

CHOUTEAU GROTTO
FORESIGHT
VOLUME 55, ISSUE 1
JANUARY-MARCH 2023



Diana Dawson taking a swim below Thunder Falls in Carroll Cave (Erica Hroblok)

Introduction: What is this document?	3
Kiesewetter Cave Novice Trip	4
Carroll Cave DL2 Survey Trip	6
Three Creeks Conservation Area Monitoring Trip	9
Flippen & Toby Cave Survey Trips	13
Mark Twain Lake Survey Trip	14
Mammoth Cave President's Day Expedition	20
Three Creeks Conservation Area Monitoring Trip	23
Pike and Ralls County Cave Monitoring Trips	28
Roubidoux Cave Novice Trip	38
Animal Den Cave Survey Trip	40
Nameless Cave Reconnaissance Trip	42
Carroll Cave Bat Roost Detector Trip	44
Spring 2023 MSS Meeting and Spanish Steps Cave Survey Trip	48

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, <https://www.showmecaving.org/>.

There are 13 Trip Reports in this Foresight. If you have a trip report to send in, contact the editor at kdm1913@gmail.com.

The 2023 Officer Team included:

- President: Martin Carmichael
- Vice President: Kohl Mitchell
- Secretary: BJ Seidel
- Treasurer: Kevin Feltz
- MSS Director: Rita Worden
- Quartermaster: Rita Worden
- Foresight Editor: Kohl Mitchell

Kiesewetter Cave Novice Trip



Date: 01/14/23

Location: Kiesewetter

Goals: To have fun!

Participants: Bryn D-W, Sean Douglas, Tara Thomas, Sean Zimmerman

Time In: 10:30 a.m.

Time Out: 3:00 p.m.

Bio Count: 5 tri-color bats, 1 pickerel frogs

Report Written By: Sean Douglas

Everyone arrived at the cave location on time and then it was time to open the gate that I can only imagine was donated by a maximum-security prison. Once the cave gate was open we started the belly crawl into the cave. Once in the initial room we saw two bats. We first decided to go the direction that leads to the birth canal. The mud was thick and heavy and we saw a frog on the way. Bryn and Sean further explored a tight crevice. No one attempted to get through the birth canal.

Then we went back and took a small break in the 87 Room before proceeding to the formation passage. We then momentarily split so Sean Douglas and Tara Thomas could go deeper into the Formation Passage. Once deep enough in, Sean proposed to Tara, and Tara, knowing that she may not be able to navigate herself back out of the cave, was obliged to say yes.

The rest of the time in the cave was spent looking at formations and further exploring the beauty of the cave. A special thank you to Bryn Downes-ward for making this unique and forever memorable experience possible.



Carroll Cave DL2 Survey Trip



The three of us on top of the breakdown pile in the Shower House. Left to right, Logan Dowd, Kohl Mitchell, Ben Geisert. (Ben Geisert)

- Date: 1/17/2023
- Location: Carroll Cave
- Goals: Survey the DL2 passage of Carroll Cave
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, Ben Geisert, Logan Dowd
- Time In: 10:00 AM
- Time Out: 11:00 PM
- Bio Count: 4 cave fish; 2 cave salamanders; several bat carcasses
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

Ben Geisert, Logan Dowd, and myself were the first team to enter the cave on Saturday morning, dropping in at about 10:00. Our mission was to return to DL2, a lead off of Lower Thunder River previously surveyed by Alex Litsch, Cathleen Yung, and myself on the last survey weekend in August. We'd dug out a ~10 foot mud fill, breaking into small walking/stooping passage beyond. We stopped the survey as we reached the fill, so this was where we began this

time around. Ben and Logan began setting stations and getting measurements, while I tried to wrap my head around the sketching. It didn't take long before we got a good rhythm going, and began making our way down the passage. After we broke through the mud fill, the passage does a little U-turn, into a decent-sized room before generally continuing towards the west. At this room, there is a tight squeeze that cuts through the top of the U, while a wider, but still low passage continues into the room at the base of the U. We named this room the P Room, in honor of some bodily functions that happened there.

As the passage continues to the west, it continues in a similar fashion to before the mud fill - a mixture of stooping, walking, crawling, and belly-crawling following the meandering stream as it enters and exits the passage. The floor in this passage is entirely mud of the thick, boot-sucking variety that is so common in Carroll, and it was extremely difficult to keep my sketchbook clean. Logan, meanwhile, lost both of his gloves in the mud in the course of the day.

Progress was relatively slow, due to the consistently short shots, the ridiculous amounts of mud, and the slow sketcher. It took us a few hours to enter truly virgin cave, since Cathleen and I had scooped for a couple hundred feet after the dig last trip. At one point about halfway through the day's survey, we had to return to the beginning of the survey to retrieve my garden trowel - there was a squeeze that had to be dug out about 1" more in order for us to fit through. We stopped for "lunch" at about 5:00, and morale, which had been steadily dropping throughout the day, had reached an all-time low. We were sick of this mud! We resolved to keep surveying until at least 8:30 before turning around. A few stations after this, we reached a tight crawl in the stream which continued generally in a straight line for about 50 feet, mercifully getting higher as it went on. As I sketched, I heard some excited noises from Ben and Logan ahead, and heard talk of a breakdown pile. I was excited to finally see something other than mud, but I had no idea what was in store.

I finished up the sketch in the low passage, and saw the base of a large breakdown pile ahead. As I climbed it, Ben told me not to look up until I was at the top. Once I reached the top - holy cow! It was a circular breakdown room, about 20 feet in diameter with a 10-foot high pile of breakdown on the floor. The dome above gradually narrowed as it got higher, but at the ceiling about 20 feet above the top of the breakdown pile, there was an approximately 8-foot diameter hole leading upwards into upper-level passage. The Disto showed that from the breakdown pile to the highest point we could see in the upper level was about 50 feet. Of course, the upper level was completely unreachable without a bolt climb, which would probably be a sketchy affair in Carroll's crumbly rock...

As I sat on a big rock on top of the breakdown and started working on the sketch of the room, we decided that we'd get the dome (which we named the Shower House, due to the rain of water from the ceiling) sketched and then call it quits on survey for the day. We'd push the cave on further, to see what awaited the next survey crew, or to see whether the passage ended soon enough that we could finish it out today. Some quick math here told us that we'd gotten about 500 feet surveyed on the day. -

After the Shower House, the character of the cave changes. The passages are far larger, with more rocks and less mud. After a couple hundred feet, we thought we'd reached the end of the passage at a mud fill and prepared to restart the survey - however, we'd initially missed a slide to the right of the fill that dropped out into further passage. It wasn't long before we passed another dome that led to upper level passage - slightly shorter and not as wide, but it looked to be a far easier path for a bolt climb. Around this dome, there was a couple hundred feet of true borehole passage - 10-15 feet wide with 20 foot ceilings. However, it didn't stay this way for long - probably 500 feet or so from the Shower House, we reached a true breakdown room that blocked further easy exploration. There was a path on top of the pile that a small person could squeeze through and attempt to continue - I tried getting in, but it was sketchy enough and I'd have to move enough rocks to get through that I decided not to push it. Ben tried to push around the right side of the room, along a crevice through gaps in the breakdown, but sketchy rocks above and to the side caused him to terminate this exploration as well. At this point, we decided to call it a day, and made our way back through the miserable passage we had spent all day getting to know so well.

We rejoiced when we finally returned to Thunder River and got the opportunity to wash the many pounds of mud off of our bodies and packs. After some time sitting in the river resting and cooling off, we began the trek back to the ladder. A long, hard, but rewarding day of caving came to an end when we climbed the ladder and exited at about 11 PM.

Three Creeks Conservation Area Monitoring Trip



The group carefully making their way down from Brynjulfson Cave #1. (Caleb Mundwiller)

Saturday Jan 28th, 2023 - Three Creeks Conservation Area - Cave Monitoring

Bryn Downes-Ward, Caleb Mundwiller, Diana Dawson, Jarrett Whistance, Sean Zimmerman, Kohl Mitchell and Trip Leader Martin Carmichael

Brynjulfson Cave #1 BNE046

Brynjulfson Cave #2 BNE069

Charley Cave BNE067

Bear Cave BNE023

Cavelet (unnamed)

Split Cave BNE063

Tower Cave BNE022

We met at the Deer Park access at Three Creeks Conservation Area around 8am on 1.28.2023. The temperature started as a brisk 37°F; it was mostly sunny and warmed up to 57°F as we finished the day around 12:40 pm.



All but Sean headed north to Bonne Femme Creek to monitor our first three caves. Because of the group size we rotated which people entered any given cave to minimize traffic; not everyone went into every cave. Here in Brynjulfson Cave #1 we found our only bats of the day, four of them, tucked fairly far (12") within a crack in the cave wall. They were difficult to see as the crack obscured all but their head and parts of their wings. Because of the limited view we couldn't positively identify them but we snapped a quick photo.

Our third cave monitored was Charley Cave. In the back, where it pinches off too low to continue, there is strong air flow heading toward the entrance of the cave. LIDAR images show several small sinks on the hill above the cave.

After monitoring Brynjulfson #2 & Charley Cave we headed back to the parking lot to have Sean join the group then headed southwest to Bear, Split and Tower Caves.

Every cave monitored had scat present, and it was heaviest in Bear Cave. Mosquitos and crickets ruled the day as far as numbers go, with hundreds of them in the Brynjulfson Caves #1 and #2 but their prevalence dropped sharply in the remaining caves. Mosquitos were present in every cave we monitored. All of the moths we found were Herald moths, which due to their color pattern were easy to identify.

~Martin Carmichael, 1.30.2023

Brynjulfson Cave #1 BNE046

- Crickets ~100+
- Bats 4 (tucked away in a crack, see photo)
- Herald Moth 3
- Mosquitos ~200+
- Spider 3
- There is a birds nest on a shelf about 8' into the cave

Brynjulfson Cave #2 BNE069

- Crickets ~100+
- Herald Moth 5
- Mosquitos ~200+
- Spider 5
- An engorged but dead tick was found in the dome near the back. Yellow scat was present.

Charley Cave BNE067

- Crickets 7
- Mosquitos 20
- Scat was present in the back of the cave. There is a fairly strong air flow moving toward the entrance that becomes obvious when the cave pinches off.



Bryn Downes-Ward in the entrance of Charley Cave. (Martin Carmichael)

Bear Cave BNE023

- Crickets 5
- Flies 10
- Herald Moth 1
- Mosquitos ~40
- Spider 1
- Lots of scat present in this cave. Obvious, well used small animal trails lead up to this cave.

Cavelet (unnamed)

- Did not enter. This goes back perhaps 12 feet and then pinches off too tight. It's located on the north side of Turkey Creek. Two spider webs were present.

Split Cave BNE063

- Mosquitos 17
- Spiders 5
- Two small bones (non-bat) were on the dry dirt floor.

Tower Cave BNE022

- Mosquitos 15
- Spiders 42
- Spider egg sacs 3
- Scat was present in Tower cave



Diana Dawson in the eponymous tower of Tower Cave (Kohl Mitchell)

Flippen & Toby Cave Survey Trips



The group in front of Flippen Cave. From left to right - Jim Cooley, Kohl Mitchell, Bryn Downes-Ward, Diana Dawson, Peter Schnegelberger, Nathan Taylor, Dustin Schmidt

Jim and Julie led a survey trip that included KCAGers Bill Gee, Dustin Schmidt, Peter Schnegelberger, Nathan Taylor, Kristen Vogel, and Tristin Whetstine, along with Chouteau cave surveyors Diana Dawson, Bryn DownesWard, and Kohl Mitchell, to survey a large, gated gray bat maternity cave on private property near the Lake of the Ozarks. First stop was Flippen Cave, to do map QC checks and to deliver a sign indicating that this cave is managed for the landowner by the Kansas City Area Grotto. Flippen Cave was gated by KCAG and other caver organizations in 2010.

Then we moved on to the gray bat cave, which was gated by Cave Research Foundation (CRF) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) in April, 2022. There our adventure was immediately complicated by the fact that wood rats had consumed ALL the perishable survey stations set in March, 2022, and by needing to run an extensive exterior survey up the hill (at the request of the landowner) to accurately characterize how the terminating sinkhole on the surface relates to the cave system. So, we started out the day recreating the survey lines from our four bullet-proof stations. (The sinkhole proved to be right where we thought it would be.)

- By Jim Cooley

Mark Twain Lake Survey Trip



Large crinoids in the ceiling of Buzzard Arch Cave



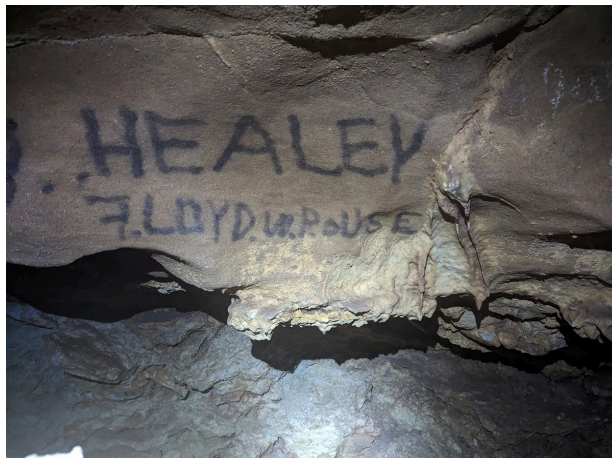
Martin Carmichael sketching the entrance of Buzzard Arch Cave

- Date: 2/11/2023
- Location: Buzzard Arch Karst Complex
- Goals: Finish the survey of Buzzard Arch Cave and survey adjacent caves
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, Martin Carmichael, Bryn Downes-Ward, Diana Dawson
- Time In: 9:00 AM
- Time Out: 4:00 PM
- Bio Count: Several cave crickets
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

On February 11, myself, Martin, Bryn, and Diana returned to Buzzard Arch Cave with the goal to finish the survey of this karst system. We arrived at the cave at about 9:00, gave Diana a brief rundown of how we survey, and started our work. To begin with, Martin, Bryn, and Diana put the finishing touches on the survey and sketch of the main cave, while I crawled around the cave doing some quality control on the existing sketches from the last trip. I was impressed at how well we'd done, with a few missing ceiling and floor ledges and some touch-up where I'd messed up the line plot last time the only changes that needed to be made.

As I was finishing up the QC and Martin was finishing up his sketch, Diana headed to the back of the cave to get pictures of some neat old carbide graffiti on the walls.

It didn't take us long at all to finish in Buzzard Arch Cave, so our next objective was to peek into some of the numerous little cavelets in the bluff face around the main entrance. I had briefly peeked into some of them on previous visits, and I believed that at least one or two held significant enough passage to be considered caves.



The first job was to run a survey line from the main entrance of Buzzard Arch Cave to said smaller entrances, so Bryn and I began doing this while Martin made some sketches of the entrances themselves. We made our way to the west side of the main cave, linking up with Buzzard Arch's secondary entrance and poking into two small cavelets that ended after 5-10 feet. The survey here consisted of running a tape to points along the 5 to 10 foot wide section of bluff that was traversable around the caves - beyond this, there's a steeply sloped 15 foot drop to the lake below, and another 10-15 foot nearly sheer cliff face above us before it levels off into the woods.

Slightly further west along the bluff, we came across a series of broad, low holes in the rock. These were the openings that I thought had the greatest potential, so after we ran a survey line connecting to three of them, Martin and Diana began tackling the easternmost entrance and Bryn and I entered another, the third from the east. There were four entrances in a row here - from the east to the west, they were 3' tall by 7' wide (Entrance #1), 2' tall by 6' wide (Entrance #2), 3' tall by 8' wide (Entrance #3), and 1' wide by 2' tall (Entrance #4). Bryn and I would later find a fifth entrance, inaccessible from the bluff face, that was 1' tall by 4' wide.

It wasn't long after we entered our respective entrances that we realized that they were all connected through TIGHT belly crawl passage - throughout the entire cave, there was hardly a ceiling higher than 2 feet. We could see the other team's lights and hear their voices, and we could both see out of entrance #2 from our own sections, but this connection area is so tight that we couldn't actually access each other's sections, and this entrance chokes to a size not enterable by humans after about 5 feet (although with some determined digging, it could be cleared). We each got about 40 feet of passage, adding up to a total footage of 76.5 feet. We decided to name this new-to-the-MSS cave Marina Maze.



Entrances #1 and #4 of Marina Maze (Kohl Mitchell)

After we finished up here, we moved to the east side of the main cave entrance and ran a survey line to a little tube entrance that we thought would just barely meet the criteria for a new cave (hence why we decided to call this one Just Barely Cave). This entrance starts out as a circular tube about 2' tall by 3' wide, and generally maintains an ovular profile as it gradually gets tighter. Bryn and Diana both tried to push a tight squeeze about 10' past the entrance, but after it defeated them, it became my turn to give it a try.

I slowly wiggled my way down the cave, making it 23 feet before it got too tight for me to continue. As I wrapped up the sketch, I started hearing some commotion outside - Bryn and Diana had decided to take a dip in the nearly-freezing waters of Mark Twain Lake below. With that, the survey of Buzzard Arch Karst Complex is complete.



Diana Dawson in tight passage typical of Marina Maze (Martin Carmichael)



The terminal dome in Bill Gray Cave (Diana Dawson)

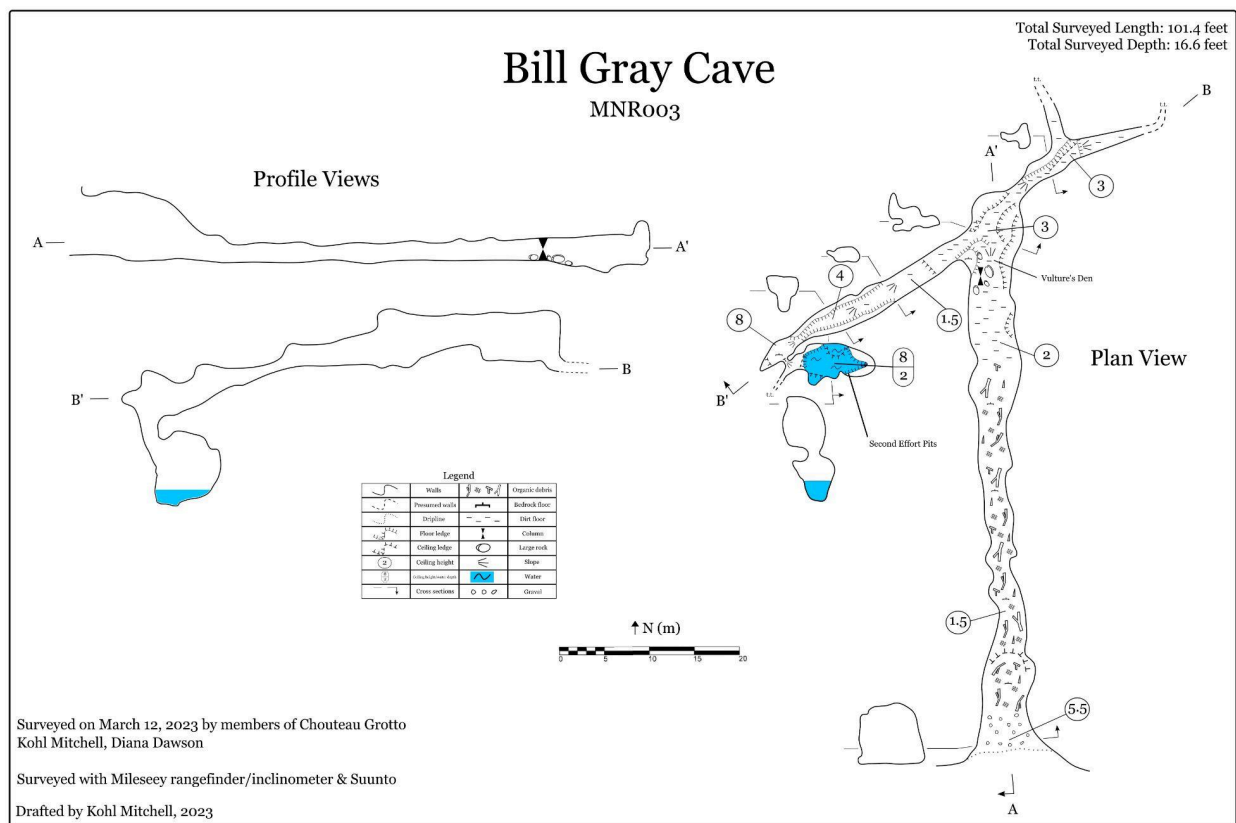
- Date: 2/12/2023
- Location: Bill Gray Cave
- Goals: Survey Bill Gray Cave
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, Diana Dawson
- Time In: 9:00 AM
- Time Out: 12:00 PM
- Bio Count: 3 pickerel frogs, 1 spider, 2 millipedes
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

The next day, Diana and I returned to the lake to survey a separate nearby cave, known as Bill Gray Cave. I'd previously visited this cave and abruptly terminated my exploration about 20 feet in due to a large turkey vulture blocking the passage in front of me. Hoping that he wasn't home this time, we entered the cave and started surveying down the low crawlway entry passage. I'd expected this passage to just choke out after a few dozen feet without doing anything particularly interesting, but I was gladly mistaken. After about 40 feet of this 1.5-2' tall crawlway (interestingly, the floor in the entry passage was completely covered in dry plant debris, including an irritating amount of



cockleburrs), it tees into a ceiling joint-controlled passage.

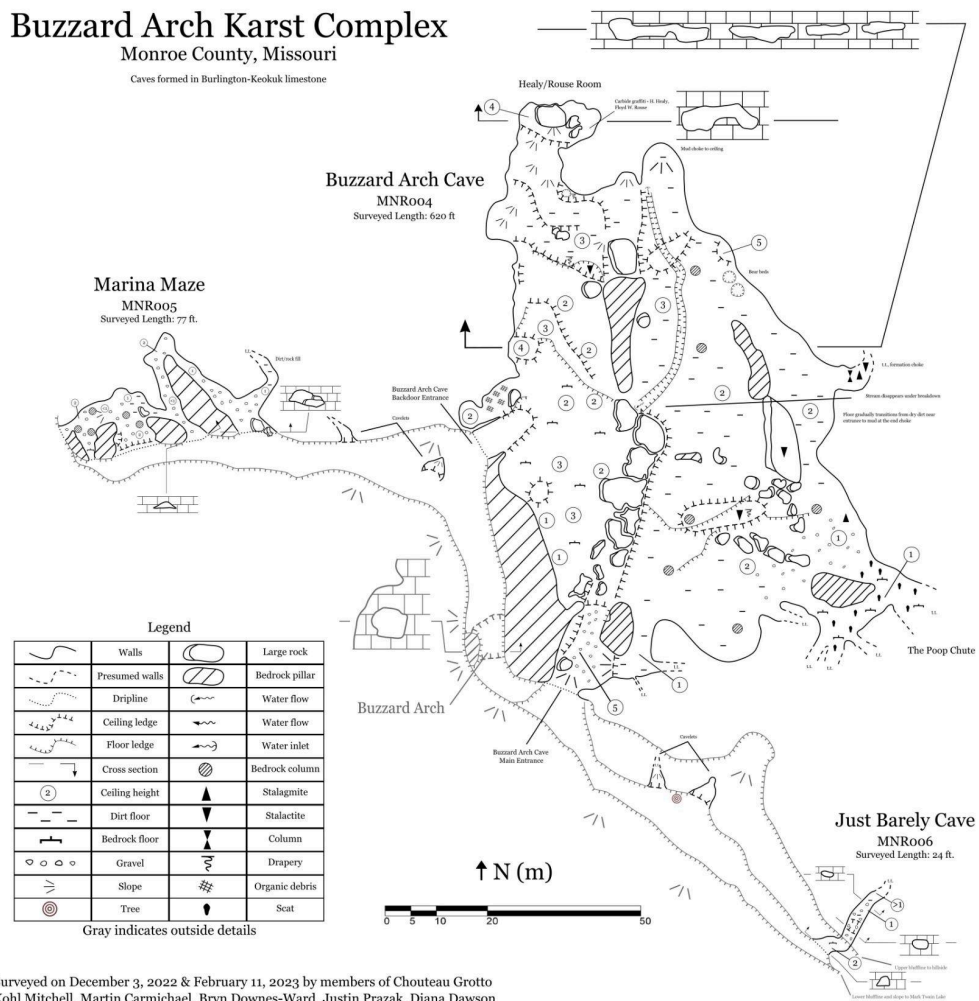
It chokes out relatively quickly to the right, although it could be dug out to human-enterable size by a determined digger. To the left, however, it begins a gradual slope downwards for about 20 feet until it drops into a very neat little dome complex. The passage narrows and gets taller as it goes downslope, so we had to switch from belly-crawling to wiggling along on our sides until we reached the pit. The entrance to the pit complex drops about 6 feet from the level of the passage, so we could easily chimney our way down. Basically immediately to the left of the entrance drop in the first pit, there is an entrance to another little pit in the direction of the main passage. This pit has about 8-foot ceilings, and this is where the cave ends. The bottom of this pit reaches the water table of the lake, and there's about 2 feet of water in the floor. There is visible passage continuing towards the west underwater here, and it's interesting to think about where it would have gone before the lake was built.



Buzzard Arch Karst Complex

Monroe County, Missouri

Caves formed in Burlington-Keokuk limestone



Surveyed on December 3, 2022 & February 11, 2023 by members of Chouteau Grotto
Kohl Mitchell, Martin Carmichael, Bryn Downes-Ward, Justin Prazak, Diana Dawson

Drafted by Kohl Mitchell, 2023

Surveyed with DistoX2, Mileseey rangefinder/inclinometer & Suunto

Mammoth Cave President's Day Expedition



Shannon Zaloz admiring the Old Granddad formation in Turner Avenue (Kohl Mitchell)

- Date: 2/18/2023
- Location: Mammoth Cave
- Goals: Resurvey in Grund Avenue
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, Shannon Zaloz, Brian Young
- Time In: 10:45 AM
- Time Out: 11:45 PM
- Bio Count: Multiple bats, many cave crickets, 1 rat
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

I made my way to Mammoth Cave on the night of Friday the 17th, leaving home right after work and getting to the Hamilton Valley compound at 12:30 AM on Saturday. Despite there only being one day of caving on this expedition, I was excited about making the trip (my second to Mammoth), since I knew that several Missouri cavers would be there, as well as Chouteau's own Shannon Zaloz. After a night of fitful sleep, I made my way to the commons area at about 7 AM, where I grabbed some breakfast and caught up with Shannon for a while.

We met with expedition leader Spike Crews, where there was some initial confusion about where Shannon and I would be going - first, we'd be on Dan Lamping's crew, doing some survey in Mather Avenue. Then, we'd be going with Tommy Brucker to a wet passage in a different section of the cave. Finally, it was decided that there would be three survey teams heading to Mather Avenue - one led by Dan Lamping, one by Krista Bartel, and one by me. Our survey objectives were only a few hundred feet from each other, so we would all be able to stick together for the 2-hour trek through the cave to our objectives. Our team consisted of myself, Shannon, and Tennessee caver Brian Young.

We left Hamilton Valley at about 10:00 AM, along with Dan and Krista's groups (which included fellow Missouri cavers Shawn Williams, Joe Sikorski, and Marissa Schorr), and headed to the Austin entrance (an artificial entrance into the Flint Ridge/Unknown Cave section of Mammoth Cave blasted out in 1956). This was the first time into the Austin entrance for all three of our team members, and the first time in Mammoth for two of them. We quickly made our way down the passage to our objectives, stopping occasionally along the way for water breaks, as well as ooh-ing and aah-ing at the impressive gypsum formations along Turner Avenue, particularly the massive flowstone and gypsum column known as Old Granddad.



Once we reached our destination about 2 hours after entering, the three teams split up, agreeing that at least one of the other teams would wait for us outside our lead to help us newbies navigate our way back, with a meeting time set for 9:30 PM. Our objective was to resurvey a few hundred foot long stretch of tight canyon passage in the area known as Grund Trail, which would complete a significant loop in the survey in this area. Annoyingly, about 75 feet down this passage, there was a 15-foot vertical drop, so we needed to pack our vertical gear with us through the cave. We entered the tight passage, with some confusion as we tried to track down the stations that we needed to re-survey.

Eventually, we found our objective and began the survey. We were able to take one good reading before we started getting severe disagreements in the fore and backsights on the BRIC4. After what had to be an hour of trying everything we could think of to ensure that it wasn't user error, we tried recalibrating it, even though we had calibrated it just before we began our survey that morning. The recalibration of the BRIC seemed to work, so we continued down the passage and were able to get a few more shots in, nearly reaching the vertical drop, before we began encountering the same problem. We spent some more time ensuring it wasn't user error, and recalibrated the thing, which again seemed to fix the problem. After this, we took survey shots down into the pit, put on our vertical gear, and as I sketched the pit, Shannon and Brian began fiddling with the BRIC in an attempt to fix our problems. We had been following old survey stations until we reached the pit, but after the drop we were unable to locate any more and started marking our own. However, the BRIC yet again began giving us readings that simply would not agree between foresight and backsight, and after hundreds of shots and several calibrations in desperate attempts to get it to work, we eventually bit the bullet and continued on for a few shots with old-fashioned compass and clino.

We terminated survey at about 8:30, probably halfway from our starting point to where we were supposed to tie in to existing survey, and knowing that it would take us a long time to put our vertical gear on, climb the rope and pack up our gear one by one, and squeeze back through the passage. Shannon made an abortive attempt to cross a series of ledges across the pit from the drop to pursue a canyon lead in the ceiling, but she quickly gave up on this. It does appear, however, that someone confident in their rock-climbing abilities could reach the lead via these ledges. At this point, we wiggled as quickly as we could to get back to the main passage, and just before 9:30, we met Dan, Joe and Marissa waiting for us (Krista's group had left the cave a few hours earlier, as their lead had ended). From here, we made tracks for the exit as fast as we could, ready for a hot meal and a good night's sleep.

Or rather, Shannon and Brian were ready for a good night's sleep, as I needed to be back home by noon on Sunday. I got my survey stuff back to Spike, did the necessary paperwork, and left Hamilton Valley about 24 hours after I'd gotten there.



For the most part, this is what the passage we were surveying in was like. (Kohl Mitchell)

Three Creeks Conservation Area Monitoring Trip



The group admiring the solutional pendants in Sink Cave - left to right, Caleb Mundwiller, Erica Hroblak, Martin Carmichael, Jarrett Whistance, Thomas Sisney, & Eloria Fedynich. Not pictured, photographer Diana Dawson.

CRF Monitoring of Three Creeks Conservation Area, Feb 18th 2023

Diana Dawson, Caleb Mundwiller, Erica Hroblak, Jarrett Whistance, Eloria Fedynich, Thomas Sisney, Trip Leader Martin Carmichael

We met at the Myers Lane parking lot access around 8am on Saturday and headed off on a large loop around the conservation area. It was around 2:40pm by the time we made it back to the parking lot.

Sink Cave

First stop was Sink Cave. This is where we found the highest concentration of bats with 14 total. After ducking and sliding into the cave, in the first room, on the wall about six feet up was a set of scratch marks (4 claws) that were about as big as my outstretched hand. There was a

significant amount of staining on the ceiling - this cave is clearly a favorite spot for the bats. Perhaps being off trail and more isolated, as well as being one of the larger caves we visited were factors. Some bats were obviously brown bats, at least one was tricolor, and the others could not be determined due to the view.

Bats	14
Crickets	~20
Herald Moth	3
Mosquitos	200+
Spider	1 (3" diameter)
Scat present in cave	

Tumbling Cave



Diana Dawson & Erica Hroblak in the seldom-visited terminal room of Tumbling Cave, and outside the entrance (Diana Dawson, Martin Carmichael)

Second was Tumbling Cave. At the large entrance we found three dead bats, all still hanging from the cave ceiling. One had its fur matted as though it had been wet and then

handled. Though I doubt it was handled, that's the appearance it had. The other was hanging on by one leg and had a dried appearance. The third dead bat at the entrance had a hole in it and you could see red tissue inside of the bat.

Inside the cave we found four tri-color bats. One of them was fully covered in condensation; none of the other three were. We debated whether the one covered in condensation was dead, but could not reach a consensus. We noticed we didn't see any mosquitos in this cave. Given its relatively high ceiling, maybe they were out of sight up there. Erica and Diana crawled all the way to the back of the cave to continue the faunal count; they emerged quite muddy! This was Erica's first day caving and she was enthusiastic about it throughout the entirety of the trip. Quite the beginning caver! At the back of the cave they found a hundred or so isopods in pools of water. Three of us shared clothing with Diana so she wouldn't freeze to death. She's been a very fearless, fun and enthusiastic caver on recent trips.

Bats	Three dead at entrance
Bats	4 Tricolor deeper inside
Herald Moth	2
Isopod	100+ in back of cave in water
Scat present in cave	

Mosquito Cave

Third was Mosquito. Living up to its name, and for its small size, it had a high concentration of mosquitos. This is a very small cave.

Crickets	2
Mosquitoes	100+

Sawtooth Cave

Fourth was Sawtooth. There were a dozen or so large logs that have washed down into the end of the creek where the cave begins. No life was found in this cave, though the entire cave was not traversed. Too much debris has been washed into this cave. Just north of this cave are two sinks, one of which a person can fit into, but that's



just about it. It gets too tight. It's logical that they would connect at least hydrologically; the two sinks are in line between Sawtooth and Mosquito cave.

No fauna found in this cave

Coon Cave

Fifth was Coon. This cave is also extremely small.

No fauna found in this cave

37" Pit

Sixth was 37" pit. This is a 'new' cave to the records and is not on any lists I've seen thus far. This cave is located in a sink in the area where Hunter's Cave is found. The sink is around 20' wide, and 8' deep. There is a small entrance that angles down sharply 75° or so and then one must sit down to slide into the first room. The first room is around 8' wide and 4' tall. At the end of this room is a small hole, around 20" in diameter.

Dropping through that hole leads to another room in which you can stand, but it is small. In the ceiling of this room there is a turtle shell that is lodged in a gravel choke. There is a small slot that continues forward and onto more cave, but only small cavers can reach this area. This drops into a series of small rooms and passages. Two bats, likely disturbed as they were flying, were observed in this cave. The total length of this cave is around 300'.



Bats	2
Spiders	7

Three Creeks Arch

Seventh was Three Creeks Arch. This is a small natural bridge that's located on the backbone that rises directly above Hunter's Cave. No fauna was observed.

No fauna observed

Crumbling Tower Cave

Eighth was Crumbling Tower Cave. This cave's location was described fairly well in one of the reports. It is located at the southwestern side of the hairpin/horseshoe turn that Bass creek makes in the vicinity of Hunters. The previous description is that it's around 20' above the creek, but in actuality it is around 50' above the creek. It is situated in a fractured rock cliff that itself is around 60' tall. This was one of the few locations we did not find scat.

True to the previous description, it is accessible along a narrow ledge which I would describe as precarious. Erica and Caleb had no problems getting over to it to perform the faunal count and snap a photo.

Mosquitos	50+
Spiders	1

Domepit Cave

Ninth was Domepit. This was our last cave monitored. No scat was found in this cave though a number of shells (acorn, others) were present. An animal has been snacking in this cave. At the very top of the cave there were a cluster of spiders.

Spiders	50+
---------	-----

~Martin Carmichael, Chouteau Grotto

Pike and Ralls County Cave Monitoring Trips



Our crew posing with the ladder in Ed's Pit. Left to right, Kirsten Alvey-Mudd, Eric Bassinger, JJ Huelsing, Ryan Doolin, Kohl Mitchell
(Kirsten Alvey-Mudd)

- Date: 2/26/2023
- Location: Animal Den Cave, Betty Jane Cave, Ed's Pit, Spring Cave
- Goals: Investigate and perform biomonitoring on these caves
- Participants: Kirsten Alvey-Mudd, JJ Huelsing, Kohl Mitchell, Ryan Doolin, Eric Bassinger
- Report Written By: Kirsten Alvey-Mudd

Following some ground intel and a cold call to the residence of the landowners on Thursday, Feb 23, I arranged to return to hunt 4 caves with very little intel and no reports in the MSS Cave files. They knew of only one cave on their property, and would take us to it. They also wished to join us on the hunt for the other caves.

We began the day at the cave they knew they had. It did not match to any GPS location. However, the description did match that of Animal Den. This at least gave us a starting point for locating or tempting to locate the others. After a thorough biological monitoring and turn by turn description and exploration in Animal Den, we spread out and headed towards the next GPS location which was again a bust. We could, however, see across the creek an active spring that we believed might be Spring Cave. The landowner, however, indicated that that section of property was not his property, that it belonged to the trailer that could be seen through the trees above it.

We then proceeded farther down on the west side of the creek looking for Ed's Cave which is a pit. Again, we reached a fence line and the landowner indicated that was not his property so we stopped. On our hike back we dropped to the creek level and followed it as well as spreading out on his property through the woods to look for Low Water Cave and any other new caves that might be on the property.

Low Water Cave was not located but we did identify a very small slit that entered into a small but nice cave directly above the old wagon trail road at the creek crossing. The entrance was tight. Even Kohl Mitchell took a little bit of work but did get into the cave. JJ Huelsing had to remove a large rock buried in the entrance to facilitate Kohl getting in. The next to try was Ryan, who could not fit. I, of course, had to say "hold my gear" and pushed through into the cave as well. Surprising few, I'm sure. The entrance slide actually measured 2ft wide by 8 inches!! We next checked out several fox hole den caves. None of which any of us were capable of entering.

We also stopped to look at a beautiful spring that cascades 25-30 ft down from a rock outcropping behind the landowners' residence. If the water levels ever do lower, it is enterable and appears to be quite deep. We next proceeded to check out the sinkhole plane above the spring. Six separate sinkholes of which three drop to exposed rock and one opens through to passage below. Passage was minimal; only 17 ft from surface level to floor.

After leaving the first property we headed back out to the highway and down the road to the adjacent property, where the landowner was happy to walk us straight to Ed's Cave and Spring Cave.

Animal Den Cave:

This cave sits east-facing on the west side of the creek in a very small rock shelf outcrop. Although the entrance measurement is correct, there is little to no evidence that this is an animal den. Beyond the mandatory opossum skull we seem to find in every cave in the county, there was not even very much scat in this cave.

Initial entry is a slight downward slope, nothing unmanageable. The 14ft long entry is joint controlled with a crevice slit in the ceiling. At 14ft the room continues in a body sized joint determined crag tube another 57.9 ft. (Laser tape)

The main passage trends towards the north just running inside the hillside slope. The floor drops away leaving a crevice stream widened passage approximately 5 ft high. The entire room and passageway are about 10 ft. wide with a walking channel of about 4.5 ft in the center. Floors are of large rock and chert breakdown with trickling water on entry. 80 ft from the entrance, there are carbide signatures in the ceiling by Marvin Hunt, 1946 and EW Rice, 1922. The main passage continues throughout with varying ceiling heights from 5 ft to 10 ft at about the same width. A trickling stream crisscrosses from side to side underneath the floor with only a minor amount of sticky mud in a few areas as it crosses.

At this point, 188 ft back passage on the main level ends and one must climb up and over a mud choke with rock flowstone overlay. The crawl tube is approximately 2 ft. high by 3 ft. 2.5 ft wide and 8ft long. Once through, you emerge into a heavily decorated formation room measuring 10.5ft wide x 5ft at its widest and 5ft tall with ceiling draperies, soda straws and a few conjoined columns.

From this room the passage goes two directions. Heading towards the south: passage drops 10 ft to a hard end in a tube approximately 2x4 in diameter. Passage to the north: you drop through a 2 ft wide by 4 ft long joint determined slit in the floor approximately 3.5ft down to a 8 ft mud floored heavily decorated room again. Water disappears from the edge of this room before you go through another joint determined wall and flowstone passage approximately 12 inches wide by 3 ft tall.

On the other side of this last slip hole is a small dome room with beautiful formations that are no longer active and mud floor. A huge variety of flow stone, columns, stalagmites and stalactites exist in this hole. It's approximately 6.5-7 ft high with a small dome inside. The name Harry Brown or Brownfield and 19??, and initials OEB are in carbide.

The last room is 3.5-4ft wide and again water is slightly pooled at the bottom and trickling out the western edge. Additional passage at approximately 4 inches wide by 12 inches high with formations and mudscaping can be seen another 1-2ft heading to the west. This is a hard end.

The Northeast region is still in limited drought conditions despite recent rains. The floors throughout the cave are a mix of dry mud banks and pasty sticky mud where the water crisscrosses across the general pathway. There's a clear line of inundation where debris and material from flooding has reached well up to 5-6 ft. in the taller 10 ft passage areas and quite likely reaches the ceiling in the lower 5 ft zones.

Biocount: 2 little brown bats, 11 tricolor bats, 30 +/- cave crickets, 1 opossum skull, raccoon scat, 3 rove beetle larvae, 47 macrocera nobilis webworms, 1 cave salamander

Betty Jane Cave:

At the dripline, the entrance is a high key hole 4 ft x 4 ft. Within 3 ft. of this entrance, it drops to a tight squeeze of 8 inches x 2ft. At the time of our entry, a large rock had to be moved to facilitate the 8-in passage opening.

Inside the cave, the first room measures 10 ft x 15 ft with a center ceiling joint slot extending another 2 ft up with formations along its length.

From this main room, the passage spiders five directions through bedrock columns less than 1 ft except for one which could be pushed possibly five. Another joint control passage which runs along the front of the bluff is filled with dirt in the bottom and extends another 2 ft high.

The mandatory opossum skull required by all caves in northeast MO was found in this cave, along with a plethora of gnats was seen in the cave.

Ed's Pit:

Ed's Pit sits about 50 ft up above the west bank of a creek. On our visit it had orange construction fencing around the sinkhole and only the gate of a chain link fence set in concrete near it.

The entire sinkhole circumference is approximately 20 ft x 15 ft at the surface level. The slump drops 4 ft to a rock opening measuring 6 ft x 4 ft. Inside is a steel and rebar ladder which has been permanently installed to facilitate your 25 ft drop entrance into the cave. The ladder was in good condition but it should be noted that only one side of the upper support is attached to the rock. The other one will move.

The sinkhole ladder entrance to the cave basically cuts the cave equally in half. The ladder itself drops into one large fluted dome room with several small additional flutes connected to it. Most of the domes to the side run 25- 35 ft and are decorated near the top. A large number of historic signatures as well as some modern era are in this section of the cave.

Heading south from the ladder, passage went 160ft crawling over mud banked stream meander with 1-2 inches of water and large chert. From here the ceiling height lowers to a belly crawl in 3-4 inches of water and a canyon can be seen some 30 ft ahead beyond the crawl. We we're not prepared to be soaking wet all day so did not push beyond this point. Coming back, the passage goes 15 ft behind the ladder and breakdown debris pile from the sink.

From that point, cave passage extends to the north and water disappears below a rock wall. Passage goes up and down over mud hills with flowstone caps and mud washouts. It becomes highly decorated. Some active and some abandoned formations are throughout this section. Several crawls, belly and hands-and-knees, are in this area.

108 ft down the northern passage you slide between flowstone and columns with a flowstone cap washout into walking passage approximately 10 ft wide at the top belling downward to 6-7 ft height in the center walking area. At 120 ft the passage suddenly rises up

again to a hands and knee crawl with clear large scale breakdown and water cascading in from a dome that has collapsed. After crawling through a hole beside the collapsed dome, one drops down into walking passage only briefly. The passage extends about 15ft and then goes back up into a long belly crawl that was only traverse for about 15 ft, but another 30 ft could be seen in the distance. Any further exploration there will be left for the mapping team. When coming up out of the breakdown passage hole, a small decorated dome approximately 5 ft high is in the ceiling. At this spot, a small 1 ft side hole goes to the east and pops up into another small room with another 5 ft fluted dome. The OEB initials in carbide (also seen in Animal Den Cave) are again seen on the wall.

The length of the northern passage from the ladder measures 189 ft, passage to the southern end of the ladder was 120 ft. Counting the measured passage underneath and behind the ladder pit entrance, a total of approximately 325 ft of quick laser tape measurement was taken.

Spring Cave:

As recorded, this cave has a 3.5 ft x 3.5 ft entrance and perpetual spring. Approximately 5ft back from the entrance passage drops into a low airspace belly crawl in water. This would definitely be a wetsuit cave and should be visited during dry periods with no expected rain.

There is an old Victoria chest freezer as well as a second oval watering tank in front of the cave used to capture spring water and pump it earlier years. There is no pump there currently and both containers are heavily rusted and abandoned, but they are easy identification points in the woods to find this spring.



The entrance and spectacular spring cascades and bluff of Wieczorek Cave (Kohl Mitchell).

- Date: 2/27/2023
- Location: Wieczorek Cave
- Goals: Investigate and perform biomonitoring on the new-to-the-MSS cave
- Participants: Kirsten Alvey-Mudd, JJ Huelsing, Kohl Mitchell
- Time In: 10:30 AM
- Time Out: 11:30 AM
- Bio Count: 20+ bats (big brown and tricolor), 33 pickerel frogs, 7 fishing spiders, 1 crayfish
- Report Written By: Kirsten Alvey-Mudd & Kohl Mitchell

While doing some land tracking to locate four known but very little reported on caves in the MSS files just a few miles away, I opted to return to Hannibal for the evening via a different set of county roads, which is something I commonly do in every area I work in so that I get an opportunity to cover more ground and see potential cave openings or karst areas. The back road I took led me from Highway F to Highway P via Route JJ. While driving down JJ, I noticed the extensive number of sinkholes which sparked my interest. Upon reaching the intersection of JJ and P and seeing the Union Christian Church I remembered that I had been here as a young teenage driver, driving country roads looking for caves 40 years ago. I remember noting the

sinkhole plane at the time. But as often goes, one loses track of these things and I never really returned.

This time however, I could correct this. I pulled up the county property GIS and identified the landowners for the bulk of the sinkhole plane. On Sunday, February 26th, one of the other caves we had planned to go to had to be postponed due to a landowner injury. So we had additional time on that day and pulled into the Union Christian Church with a group of cavers to look at the sinkholes on the church property. We were going over next to the adjacent property to do the same afterwards.

We began checking out the holes on the church property, one of which definitely went into joint determined passage. Although this passage made a T junctions and pinched to impassable relatively quickly. It was nearly 35-40 ft in total and would qualify it as a cave. We GPS'd it and spread out once again on the church property, eventually coming upon a fence line. At this time, Kohl Mitchell, who was with us, advised that he believed some people he knew owned the land south of the church (which is where we were) and that perhaps they would allow us further access. He knew their names, so I looked them up via Google, called and left a message about our looking at potential caves or sinkholes on their property. Kohl had recalled that he had heard a rumor that there was a cave on a property they owned but had no idea where since they had a large amount of land in several areas. It was difficult to know exactly where a cave might be. Daylight was waning so we called it for the day. JJ Huelsing and I return the next day to begin more work on the sinkhole plane at the Lane properties at P & JJ.

On our way to meet at Union Church on Monday, February 27th, I received a phone call from the landowner and his son. They were very excited that we had called. YES, they did have a cave on their property. YES, we could go in. They had never been in the cave before. They were a bit frightened of exploring it alone. They had been trying for years to find someone reputable and experienced who could take them in and asked if we would. I said absolutely we would, but that Kohl Mitchell (whom they knew from the area) had been with us on the day before and was really wanting to join us if we gained access to the cave because he had heard about it from others in the area but didn't know where it was.

They said they would be happy to come out just to take us to show us where the entrance is and we could return with Kohl at another time. I contacted Kohl to let him know that we had gained access and to see what his dates of availability was for the possibility of us all returning over the weekend to facilitate looking at the cave. He unfortunately had plans for a large portion of the weekend. I promised we would not enter the cave without him, just go and get locational information and how to reach it. Kohl called back 10 minutes later and said that he had talked to his father and gotten the rest of the day off from the family farm, that he could be there in 30 minutes with gear to join us.

The landowners arrived just before Kohl and we discussed the history they knew on the cave. When Kohl arrived we proceeded to hike down the very first ravine to the south of Union Christian Church. As we came around the edge of it, a stunning and massive waterfall was

cascading from a gorgeous picture-esque spring cave at the base of a 30 ft ravine bluff. It was spectacular! We were in disbelief that a cave this obvious sitting just 100ft maximum in extremely open view of Spencer Creek had not been turned in as a known cave already to the MSS cave's database.

The landowner entered the cave with us using gear we loaned him, while his son and grandson, who were not prepared to go caving, stayed outside of the cave. Immediately inside the entrance one must step down into thigh deep water. Due to rains the night before, the water was cloudy and, according to the landowner, running slightly higher than normal. The waters were rushing and pushing rather hard.

The first passage is a tunnel 6-7ft high and 7-8 ft wide with a highly decorated ceiling channel. Inside the ceiling channel, two big brown bats and one tricolor bat were seen. Several wolf spiders were found on the cave walls. The first small dome room is beyond this. It has two joint controlled passages that lead off of it but quickly pinch as they rise towards the surface. The cave then makes a hard turn to the left for approximately 75-100ft - first in walking passage, then passage becomes more of a crouch, before it again returns to walking passage, but at this point the water deepens to upper thigh to waist deep.

You now emerge at another junction in the joint determined passage.

The left side of this junction is mud filled joint controlled crevice, going three directions, the right hand direction facing more or less directly east and heading into the sinkhole plane field above.

This passage, when heading east, began as a thigh deep walk and within 50-100ft the floor slowly rose up. We leveraged ourselves only on our knee with our head and shoulders in the ceiling channel crevice so we didn't have to place our hands in the water yet. Looking into the distance this passage went on and on, as far as the eye could see, the air was blowing extremely cold, like an air conditioner on high. The echo in the distance was intoxicating. Kohl and I discussed how far down this passage we would go as the landowner was not wanting to get into anything this wet with us. The landowner and JJ stayed behind. We decided to push the passage until we were at a point where we would be getting extremely wet. Neither of us was in wetsuits or prepared for a long extensive soaking head to toe water crawl of any kind. The temperatures outside were in the mid 30s and we would have a hike back to the car for changing, so Kohl and I proceeded down the long water filled passage. A constant and continual ceiling crevice runs throughout, most of it heavily decorated. There are sections, however, where the decoration disappears and joint controlled ceiling fracture rises as high as 25-30 ft above you - some of it wide enough you could stand up and walk in it, others too narrow for walking. The bulk of the tricolor bats seen were within these formations or at joint controlled cross-section junctions where the cold air was captured and running heavily up in and out of the joints.

There were a total of 16 joint control cross sections, the majority of which went less than 4 ft. either left or right before becoming mud filled. Many had ceiling crevices with airflow coming from them, indicating that there is additional passage somewhere above - if only it could become accessible. We checked in every joint and junction to see if any of them had a climb up

out of the water. We stopped at about 150ft of water crawl to take some photos of the conditions and shoot a small video for the landowner to see, then proceeded back into the water crawl and kept going, and going and going.

The water levels varied throughout, but never more than mid arm or thigh deep while crawling. Kohl and I both agreed that neither wanted to take any type of chest dip even if it was while crawling on hands and knees. We had long since lost sight and sound of JJ and the landowner behind us when the water became much shallower and large chert was on the floor with water just trickling amongst it. The ceiling began to dip down and we were going to be forced into a crab crawl or belly crawl through the trickling water and large chert. We made the decision at this point to take some photos and light up as far as we could in the distance to see how much passage went ahead or if it looked as though it sumped out. Air was still blowing quite hard in our faces. With good lighting, we could clearly see that the passage moved a minimum 30-50 ft ahead and appeared to have no end, but the conditions would continue to stay as a low wet crawl. Although it looked as if passage might tip up into a walking crevice in the distance. We did not push any further, and left any further exploration for the mapping teams.

On our way back to where JJ and the landowner were still waiting in waist deep water, both Kohl and I separately counted our crawls as a method of measure for the passage. Each of us roughly knowing our crawl stride, We individually calculated footage on the way back. I had approximately 625 ft, Kohl approximately 600 for just that section of watercrawl. We agreed to use 600 as our best estimate on the water crawl and that there was an additional 120 from us to the entrance. Adding in that we could confidently see at least 30ft ahead from where we stopped. This led us to an estimated 750 ft of passage explored, all of which was in water from the drip line to that point.

As Kohl will be the lead for mapping in this cave with it being just around the corner from where he lives, knowing that all parties involved would need wetsuits and to be prepared for long work and water was important. The 600 foot section we adventured into on our own was extremely straight and linear with 16 joint controlled off shoots or cross-secting passages. While returning from the cave to the vehicles, we stopped at each of the sinkholes on their portion of the property above the cave.

One in a series of 5 small sinkholes on the property, which sits 200 ft from the cave entrance and directly in line to its passage direction. Although it did not tie into the main cave, it did have approximately 30 ft of passage inside, going in three directions with a T+ junction - worthy of registry as a second cave.

The landowner was very accommodating and actually spoke to us about a couple other sinkholes on their property that they took us to. At this point none of those has any passage that opens up. Although one holds 2-3 feet of water during heavy rain periods and then drains out in less than a day. From here, Kohl returned to work for the remainder of the day and JJ and I proceeded to investigate the sinkholes on the sinkhole plane above this cave.

- Kirsten Alvey-Mudd

This is some exciting stuff! I lived 5 miles from this cave for 10 years and didn't even know about it - although, more recently, I had heard a few local rumors along the lines of "oh, so-and-so has a cave on their property", but no more details than that. I never dreamed that it would turn out to be the second-biggest cave in the county, with much more still to explore. Not to mention the fact that it's got some of the strongest airflow I've ever felt in large passage. This is going to be one heck of a survey project for us in the future.

We were all amazed that this cave had been completely unknown to the MSS until we visited. It, and its associated sinkhole plain, are very obvious on LIDAR, and the entrance is clearly visible from the adjacent creek. Just goes to show, there are still some great caves out there waiting to be found.

- Kohl Mitchell

Roubidoux Cave Novice Trip



Date: 3/11/2023

Location: Roubidoux

Goals: To have fun!

Participants: Bryn D-W, Diana Dawson, Eloria Fedynich, Thomas Sisney, Caleb Mundwiller, Justin Charles, Sebastian Piacentino, Sean Douglas, Brennan Alexander, Ben Weisz

Time In: 10:20 am

Time Out: 2:50 pm

Bio Count: 45+ tri color and small brown bats, 1 frog, 1 salamander

Report Written By: Thomas Sisney

Arrived at the Roubidoux entrance around 9:45 and got ready to enter the cave as the rest of the group showed up. Once we were all present, we hiked up to the cave entrance and took a group picture before heading in.

The mouth of the cave opened up into a large, open passage that snaked on for about 50 meters. This section of the cave was home to quail, but further in there were many bats. Above us we could spot multiple bats, some huddled together, and counted just over 40 total. We didn't see much other wildlife, except for a frog near the entrance as well as a salamander in the water.

We continued down the cave as it got narrower and darker. The stream on the ground became unavoidable as we started to crawl through the first small passageway. We quickly ran into the meat grinder, which we all made through fairly quickly.



The rest of the trip to the back of the cave went fairly quickly. We decided to go to the pit next to the colon passage, and we made the trip in just over an hour. Notably, we passed through Mud Alley, which was a crawl through wet, thick mud that tested our shoes and knee pads as we went.

After making it to the climb up into the passage to the pit, we found a rope that allowed us to walk up the wall. One by one we made it up, and Bryn and Justin stayed behind. We made the 5 minute trip to the pit and each looked down into it. It was roughly 45 feet deep, with a small passage on the other side and another down below. After we had all checked it out we turned around.

Back down with Bryn and Justin, the group decided to head into colon passage for a quick wander. Lori and I stayed behind and ate. The group was back in less than 10 minutes, and we all headed back the way we came.

After the long trip back to the entrance of the cave, we all took a group photo and exited back to the cars as it began to rain. We cleaned up and headed on our way.

Animal Den Cave Survey Trip

- Date: 3/11/2023
- Location: Animal Den Cave
- Goals: Survey Animal Den Cave & introduce other cavers to survey
- Participants: Kohl Mitchell, JJ Huelsing, Eric Basinger, Emma Buckingham, Erica Hroblak, Sean Zimmerman
- Time In: 9:30 AM
- Time Out: 5:00 PM
- Bio Count: 3 tricolor bats, numerous cave crickets and gnats
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

During the weekend of caving I'd done in NE Missouri with Missouri Bat Census in February, I had made contacts with several landowners and gotten permission to survey the caves on their property. I

figured I'd start this project with a relatively simple cave in Ralls County called Animal Den Cave. I returned to this cave with a crew of 5 other cavers, none of whom had ever surveyed before. The team consisted of JJ and Eric from Stygian Grotto, who were with us in February and expressed interest in returning for the survey, and Sean, Erica, and Emma from Chouteau. The landowner and his son also accompanied us until about lunchtime. After we got to the cave entrance, I gave a quick rundown of how to use a Suunto compass and explained the basics of survey points and relaying data, and we got going.

In the room just past the entrance, the main passage continues to the north through easy walking canyon passage with 6 to 8 foot ceilings, and a tight, joint-controlled side passage continues to the west. We decided to survey the main passage first, and explore the side passage after we were done with the main survey - we didn't enter it last time, and had no idea where it would go.

The first few stations took a while, as the team slowly began to get the hang of using the Suunto and placing survey stations, but it wasn't long before they were taking shots faster than I could sketch. This was easy survey, so it was only a few hours before we reached the end of the ~250-foot main passage. This area was more complex, with the passage terminating in a heavily-decorated joint-controlled room that only two or three of us could fit in at a time.

By about 2:00, we returned to the entrance room, where we stopped for a snack before Erica and I began surveying the side passage. It begins in about 50 feet of tight joint-controlled canyon passage, before it makes a turn to the southeast in a more typical low bedrock crawlway, which is liberally decorated with animal scat. This passage continues for about 100 more feet

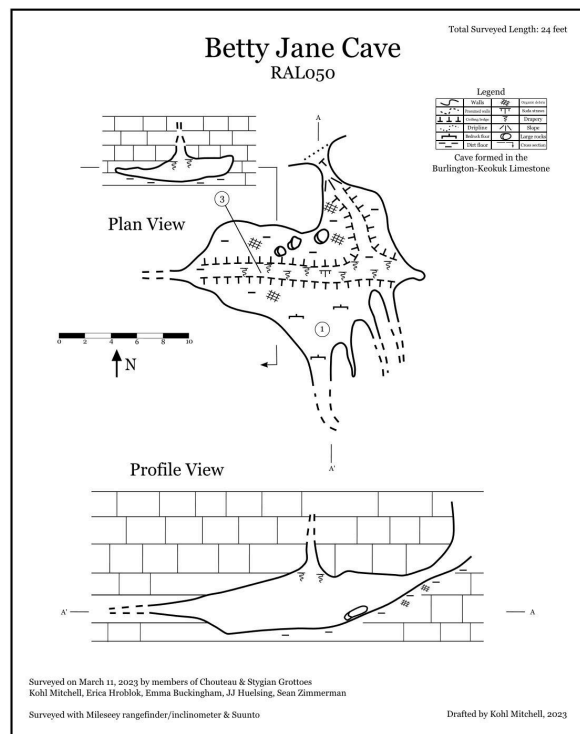


before, much to our surprise, it opens up into the largest room in the cave! There is a large breakdown room with a stream flowing through it, trending generally southeast-to-northwest. This room has ceilings about 10-15 feet tall and extends probably 30 feet before the ceiling gradually lowers into a cherty stream crawl with no end in sight. The passage continuing towards the creek outside is blocked off by breakdown.

Interestingly, there was another cave reported in this area, Low Water Cave, that we were unable to locate on the last visit. We wonder if the entrance to this cave has collapsed, but at one time was an entrance into this passage. There are several small sinks with little openings in the hillside south of the Animal Den entrance that could possibly have been reported as Low Water Cave.

The survey here was slow, and since we knew we wouldn't be able to finish the survey today, and we couldn't communicate with the rest of the team from where we were, Erica and I decided to return to the entry area and exit the cave. There was a tiny one-room cave nearby that I wanted to get surveyed as well, so we decided to hit that before we left. The entrance to Betty Jane Cave (named after the landowner's grandmother) was tight enough that Erica and I were the only ones to enter, and despite the tight quarters, it only took about 30 minutes to get the 23.5 feet of survey done here. This cave consists of one joint-controlled room, about 1.5 feet tall with a decorated ceiling channel in the middle that extends about a foot higher. To the south from the entrance, passage spiders out four different directions into the hillside, but it is far too tight for a person to go more than a few feet in any direction.

After we were done in Betty Jane Cave, we hurried to our vehicles to escape the sleet that was now peppering down outside, with much to look forward to on the next trip here.



Nameless Cave Reconnaissance Trip

Nameless Cave - Crawford County

03/12/2023

Survey reconnaissance

Dan Lamping, Bob Lerch, Jen Sutherland, Shawn Williams, Rita Worden

Report by: Rita Worden

9 am Sunday morning Shawn and I arrived at a conservation area parking lot to meet up with Dan, Bob and Jen. We had been in the neighborhood the previous day for OTA's 20th anniversary and were eager to get underground. After consolidating into vehicles able to handle the trip we headed down rough roads a few miles to meet the landowners, who were relatives of Dan's.

The goal on this day was to set good stations at long intervals so several teams could return another day and efficiently leapfrog, each finishing a segment or two every day. As we moved through the cave the challenges for survey became clear and the need for a plan obvious. I had been warned about the mud, but there is a lot of deep, pull your leg off, mud, wall to wall. I floundered a bit, up to my thighs, but remembered to use my voice, lol, and it seemed to help.

The cave is also very big, cavernous, and the exposures are surprising even though manageable. I was sent first up a wall of clay I couldn't see the top of. There was a knotted hand-line and good footholds so I made steady progress up the 40 ft, 55 degree slope even though favoring my right shoulder. But at the top, as I got "off rope" and stood full up, I saw I was on the top of a cliff overlooking a gaspingly surprising 'Grand Canyon'!

And I kept hearing about a "hanging lake". To get there we climbed through a hole in the ceiling next to the wall. There was a rope tied horizontally across the opening as a handhold as well as one foothold you could stand on, which brought the opening only to my chin level. Some of us needed a second foothold but we all got up and over in time. We were then at the top of a mountainside of 2ft deep, empty rimstone dams 20 feet wide! Except the one at the top (3ft deep?) was full to the brim with drip water from a beautiful array of stalagmites and drapery. Where that brimming pool empties to I can't exactly tell ya, but there was another dam some 15ft across this pool, so I got up on the lip of the water-full dam near to me to try to see over the far dam. There was no pool there. In fact, the floor was broken out, like ancient pottery, and the water had fallen through to the passage below! It was awesome to imagine that event, but down the slope we went and onward.

We also saw some signatures here and there, none from this century, but some impressive ones from short-faced bear. We also saw some level, dry passage that had been a cavers' camp, as we saw a carbide dump and some rusted food cans. Eventually we found ourselves at the top of yet another clay-over-breakdown cliff about 45 ft high in a 60 ft passage looking across 100 ft of chasm to the continuing passage beyond. There was a way down, but what a long way. It would take a while, but two started down. Shawn explored a ledge on the left and to everyone's

surprise ended up in that continuing passage, a tiny figure in the 'distance'. Jen followed him. I stayed thinking this would all be easier for each when we survey. At this point, having placed a goodly number of stations about every 600ft and facing a 4pm out-time, we decided to do an about face and return to the surface.

The pace on the way out was no more relentless than is usual but, given the terrain, I got pretty breathless. Probably dehydrated. Re-rigging the ceiling hole at the hanging lake finally gave me an extended time to recover and the boot sucking mud wasn't so bad. Future plans were discussed as we cleaned up, goodbyes were said and we parted ways. - Rita Worden

Carroll Cave Bat Roost Detector Trip



Report and photos by Diana Dawson

Bill Gee led a trip to Carroll Cave to the lunchroom with the goals of replacing the batteries and memory card in the bat roost logger in the lunchroom, replacing batteries and memory card of the light intrusion detector at the ladder, collecting water samples, and introducing cavers to Carroll Cave. All were accomplished. Attendees were Bill Gee, Tristin Whetstine, Sarah Petersen, Caleb Mundwiller, Erica Hroblok, Martin Carmichael, and Angie Wooden.



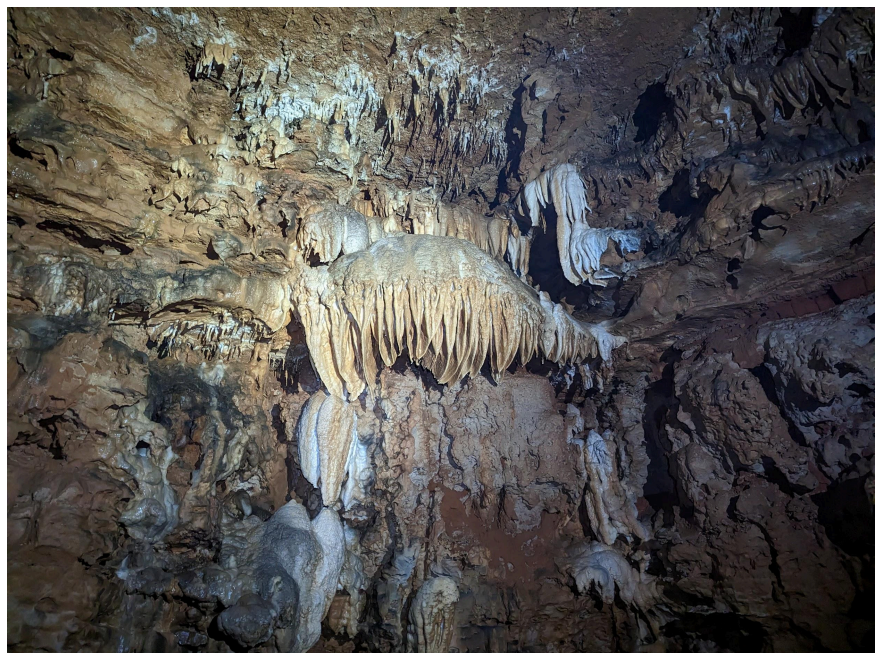
Erica and I arrived around 9AM, while the others were already there gearing up. It was oh so very chilly. We scuttled to the silo for protection from the spicy wind to start gearing up. It



took me what felt like 20 minutes to get my stupid cleats on! Bill gave those using the cable stoppers a quick run down on how to operate them. Martin was the first one to the bottom. Bill assisted with the rappelling. Rappelling went smoothly. Unlike my first trip to Carroll, I rappelled with confidence. Didn't shake in my boots this time. While waiting for the others to rappel down, some members did some exploring in the near

vicinity. Once everyone was successfully down the shaft, we made our way towards the bat roost detector. There were many beautiful formations to photograph, and I tried my best not to slow us down while taking pictures.

The water barrier was fun - lower than I expected. We ran into some fun mud crossings, and were waist deep at one point. Once we made it to the bat roost detector, some of us felt oddly compelled to eat lunch near the mounds of bat shit. Who knows.... Maybe sprinkling a little guano on your sandwich would help boost the immune system. Tristin, Erica and I ventured onwards to a cool little formation area while waiting for the others to finish up their lunch.



We took longer than the others would've liked so they herded us back, and we made our way back to check out Thunder Falls. Crossing the water barrier this time, I got a taste of what it's like to smack my shin into a rock ledge while trying to hurry and photograph the others crossing the barrier (Bill did warn us about this).



(Photo by Diana Dawson, right as I smacked my shin on a rock ledge in the water)

Angie was running out of steam, so we went on to Thunder Falls while Martin stayed with her to take a break. We made it to Thunder Falls, and had some fun swimming and admiring the falls. We made our way to the exit right after this.



Spring 2023 MSS Meeting and Spanish Steps Cave Survey Trip

- Date: 3/26/2023
- Location: Spanish Steps Cave
- Goals: Survey Spanish Steps Cave
- Participants: Shawn Williams, Krista Bartel, Lawrence Ireland, Kohl Mitchell, Jessica Shoffner
- Time In: 11:30 AM
- Time Out: 4:30 PM
- Bio Count: 1 dark-sided salamander, 1 spring peeper frog, multiple worms, beetles, & centipedes
- Report Written By: Kohl Mitchell

Four Chouteau cavers made the trip down to the Spring 2023 MSS meeting in Rolla - MSS liaison Rita Worden, plus Caleb Mundwiller, Diana Dawson, and myself. We all arrived around 8:30, and socialized with new and old friends alike before the meeting started at about 9. The meeting lasted about an hour, and after that came presentations on the Valles Mines survey project and geology for cavers, from Alex Litsch and Spike Crews, respectively.

Caleb, Diana and I got some lunch at the Tater Patch across the road, and got back just in time for Dan Lamping's presentation on the Love Cave project. I found this presentation particularly interesting, as it contained some Missouri caving history that I had never heard about before. After this came the MCKC meeting, and after that was over, Caleb and Diana headed back to Columbia. Rita and I, meanwhile, headed to the Public House in Rolla with several other cavers, and a good time was had by all.

The next morning, we got a slow start, and after some brunch at Waffle House, we made our way to the cave. Rita met us at the cave but decided to head on home, so the rest of us - Krista Bartel, Shawn Williams, Lawrence Ireland, Jessica Shoffner, and I began to work. This is an interesting cave - a small footprint, but several different levels, each forming a crescent-shape before dropping down to a lower level through a small hole in the floor or low on the wall. It is situated in a sinkhole in a losing stream, and intakes an incredible amount of water. Krista's team started the survey, while Shawn and I began digging on an interesting debris choke near the entrance that almost certainly continues - it obviously takes a ton of water, but there's no clear area that the water goes.

This was a very awkward dig, and it wasn't too long before we hardly had any room left to put the debris that we got out. We were digging through four feet of leaves, sticks, and mud in places, but we just couldn't find any going cave. Eventually, both of us were worn out and quite cold, from the constant dripping water in that passage. We left the cave around 1:30, as did Krista's team. Shawn and I returned to our vehicles to layer up before we went back in to start a survey from the end of the cave, with the goal to meet Krista somewhere in the middle.

We made slow but steady progress, getting somewhere between 60 to 80 feet surveyed before Krista met up with us at around the halfway point from where we'd started after our lunch break. At this point, while I finished my sketch, Krista and Lawrence pushed a low lead near the end of the cave a few more feet until it ended at a downwards passage, presumably to another lower level, that was sumped. We left, with the hope to return in a dry period to check out the sump. After a delicious burger at Hopper's in Waynesville, I made the long drive back to Ralls County.