difficult to get through. Corey was first to attempt it and made it through after some struggling. Nathan followed, then myself. I was just able to fit by skirting around the right side of the formation blockage on my right side. Sara attempted to make it through the choke point next, but was unsuccessful. She bowed out and decided to go join Freeman while the rest of us surveyed.

We found that the entire joint slot was covered in blackened formations. The notes indicated the survey tie-in was on a black flowstone, but was unmarked. This was impossible to recover so we decided to start at the carbide dot at X21. Marissa was on FS, Corey on BS, and Nathan was doing recon ahead of the survey. We started surveying. The new survey really started once we left the joint slot on the opposite side we entered. At a glance, the passage leaving the joint slot didn't look too bad. I entered feet first and wiggled my way down it and found that it did get a bit snug as the ceiling came down and made the opening about a foot tall over grabby flowstone. At the bottom the passage opened up a bit more to allow me to sort of sit up. To the right it looked like a passage wrapped around the flowstone mound and went back towards X21 under the joint slot, but the flowstone choked this down to be much too tight for any person.

In general, the entirety of the survey was following a cobble/gravel stream bed with very little water trickling down it. As the stream bed meandered, there was always a mud bank sloping in from one side or the other. We found what appeared to be survey stations in the form of more carbide dots, one with a circle around it, during the survey. It appears the passage was surveyed already, but the data was lost or never turned in. At times, we felt like there was a subtle amount of airflow in the passage.

At station X27, the stream bed meandered out of sight under the wall and we belly crawled across the meander over a mud bank. A notable landmark in this area is just before station X27, an inflow of bright orange mud that looks like a flowstone formation with little ripples in it. Poking a finger into it reveals it to be very goopy mud that is black underneath. At station X30, the passage comes to a T intersection and pops up into an 8 foot tall corridor going north. Down the middle, tallest part of the corridor were several bowling ball chert nodules protruding out of the walls. To the right, the passage narrowed and became almost mud-filled, but the mud fill was more of a dam as after crawling over a short section it popped back to walking slot passage for a little bit. The passage ended pretty quick, but there was a very small joint slot about 30 feet tall near the end. Corey chimneyed up into it to look around, but didn't find any more passage.

After station X30, the passage took a strong favor to north heading and became much simpler to sketch. We could have pulled off some long survey shots here, but due to being near the edge of my paper we shortened them up some. The simplicity ended at station X36 when we came to a junction room. I had some catching up to do on the sketching plus the longer shots we had just taken. They took a snack break while I got caught up. I also stopped to have a snack and put on my dry poly top base layer and balaclava while in the taller section. When I got up to the junction room at X36, I learned that Nathan had left his pack near the start of survey. He opted to go get his pack and head out and join Mike and Sara while we continued surveying.

Corey, Marissa, and I continued on. We took a survey shot down the side passage on the right (east) side. It was a low, chunky cobble crawl as far as the eye could see. Corey pushed into it later in the day and said it continued and was about 2 feet tall. We decided to stay on what we felt was main passage and Nathan informed us of a large dome ahead. I took some extra time to sketch the junction room before moving on. After a few more shots in some very crawly passage, we came to a muddy side passage on the right. This went to the dome. Oddly enough, we found a plastic fork stuck in the mud at the start of the passage. We used the top of this fork as station X40 and it is the last station on the main survey. It will be the starting point of the next survey.

In 3 survey shots, we were in the dome. I think all the small, difficult passage leading up to this dome made the dome especially amazing. The dome was 42 feet tall from the top of the cobble pile. Maybe another 4 to 5 feet to the base of the cobble slope. On the floor on one side was a rimstone pool under a fairly active drip and a series of rimstone pools downhill from it. The cobbles around the drip were all cemented with calcium deposit. At the top of the dome was a large drapery formation that was not actively dripping. On the west side was a slot continuing off into a too narrow passage. Corey said he was able to voice and light connect to the main passage ahead of station X40 through the slot. The walls of the dome had a distinct characteristic change about 16 feet up. They went from smooth, vertical walls to very jagged. I captured all of this in the cross section as best I could. We decided to end the day at this dome. While I took time to accurately sketch the dome, I sent Corey and Marissa ahead to see what was ahead of station X40. They weren't gone long before returning and saying it was not great.

We packed up at about 5:30 pm and headed out. To our surprise, Nathan, Sara, and Freeman were all there still waiting for us. As we exited the Left Fork, I was no longer concerned about avoiding the water and now having a full poly base layer on I was warm. I opted to crawl through the water whenever I could. When we came to the 2nd WAC, Corey, Nathan, and I followed the water while the others took the WAC. Corey and Nathan got ahead of me and they found a sealed canister that was a caver register in the stream. While we waited on the other side of the WAC for the other three, we managed to get the canister only to find that the seal was compromised and it was full of water. We decided to take it out of the cave with us. Other than briefly making a wrong turn where the Left Fork met the main passage, we found our way out easily enough. Our boats and the other deep cave team's boats were all that was left at the boat launch. We got on the water and paddled out. We exited the cave at about 8pm.

Carroll Cave Upstream Thunder River Trip

Trip report by Tony Schmitt

Entry Time: 10am

Exit Time: 4pm

As part of the MCKC 30th anniversary and celebration of the Carroll Cave acquisition, I agreed to lead a trip. Martin Carmichael (Chouteau Grotto) along with Jen Sutherland and Cathleen Yung (both MVG) signed up. Martin has been in the cave many times. Cathleen has been in the cave once on a survey trip downstream to survey a sleazy side passage. This was Jen's first introduction to Carroll. Both Jen and Cathleen are newer to the caving community. Both are competent, enthusiastic and easy to get along with. Our goal for the day was the Second Azure Pool and the Chocolate Bunny.

Martin ran Jen and Cathleen down to Thunder Falls while I waited near the ladder for a potential 5th person. I soon got a call down the shaft to "go caving". No 5th.

We headed upstream from the ladder and I immediately noticed the water level was much lower than I ever remember seeing it. It looked and felt like it was a good 18" lower than usual. Both of the shower heads were running at what appeared to be normal flow.

We almost immediately started seeing fish in the bigger pools. We kept count as we headed upstream. I pointed out all the landmarks along the way. We enjoyed a nice easy stroll upstream. We ended up making it to the Round Room in under two hours. We made the Second Azure Pool shortly after taking a quick break in the Round Room.

We were doing good on time so we decided to head upstream a bit farther. We ended up turning around about half way through the "Jumps".

On the way out, I tried to let Cathleen and Jen take turns leading. We ended up back at the ladder by 3:30. All of us were on the surface by 4pm.

We ended up counting 54 fish between the ladder and the Round Room, and one grotto salamander. We figured the water being low had pushed the fish together into the larger pools. Obviously that's just us spit balling, but the water being low was the only difference I can think of.

Once on the surface we enjoyed a nice dinner and the MCKC meeting, well at least as much as one can enjoy a meeting.



At the SLUG cairn. Left to right – Jen Sutherland, Martin Carmichael and Cathleen Yung. Photo by Tony Schmitt.

Bruce Cave Recreational Trip

- Date: 10/22/2022
- Location: Bruce Cave
- Goals: Novice trip
- Participants: Eloria Fedynich, Thomas Sisney, Bryn Downes-ward, Diana Dawson
- Time In: 3:05 PM
- Time Out: 4:40 PM
- Bio Count: 1 tri-colored bat, 1 Pickerel frog, 15+ spiders, 1 turtle
- Signs of Recent Vandalism: None
- Report Written By: Eloria Fedynich

We met at the sinkhole that was being cleared out and drove to a house on Saturday at 2:45 pm. Rita spoke with the property owner, obtained directions to the cave mouth, and we hiked to the entrance. None of the participating group had been in the cave before, however, Rita guided us to the cave opening and gave us instructions to find the exit. Several of the cavers had drove up the same day (Saturday, 10/22/2022), one had arrived the night before and camped at Rita's property.

Everyone was geared up and ready to go into Bruce by 2:45. The cave was primarily dry for the first half, with select areas being ankle-calf high water towards the end of the cave. Midway through the cave, we noted light shining in from another opening. At the end of the cave, a turtle was found to have fallen in. Through tremendous teamwork, the turtle was passed from person to person as people climbed to the surface, and we placed him in the grass (facing away from the cave). There was no clear way the turtle would have escaped otherwise. Afterward, we packed up, changed clothes, and drove to Rita's property for the bonfire and dinner.

Pic Walenta Campground Work Day

Working on the Pic Walenta Memorial Shelter House at Carroll Cave, Oct 27 and 28.
Report by Rick Hines.

I had hoped to pour concrete on Oct 28 but after 3 inches of rain earlier in the week I canceled the concrete to avoid getting a concrete truck stuck in the cow pasture. But since I had a crew lined up, I went ahead with working Oct 27-28 and switched from concrete work to framing the shelter house.

I drove down Thursday morning and picked up my trailer at the silo, then drove back to Camdenton and purchased 45 twenty-foot sticks of rebar, rebar wire ties, tie twisters and some 2x8s. Jeff Bowman was the first to arrive Thursday and caught me napping in my truck.

First, we started checking the alignment of the eight post we had set on a prior work day. I was surprised to find how much they had moved after the rain. Bill Gee arrived and after setting up his trailer he joined in to try to straighten the posts. We then took some measurements to determine the shortest post. We determined that if we cut the post to match the height of the shortest, we will still have a little over 9' between the concrete and the bottom cord of the trusts.

Jeff and I drove to town to get dinner at El Caporal, leaving Bill cooking dinner in his camper. We returned after dark and I set up my tent/cot and powered up my electric blanket. After a couple frosty nights on the last work trip, I came prepared for another frosty night. I was nice and toasty all night.

Friday morning after coffee and hot oatmeal we got back to work. Our three-man crew on Thursday grew with the addition of Don Toole, Martin Carmichael, Sarah Peterson and Justin Prazak. Don has a lot of construction and carpentry experience so it was great to have his help. We soon finished getting the posts plumb and aligned. We packed gravel around the base of the posts to fix them in place until we get them locked in with the concrete. We used my transit to mark a level line on each post and then measured and marked the cut line at the top of each post. We used an electric chainsaw to top the posts. Then we marked the posts for cutting a notch to set 2x8 on the inside and outside of the posts. Cutting the notches was more difficult than I expected. We experimented with a chainsaw, handsaw, circular saw, sawzall, and a chisel and eventually got it done. Then we screwed the 2x8s into position at the top of the posts. I considered trying to set the roof trusses but we decided the important thing to do was to get ready for concrete.

We pulled string across the concrete forms to allow us to adjust the gravel to yield about 4 inches of concrete. We identified the areas where we needed to add or remove gravel. We shoveled, scraped, and raked until we got the gravel base where we wanted it. The final operation was to lay out the rebar on two-foot centers and tie it. We just finished the rebar, as part of the crew started getting ready for a short “reward” trip into Carroll. Since Bill needed to collect a flowstone sample from the side of the shaft for analysis, he led the trip taking Sarah, Justin, and Jeff on their first trip into Carroll. It was a short trip, down the 120-foot shaft, a short distance down the Carroll passage to the headwaters of the Carroll River and then back to the shaft to climb out.

Everyone helped me pack up my tools and then Jeff, Sarah, Justin, Martin, and I headed back to El Caporal for another great Mexican dinner.

I'll watch the weather and pick a day to reschedule the concrete, hopefully within two weeks. Other than putting chairs under the rebar, we are ready to pour. If it is necessary to cancel the concrete again, we will just continue to work on setting the trusses and doing the roof.

Thanks to everyone that helped.

Rick Hines, Jeff Bowman, Bill Gee, Don Toole, Martin Carmichael, Sarah Peterson, Justin Prazak

2022 Cave Research Foundation Meeting

- Date: 11/5/2022
- Location: Berome Moore Cave
- Goals: Gather water samples for radioisotope research
- Participants: Rita Worden, Kohl Mitchell, Maya Robles
- Time In: Approx. 4:30 PM
- Time Out: 5:45 PM
- Bio Count: 1 bat (unidentified species)
- Signs of Recent Vandalism: None
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

The annual Cave Research Foundation meeting (the first in-person meeting since COVID) took place in Perryville, Missouri on November 5, 2022. I arrived in town late Friday night, and not wanting to disturb cavers at the Berome Moore campsite, I elected to sleep in my truck in the Walgreens parking lot. After a night of fitful sleep, I made my way to the Catalyst Center, where the meeting was to be held, at about 9:00, midway through the CRF Ozark Operations meeting.

After this was over, I was able to talk to several people who I've been around before, but never had the chance to have conversations with - Dan Lamping, Derik Holtmann, Tony Schmitt, and more. The adjacent American Tractor Museum was also open for touring, which was very interesting.



At about 11:00, the Perryville city manager gave a presentation on the efforts the city has made to keep the underground environment clean and safe for the city's residents, and to preserve the caves themselves. This was followed by a delicious lunch prepared by Kirsten Alvey-Mudd.

At 1:00, the CRF meeting proper took place, and awards were presented to numerous people in attendance. This was followed by presentations on multiple ongoing CRF projects in Missouri. First, Scott House presented on the history and ongoing survey of the infamous Lost Boys Cave in Hannibal, Missouri. Next, Chad McCain spoke on the ongoing survey of Perryville's own Moore Cave System, the second-longest cave in Missouri at nearly 25 miles in length. Ben Miller gave a talk on dye tracing around Roaring River Spring in southwestern Missouri, and

Kayla Sapkota presented on various CRF projects in Arkansas.

Quickly after the meeting concluded, Rita Worden, Maya Robles, and I made our way to Berome Moore Cave, where Rita needed to collect water samples for a Washington University student to use for radioisotope research. We needed to find a water source that was steadily dripping from the ceiling.

From the entrance, we made our way to base camp, noting a waterfall that steadily poured into a basin that was apparently once used to send water to base camp. At base camp, we turned left and entered Cat Tracks Passage. We traveled several hundred feet down this passage, admiring some of the better-preserved jaguar tracks as we went, until we gave up. We hadn't seen any steady drips yet, and hearing none in front of us, we decided to return to the waterfall we'd passed previously.

We found a spot that didn't have any interference from the gathering basin system, and Rita was able to fill the four vials with no problem. After this, we made our way out of the cave just in time for Rita and Maya to return to Perryville for the CRF banquet, and for me to begin the long drive back to Perry.

Carroll Cave Landowner Outreach Trip

- Date: 11/19/2022
- Location: Carroll Cave
- Goals: Introduce local landowners to Carroll Cave
- Participants: Rick Hines, Martin Carmichael, Kohl Mitchell, Bryn Downes-Ward
- Time In: Approx. 12:30 PM
- Time Out: Approx. 4:00 PM
- Bio Count: Numerous cave fish
- Signs of Recent Vandalism: None
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

Martin, Bryn, and I arrived at Carroll at about 10:00 on the 19th, and after unlocking the silo, we realized we didn't know the code to enter the shaft. After about 15 minutes of impatiently waiting for Rick to arrive and trying in vain to find some cover from the bitter wind, we were relieved to see Rick's truck making its way across the field.

Rick explained that he was going to be taking photos of the guests in the cave, so Bryn and I received battlefield promotions to trip leader - we would handle one group, and Martin would take the others by himself. Rick would tag along with Bryn and I for part of our trip before returning to the surface. Jim and Julie Cooley, who rode along with Rick, would remain on the surface to assist the guests and provide some much-appreciated coffee and hot chocolate afterwards.

It wasn't long before the guests began arriving, and we started gearing them up and explaining the plans. Martin's group consisted of four locals, and they entered the cave at about 12:30. Martin planned on taking them down Upper Thunder River to Convention Hall, and then going to Thunder Falls before leaving. Our group, which consisted of myself, Bryn, Rick, and three visitors (Danny, Amber, and Jennifer) planned on heading down the Angel Pool passage before making our way down Thunder River to the falls.

I was the first member of our group down the shaft, and I was surprised to see Martin and his group waiting at the bottom. They weren't certain if anybody else was going to join them, and their calls to the surface were met with silence, so they waited for the next person down the shaft before continuing.

Our group made it down the shaft with no problems, and after some photos at the shaft, we made our way towards the Angel Pool. Rick took some pictures of the group as we went, and he turned back once we got to the Angel Pool. After some ooh-ing and aah-ing at the formations, we continued down the Angel Pool passage for a few more minutes, stopping at a series of dry rimstone dams.

At this point, we backtracked to near the shaft before we made our way down the mud into Thunder River. Here, Danny, who wasn't wearing waders, did an admirable job of staying mostly dry as we headed towards Thunder Falls. We stopped multiple times to look at the

numerous cavefish along the way - the most I've ever seen in Carroll. The water level was quite low, and after about 30 minutes of wading through the stream, we had reached Thunder Falls.

The guests peeked out over the brink of the falls, the roar drowning out almost all attempts at conversation. After a while, we moved on down the passage to the ladder, and while a few embarrassing spills were taken in the mud at the ladder's base, we made it to the lower vantage point of the falls without incident. As we headed back up the ladder, we began hearing voices from the upper falls, and came across Martin's group, making a detour to the falls before they returned to the shaft.

After this, we agreed to follow Martin and his crew up the shaft, with Bryn being the last person out of the cave. Julie's coffee and hot chocolate helped us withstand the cold as we changed clothes and prepared to leave.

Buzzard Arch Cave Survey Trip



Buzzard Arch Cave (eponymous arch to the left of entrance) viewed from the lake on a previous visit. Note the small cave openings to the left of the main entrance. (Kohl Mitchell)

- Date: 12/3/2022
- Location: Buzzard Arch Cave
- Goals: Survey Buzzard Arch Cave
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, Martin Carmichael, Bryn Downes-Ward, Justin Prazak
- Time In: 9:30 AM
- Time Out: 4:00 PM
- Bio Count: Several cave crickets; excessive animal scat and bones
- Signs of Recent Vandalism: Various graffiti
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

At long last, Martin, Bryn, and Justin made the trip up north to survey caves around the lake. Well, I'd hoped that we'd survey caves, plural, but it turned out we most definitely would not. We met up at a parking lot just outside of the recreation area and headed towards the cave, parking about a half-mile away from the cave due to a locked gate that was specifically not supposed to be locked from 9:00 to 4:30 on Saturdays.

After the trek to the cave, we made our way down the sketchy scramble from the bluff face to the entrance, where Martin gave us a quick tutorial on his survey system - a laser rangefinder that also measures inclination combined with a Suunto for azimuth readings. We began by surveying the entrance and the two passages that extend from it - a main passage going

straight into the hillside, and a side passage that leads into a big room past the entrance through a tight belly squeeze.

Bryn and I headed to the side passage, while Martin and Justin handled the main passage. We made some progress into a large, low room just past the entrance, and agreed that Bryn and I would survey along the right side of the room, and Martin and Justin would survey the left side, where a small second entrance was located.

Some context - this summer, I visited the cave two times, but I was unprepared for caving and didn't enter past the entrance passage - I could tell that there was a big, flat room just past the entrance, but from what I could see, I thought it was about 40 feet wide by 20 feet long, and a normal crawling passage continued into the hillside. I was wrong.

We slowly realized that this room was going to be far more difficult to survey than we had imagined. As we took our first shots and entered deeper into the room, we began getting readings on LRUDs that showed up to 80 feet in width and 100 feet in length. And it's not an easy room to get a grasp on just from looking in one location - there are multiple large rock columns that block views and survey shots, as well as various slopes and boulders. Oh, and barring two or three small domes, the entire room was 2 feet tall.

Bryn and I started working our way around the perimeter of the room from the right while Martin and Justin surveyed around the second entrance and made their way down the left wall. After multiple splay shots and lots of head-scratching, I managed to wrap my head around the sketching and we started making decent headway. A particularly nasty section that I started calling the "Poop Chute" was clearly a den for multiple animals, as there were fresh scat and old bones all over the floor. Luckily, the resident(s) weren't home at the time, so we surveyed around it and eventually found our way back to greener pastures.

Interestingly, the cave's character changed several times as we made our way to the back. In the entrance, the floor consisted of cobbles; just inside the entrance, it was dry mud; after this it changed to large, flat breakdown blocks and bedrock; and finally, at the very back, it changed to sticky mud. As we entered the sticky mud, we noticed that we could hear and see Martin and Justin over a sloping mudbank to our right. We finally made it to the mud choke at the end of this room that a small stream (not flowing at the time) came from. This stream travels about halfway through the room before disappearing under a breakdown pile near the center. At this point, both teams decided it was time for a break, and returned to the entrance for a snack.

After snacktime, Bryn and I returned to the Poop Chute to finish surveying two small side crawlways that we had seen earlier and decided to do later. They were DISGUSTING. After three shots, Bryn began gagging at the smell and was forced to retreat, and feeling a headache coming on, I decided to quit while I was ahead and not push some even nastier- and tighter-looking crawlways.

At this point, we headed towards Martin and Justin and made a few shots across the mudbank between us and finally tied into their survey. Once we tied in, Martin decided he'd had enough for one day, and we made the trip back to the vehicles before darkness set in. I had a moment of panic as we were cleaning up back at the vehicles - I couldn't find my keys, which

I'd put in an interior pocket in my coveralls and taken into the cave. However, it wasn't long before I was able to find them in a pocket I'd forgotten about. Good thing, too - going back to search the cave after nightfall would have put a damper on the mood.



Buzzard Arch Cave's entrance - main passage to the left, side passage to the right. (Kohl Mitchell)

Kiesewetter Cave Recreational Trip



Before and after picture at cave entrance. Before picture left to right: Gabe, Sean, Thomas, Eloria, Rita, Bryn, Diana (Diana Dawson)

- Date: 12/17/22
- Location: Kiesewetter Cave
- Goals: To have fun!
- Participants: Bryn D-W, Rita Worden, Diana Dawson, Eloria Fedynich, Thomas Sisney, Gabe Fedynich (Eloria brother), Sean Douglas
- Time In: 11:15
- Time Out: 15:45
- Bio Count: 4 tri-colour bats, 3 Pickerel frogs
- Report Written By: Bryn D-W

On the way to pick Diana and Sean up, Eloria phoned, her car won't start, can I pick her up too. Sure, but hopefully this isn't a sign of things to come.

We met up with everyone else at the road near the cave at 10:20 and quickly got changed to head off to the warmth of the cave. This was Gabe and Sean's first cave. Rita was the only one who had been here before and luckily remembered exactly where the entrance was. I had been told I need a master's degree to open this gate, fortunately I had one, so was confident we'd figure it out. However, I failed at the first hurdle, opening the box with the key. So, I let others take over, eventually it was opened, and we entered the cave at 11:15.

We did the left side of the cave first, passing Hartwig's Paradise. We took a leisurely pace enjoying the formations and taking the lower passage first. We entered the '87 room where we debated the way on, as the most obvious way on just leads back to the entrance. We headed down the stream passage toward the birth canal. Thomas, Eloria and Diana and I successfully made it through, while Sean gave a valiant effort before deciding he wouldn't make it through. So, we left the others promising to return in 20 minutes. I caught up with the others and was told they had reached the end. However, this didn't tally with what I had been told.

Convinced this wasn't the end, I crawled around and found the way on. As Thomas started down the final crawl, we reached our turnaround time so headed back out. In the '87

room we took the only passage we hadn't taken, which headed back out on the higher level before dropping back down to re-join the other passage near Hartwig's Paradise. This passage appeared less travelled than the lower passage.

We then headed along the well decorated right passage. A lot of pictures were taken of formation squeeze. Once out of the cave we headed to the restaurant to get some food. We successfully completed our goal of having fun. Everyone enjoyed the pretties, and I enjoyed navigating off a map again.



Just before exiting the cave. Left to right: Rita, Gabe, Eloria, Thomas (Diana Dawson)

Roubidoux Cave Recreational Trip



A small room in Roubidoux's formation passage (Diana Dawson)

- Date: 12/18/22
- Location: Roubidoux Cave
- Goals: To have fun!
- Participants: Tristin Whetstine, Diana Dawson, Kohl Mitchell
- Time In: 10:00 AM
- Time Out: 5:00 PM
- Bio Count: 50+ bats, 2 grotto salamanders, 3 larval salamanders, 7 pickerel frogs, 1 cave cricket, few isopods
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell, Diana Dawson, & Tristin Whetstine

By Kohl Mitchell

We arrived at the cave at about 10 AM, and quickly got suited up and ready to enter. This was Tristin's first wild cave, and he was especially excited to get in. As we ooh-ed and aah-ed at the spectacular entrance to the cave, we noticed numerous bats scattered around the entrance passage. We'd never been in Roubidoux before, but we knew from word of mouth and from studying the map that it was a very crawly cave, so we made sure to appreciate the nice, easy walking passage near the entrance.

It didn't take long, though, before we were on our hands and knees, where we'd stay for most of the next several hours. We made sure to bring good kneepads and tape them to our legs, a choice that we became glad we'd made as the day went on. We took a little detour to the

formation passage on our way through the main passage, and simultaneously admired the formations while lamenting the ubiquitous vandalism. It was in this passage that we saw the first of many...interesting...mud sculptures that we would see throughout the cave. In Tristin's words, "I want to note that there were at least 15 different mud made male genitalia throughout



the cave. Other than the surprising mud art, it was an amazing time."

After returning to the main passage, we continued making our way towards the Slot Room, where, acting on a tip from Martin, we planned on making the loop through the Roubidoux Room, past the Twin Pits to the Sphincter, and back through Mud Alley to the Slot Room. Martin had been in the cave previously and suggested this route, and while we saw the pits on the map, assumed that he had taken this route in the past and therefore there was a way past the pits. This was a mistake.

We made our way to the Roubidoux Room through the torturous belly crawl of Slot Pass - all the way rejoicing at the fact that we wouldn't have to return this way, since surely we could make it past the twin pits, right? At the Roubidoux Room, Diana rested for a while Tristin and I

continued a short way down Roubidoux Avenue before turning around at a confusing intersection - we'd left the maps behind with Diana, and were having trouble figuring out which way was which here. After reuniting with Diana, we cautiously headed towards the pits. However, as soon as we saw the first pit, we knew that there was absolutely no way to get past it safely. We stopped for a quick snack break as the fact that we'd have to return the same way we came sank in.

Eventually, we stopped whining and started back down Slot Pass, dejected at the failure of our original plan. We decided to try to make it down Mud Alley, as we were looking forward to the challenge of the Sphincter and the borehole beyond it. We quickly realized that Mud Alley truly earned its name, with the mud trying to steal our kneepads at every turn. Diana, whose shoes were falling apart by this time and were held together by some string Tristin had brought,

elected to stop about 2/3rds of the way through this passage. Tristin and I continued with the promise to be back with Diana in 30 minutes.

After what felt like miles of muddy crawling, we finally reached the Sphincter, which was much less of a challenge than we expected - the Meatgrinder near the entrance seemed to be much more of a challenge. However, the massive passage beyond this did not disappoint, and we stayed to explore this area for as long as we could before we had to return to Diana. By the time we got back to Diana, all three of us were in full Get-Me-Out-Of-This-Cave mode, so we crawled as fast as our tired and cold bodies could take us back to the entrance, stopping only to apply some new string to Diana's cleats.

We rejoiced when we were finally able to stand up as we neared the exit, while at the same time grumbling about how cold it was going to be after we got out. After what felt like the coldest ten minutes of our lives, we finished a great day of caving with a burger and fries at Hopper's in Waynesville.



Diana's poor shoes. (Diana Dawson)



Before and after. Before picture left to right- Kohl, Tristin, Diana. (Diana Dawson)

By Diana Dawson

On December 18th 2022, Kohl Mitchell, Tristen Whetstine, and I (Diana Dawson) visited Roubidoux Cave. This was our first time in this cave. The day before, 2 other members encountered car issues, so we contacted Andy to see if it was possible that we could still go with only 3 people. With permission, we ventured on. The entrance to Roubidoux is very impressive, but misleading. The walking did not last long. It was sad to see the copious amounts of graffiti and trash in the first half of the cave. My shoes came apart 1/4 of the way into the cave, making things interesting. Thankfully, Tristin had string that allowed me to perform surgery as needed so we could explore further into the cave.

We attempted to complete the loop passage, realizing very quickly that this was a death wish. There was no way to safely pass the 45 ft pit. We turned around and went down Mud Alley to conquer the sphincter and see the other pit. I made it 3/4 of the way through Mud Alley and realized it was best I take a break - exhausted from Kiesewetter the day before, and struggling with my shoes, (my knees were demolished as well by this point even with knee pads) my body said no more. I wanted to be able to make it out of the cave without them dragging me out. The mud was trying to suck the soles right off my feet. Kohl taught us the rolling trick if you have a passage that allows. This reinstilled my spirit that Roubidoux was trying to break. Who knew rolling in mud was so productive, and fun?

Someone had taken the liberty of creating a multitude of phallic mud sculptures



throughout the cave. By the time we got out of Mud Alley, I think we were all in GTFO mode. Never thought I'd say this but I was relieved to see the graffiti becoming more prominent as that meant we were getting closer to the exit. I was done for, canceled, finished. I just wanted to cry. We counted 50 bats, 3 baby salamanders and 2 grotto salamanders, 7 frogs and a few isopods. We went to get food at Hoppers afterwards. Never before had I received such strange looks. They were probably thinking, "What are these dirty homeless kids doing in here?". Never before had food tasted so good.

The supposed path around the 45' pit. Not shown
- the likely-fatal drop below. (Diana Dawson)

Carroll Cave Upper Thunder River Trip



The Second Azure Pool with the Chocolate Bunny (Diana Dawson)

Carroll Cave 12.31.2022 Trip Report, by Martin Carmichael

Trip Leader: Martin Carmichael

Trip Members: Justin Prazak, Kristen Vogel, Thomas Sisney, Eloria Fedynich, Diana Dawson, Kohl Mitchell, Bryn Downes-ward

First person in @ 10:12am and the last person was out at 4:43pm.

Cave fish: 18

Salamanders: 2

Bats: 1 flying bat near the Bone Room

We met at the silo around 9am. Everyone put on their caving and SRT gear. I opened the silo and installed our rope, using a double figure eight knot to attach to the angle iron mounts and to the loop on the silo rescue hatch. I inspected our members' gear and went over the travel plan for the day as well as some basic yet important points (i.e. don't get mud in the azure pool, stay on the trail when one is present, etc).

Bryn and Kristen were the first two to rappel down to assist those below if needed. Kohl and I stayed above and assisted the others getting on rope. I was the last to rappel down. We climbed down to the stream and headed up Thunder River, making a fairly good pace. We stopped along the way to look at various cave formations and to take photos of cave fish and formations.

At several points we had to backtrack to an easier (or even possible) route. Thomas was quite the athletic caver, chimneying over some of the mud channels and staying quite clean throughout the day. We took a break at the Round Room.

Continuing on, we actually went past the “chocolate bunny” at first, though I pointed out the area where quite a bit of clean, white calcite appears on the right side of the cave and said the Second Azure Pool was close. The azure pool was a little more tucked away than I had remembered. After continuing on for a few minutes, we turned around and looked for the azure pool on our left.



After the obligatory “ooohs and aaahs” at the azure pool, we headed back to the T junction and then down to Thunder Falls. The folks that were new to Carroll were suitably impressed. Back at the ladder we found our second salamander of the day; the photo is below.

Kristen was the first to exit and helped those climbing out get off rope. Everyone climbed the ladder and used the rope as a safety except for Bryn and Diana. Diana used a cable sleeve and climbed the ladder. Bryn used the rope to ascend via frog system and did not use the ladder.

After everyone was out Bryn hauled out the rope and I turned off the lights, and locked up the silo. Kristen double checked that the hatch was locked and the key was placed back into the lock box and we headed out. Diana took quite a few pictures throughout the trip that turned out very well.



This salamander was on the landing at the bottom of the ladder (Diana Dawson)



Before & after pics of our crew. Below, left to right - Diana Dawson, Martin Carmichael, Kohl Mitchell, Justin Prazak, Bryn D-W, Thomas Sisney, Kristen Vogel, Eloria Fedynich