

# CASCADE CAVER



Cascade Grotto of the National Speleological Society

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## Welcome

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*“I was so happy to have  
found the Cascade  
Grotto, because I was  
so eager to start caving  
after I moved here”*

*-Member*



Red Cave formations. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).

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Tom climbing out of Flute Cave (Photo by Sarah Truebe).

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# Mapping on Cave Ridge, Aug 14-16, 2015

By Thomas Evans

Friday morning Jesse Houser picked up Sarah Truebe and me at Aaron Staven's house at around 9:45 AM. The prior evening Sarah and I had flown in to Seatac and crashed at Aaron Staven's house because he lives close to the airport. We drove up to Snoqualmie Pass and stopped at Danny Miller's house to drop off some gear and park the car. The weather was slowly deteriorating, so we started hiking up the ridge as soon as we could. Unfortunately it started to drizzle soon into the hike, so we were all quite wet when we reached the summit. So we spent the rest of the day in our tents, drying off, warming up, and eating food to keep us warm. Originally we had planned to map a small cave that evening, but none of us felt like doing anything other than getting warm.

Saturday morning brought overcast weather, so all three of us slept in and continued to recover from the previous day. Once we were all awake, well fed, and slowly getting board, we geared up and visited Red Cave because it is close to the summit, not cold, and quit beautiful. To make access to the balcony easier, we rigged a short rope from a large rock flake on the floor and ran it up and over the floor of the balcony. Originally we had not planned on rigging the cave, so this is an excellent example of what can be accomplished safely when members of a caving party bring minimal equipment and know how to use it effectively. When we left the cave we pulled out quite a bit of trash, including some old cave registers and flagging tape.

Our goal was to map over the weekend, so we walked back toward and past Red Cave, and started mapping Norton Cave. Norton is a short cave with three entrances and a short pit at the bottom. We surveyed from about (cont. on pg 11 2:15 to 6:00 PM, and once again used our minimal gear to access and map the pit at the bottom (Jesse dropped the pit as I was a human anchor at the top). It should be noted that the pit at the bottom is not down climbable, and really does require a rope. At this point we stopped for dinner at the summit.

After refreshment we headed down to Ice Cave and started mapping around 8 PM. Ice Cave had the least ice I had ever seen in the decade I have been caving on Cave Ridge. Where the biggest ice formations used to reside there was nothing but rock. I hope this lack of ice may not be a harbinger of what is to come in the future! On the plus side, the pit in Ice Cave was much lower than it has been in the past because the ice plug at the bottom had partially melted. Jesse rappelled the pit and found a lead at the bottom, still not passable due to the ice plug. However, it is possible that Ice Cave may have more extent after climate change has had its way with the ice. We finished the survey around 11:30 PM and headed up to the summit for much earned second dinner.

Sunday morning the ridge was engulfed in a cloud so we got a slow start to the day. (Continued on pages 8 and 9).

“Seriously, there is nothing so magical as a bunch of cavers gathering in one place to have fun. “

- Thomas Evans



The entrance to Second Cave after partially dug out (Photo by Sarah Truebe).

## Sport and Project Caving on Cave Ridge, Aug 20-23, 2015

By Thomas Evans

This weekend was a party on Cave Ridge. Seriously, there is nothing so magical as a bunch of cavers gathering in one place to have fun. We had so many people on Cave Ridge that we nearly qualified as a regional. It was that cool. ;-)

Sarah Truebe and I hiked up Cave Ridge Thursday evening and got to the summit around sundown. We left most of our camping gear up there from the previous weekend, so we were able to get dinner started and settle in nearly immediately. This day was far more representative of a summer weekend on the ridge because it was clear, warm, and inviting.

We planned to meet Jesse Houser on his way up the ridge on Friday afternoon, so we took our time getting ready in the morning. There was quite a bit of recovering from the previous day's hike and the previous week of hiking. Jesse was delayed a bit, so we met him down at the base of the hanging valley around 3:30 PM and got ready to map Flute Cave. Just before we got underground we ran into a large tourist group hiking up the ridge. They had been up the ridge many times before, and frequently went spelunking up there when they hiked up the ridge. We chatted for a while to get them involved in the grotto and organized caving with unknown results. After schmoozing for a while we (cont. on pg. 7)



Happy cavers! (Photo by Mariana Tomas).

## Caving in Croatia's Karst

By Mariana Tomas

May 2014 is when I finally got to cave above my hometown, Makarska (region of Dalmatia) in Croatia. The cave itself is found in the Biokovo mountain, which is also a national Nature Park. It was my dream since I was 15 to cave in this part of the world, but since life had taken me on a different journey; I was thrilled that dream finally came true. The trip was lead by the amazing folks from the climbing/caving club Ekstrem Makarska, who I contacted online prior to arriving. They were great fun to be around, great sports, and athletes - the hike up was nothing to them! There were 7 cavers on this trip, including myself. I was wondering why they suggested that I have an extra t-shirt for the trip...

The approach to the cave which is found at approx. 1000 m ( 3900 ft) elevation level started with the 2.5-3 hr approach that could be described as third hiking, third scrambling, and third climbing (sideways with assistance of steel cabling bolted into the rock). At the end of the approach, it was abundantly clear why the t-shirt was necessary - I was drenched in sweat! I also found out that the cave was used as a command center of the local group of resistance fighters (Partisans) during the WWII. We took a break for lunch, and found some wild-grown asparagus all around us to compliment our sandwiches.

The cave itself starts with a vertical drop of about 8 m (26 ft), which leads into a great room. On the right is a an opening next to the wall of stalactites which leads into a smaller, but magnificent room, where a tower of stalactites rises to the ceiling, with a "window" through which you expect to see Rapunzel let down her hair... Many draperies, stalactites and stalagmites. Parts of the great room had a surface lake with floor that is covered with "cauliflower" look-alikes of white formations, a couple of mountain goat skeletons, broken formations fallen off the ceiling, and several centipedes.

Further parts of the cave require some squeezing through a narrow opening, where you have to pull your body weight up; sideways, holding onto extremely slippery and wet limestone rock. (I had to get some assistance here, and vertical gear had to come off.) Once through the squeeze, remainder of the cave consists of several drops which can be climbed down without rope, (although not entirely trivial) and they end at the huge (cont on pg. 10-11)

The Krjava cave was used as the command center by the local unit of resistance fighters (Partisans) during the WWII.

Brad drove  
over 15,000  
miles this year,  
just go caving.

His effort has  
paid off in 21  
new caves!



Lava "roses" (Photo by Brad Hutchinson).

## Caver Highlight: Brad Hutchinson

By Mariana Tomas

As one of the Grotto officers, I have had the opportunity to see the dedication, enthusiasm, and sheer excitement that **Brad Hutchinson** brings to our group of Pacific Northwest cavers. I decided to highlight his accomplishments in the past year as people often think that there are no trips organized, and/or that there is nothing fun to see in the lava tubes. Neither one is true, and Brad is a great example of what that means.

Brad has not only attended most of our meetings, but he has been out caving for 22 weekends (out of 48, as of writing this) which is no small feat for someone who has to drive from Bellingham to Trout Lake (347 miles, one way) to go caving! Some of Brad's accomplishments in 2015:

- February 25: Floating Log 1054ft crawl no breakdown, nice formations at the end
- March: Ape Cave clean up in March
- August 16: Top Shelf almost 1200 ft, 90% walking in 2 passages, a side room with formations and a dirt filled end
- October 3: Deadhorse explored 80% in 5.5hr and added 50ft of new passage, 2 people
- October 24: Falls Creek and a near by cave, 4 people. 10/4 Wonderland, Resurrection, J N R and 3 new people
- November 14: Deadhorse clean up, 21 people, And a Spear point was found in the maze!!!

Finally, Brad took part in discovery of 21 new caves in the company of Ahrlin Bauman, Oscar Bauman, Claude Koch; in the 22 weekends, which almost amounts to 1 new cave each weekend!

While Pacific Northwest has mostly horizontal lava tubes (and not the splendidly decorated limestone caves), Brad's accomplishments show that they are well worth exploring, and that our little Grotto has something to show for the past year. Thank you, Brad for you dedication!

# Caving in Tennessee

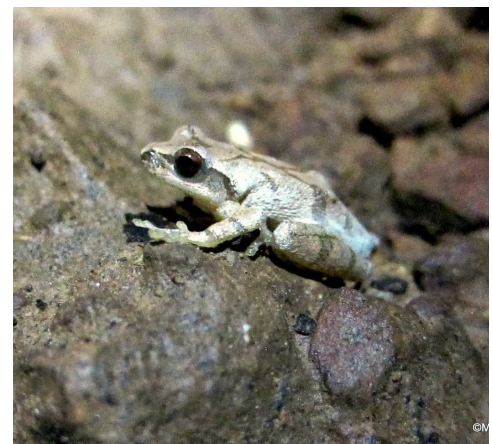
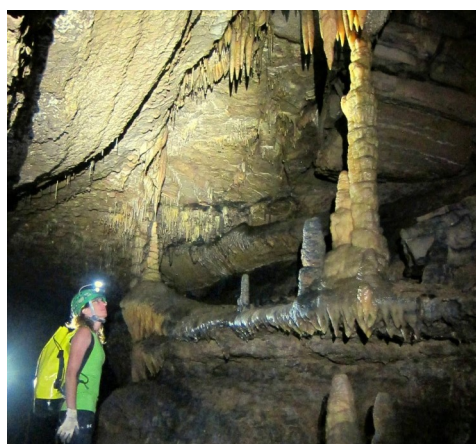
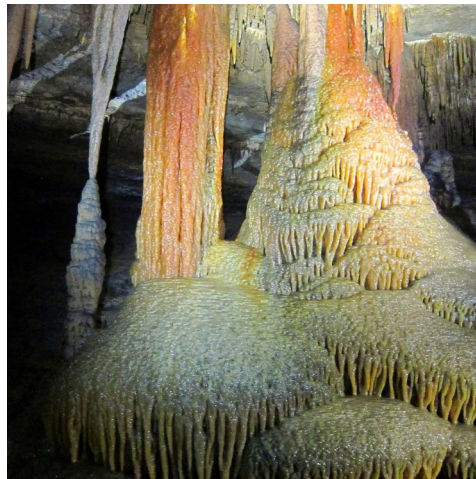
By Mariana Tomas

I had a wonderful opportunity to cave in Tennessee on my birthday this year, and Jessica Preston and Mark Hobbs were my generous hosts. Both of them are NSS members, and SCCI members FWIW.

The first trip was a horizontal cave called the Blowhole, which they have done on July 26th, and second in a vertical cave, Dan's Abyss on July 27th, 2015.

Both caves were exquisitely decorated. Blowhole has offered so much in terms of decorations that it would take days to cover it in detail, and Dan's Abyss had many critters in it, namely salamanders, cave crickets, frogs, and even cave crawfish which was unexpected as there is no running water in the cave.

Examples of decorations are wildlife are shown below. Thank you to Jessica and Mark!



mapped Flute Cave for a few hours resulting in considerably more passage than I originally expected. We ended with two leads, one that is quite small and will require a small caver, and another that is right under an unstable large rock that must be stabilized to push the lead further. It is clear that this cave is considerably longer than I was told when I first started caving on the ridge. This observation piqued our interest, so Sarah and I started digging open Second Cave while Jesse was getting ready to hike up the ridge. There is also more passage in Second Cave than I was originally told (more on this below).

All three of us hiked to the summit, dropped our gear and Jesse and I went down to the lake on the far side of the ridge for water. Sarah stayed at camp and got food out and otherwise prepped camp for our return. It took a while to pump enough water for the three of us, so Jesse and I were gone for quite a while. When we got back, James Mooreshire, Berry Sprecht, Ken Stoops, and Mark Mayovski had arrived. We all ate a very late dinner and passed out in anticipation of good caving the following day.

In the morning James hiked down the ridge to help others find their way back up again, which left Jesse, Berry, Sarah, and I to visit Hellhole. Mark was not vertical so he made the trek to get water then visited Red Cave while the four of us poked around Hellhole. While poking around we ran into a group of four spelunkers who were rappelling on ATC's, sharing equipment/harnesses, and using glow sticks to determine if their ropes had reached the floor. They claimed to be affiliated with the Cascade Grotto, but none of us believed that. It is clear the caves are getting considerably more use than they have in the past, so we should be going out of our way to educate those we run into on the ridge! Particularly because this group of four was making a video of their adventure that they were sharing with one of their college classes! After visiting nearly the entire cave (Jesse and Berry probably went through nearly the entire cave) we headed up to the summit and ate.

The group that hiked up that morning had arrived around 11:30 AM and consisted of Talon Swanson, Jeff Kruse, Miki Kanada, and James. While Talon and Miki were waiting for the others to get ready, they visited Red Cave. When everyone was ready, James, Jeff, Mark, Miki, and Talon visited Newton Cave, above the first pitch. When they got out they met us at the top of the ridge as we were eating lunch after our visit to Hellhole. Mariana Tomas and Chrissy Richards had gotten a later start than the other group, so they met up with all of us at this time.

After lunch we divided into the same two groups, with Talon's group visiting Hellhole and Jesse's group visiting Danger Cave. When the Danger group passed by Hellhole we saw the group of four spelunkers had gotten out of the cave, and we provided rope for Mariana and Chrissy to drop Hellhole, then we moved on to Danger. The Danger group went down to the end of the cave to see how difficult it would be to finish the Danger Cave map. While there is certainly quite a bit more passage to map, we probably have another day of mapping in that cave until the map is finished (minus any high leads in the walls or ceiling). After we accomplished our goals we returned to the summit and got dinner started around the campfire.

The Hellhole group got back around 8 PM, so we all ate around the campfire with lively conversation. A few people decided to head down the ridge after dinner, so James, and Berry hiked down that evening. Berry was James' ride, so I think Berry had to be home Sunday, hence why they left so late at night.

Sunday morning Sarah, Jesse, Talon, and I went to the gear cache so everyone knew where it is, and we pulled everything out to inventory it. It is clear that the cache needs some TLC, so next summer we should open up the cache, clean it out, dry everything, and replace everything in water tight containers.

While we were messing around at the gear cache, Miki, Mariana, Chrissy, and Ken went down to purify water, and Mark walked down to his car. When we rendezvoused at the summit again, we assembled a group to go to Exhalation Cave. Jesse, Talon, Miki, and Ken went to Exhalation with me along to make sure they made it to the right place. I hoofed it back to the summit, finished packing our gear, and Sarah and I headed down the ridge to catch a flight at Seatac.

When we got to the bottom of the hanging valley, we started mapping Second Cave. The goal was to map it then head down the ridge. However, I was able to dig out the deepest portion of the cave and slip through the low point (often a sump) into another ~30 feet of passage. Second Cave has between 40 and 50 feet of passage, and is considerably longer than I have been told. This cave needs to be explored, though it does require a low water table to get through the low point. We stopped mapping and spent a bit of time making the entrance bigger for a mapping trip next year. It should not take more than a couple of hours to map the Second Cave.

After visiting Exhalation, Jesse showed Talon, Ken, and Miki Cascade Cave (which they visited), then he headed down the ridge and met up with Sarah and I on the trail. We went out for food, then Jesse gave us a ride to the airport.

We decided to take a brief tour of the caves in the sinkhole plain near Danger Cave. We walked by Hellhole, X-rated, and Sarah and Jesse popped into Danger Cave to look around the cave above the pitch. They decided the cave was in fact dangerous (debatable), and I showed them to Danger Annex, a small cave about 30 feet to the east of Danger Cave. After a brief tour of Danger Annex we walked over to Exhalation Cave and we sent Jesse in to take a look around. There has always been quite a bit of air blowing out of Exhalation Cave resulting in a desire to find out where the air coming from. Jesse was clearly excited about the quantity of air blowing out of Exhalation, so hopefully we can mount a mapping trip into that cave sometime in the near future. We walked back to X-rated cave and started mapping (~1:45 PM) it from the backdoor mapping outward. The backdoor is a tight squeeze and there is a rock fall hazard, so people who use this entrance should make sure to garden the passage when they get their feet on the floor to make sure rocks do not fall on them when they get down onto the floor and into the passage. The mapping was unremarkable (finished around 3:50 PM), though the cave has more passage than Dave McElmurry and I originally thought.

During mapping I took a few minutes to poke around a sinkhole to the southeast of the front door of X-rated, and I found a small cave had opened up in the base. It should be noted that I have walked by this sinkhole many times, and this was the first time the base was open. It appears the feature had opened up the past year or two. I went down into it and found a small cave that trended more or less east/west with not much passage. This karst feature fits the description of a feature in Caves of Washington at the top of page 30.

“About 100 feet west of Danger Cave, a descent of approximately 30 feet in breakdown in an open fissure leads to a small linear solution cavern about 40 feet long, trending east and west. It has no features of especial interest.”

I know Danny Miller has been looking for this feature for a while, and we both thought that X-rated cave may be this feature. However, finding this new hole suggests that we were both wrong, and that the feature had been filled in and only recently opened again. This suggests that sinkholes on the ridge open and close periodically so we should keep an eye on them because more caves are probably at the base of a few of the sinkholes up there. Also I only think it appropriate that we acknowledge that Dr. Halliday knew of this feature long before its rediscovery. It is also appropriate that I point out that Dr. Halliday was instrumental in the exploration of Cave Ridge, and yet there are no names on the ridge that recognize his contributions to caving on the ridge.

After mapping X-rated Cave we climbed back to the summit, packed up our gear, and headed down the ridge via the hanging valley. This gave me the opportunity to give Jesse a tour of the caves in the hanging valley (First, Second, Flute, Speleogen, Dad's, Prospectors Cave, and Prospectors Pit). While Jesse and I played mountain goats and looked for the caves on the hillside, Sarah stayed in the hanging valley and enjoyed the minerals in the wash.

With the tour of Cave Ridge concluded, we headed down the ridge to food, shelter, and heated rooms. The weekend was great, with good company, even amid suboptimal weather. We managed to visit every cave on the ridge that we presently know about, so it is possible to see and experience all the caves in a three day period if desired. Moreover, it is good to have more people know where the caves are up on the ridge so cave location information is not lost for future generations of cavers. The Cave Ridge Project is slowly moving forward, and when it is finished with the bulk of the cave mapping, there will be an amazing resource for people to access so they can plan cave trips on Cave Ridge. I encourage everyone to participate in the project so that we can map the caves in a timely manner and provide a resource for the entire northwest caving community in the future!



It should be pointed out that there was not much water at the top of the ridge because it has been so dry this year. In future dry years it would be useful for people who go up earlier in the year to put snow in big flexible containers and leave them at the summit so there is water there when needed later in the summer.

The weekend was a blast with a ton of good friends and good caves. From the experience I realized that we really need to spend some time on the ridge in the next few years to really get more work done on the Cave Ridge Project. So, we decided to make a push the next few years to get more done, so we invite other cavers to come up and help! There will be more information in the future, as well as more trip reports and cave maps!



Formations in entrance to Hell Hole. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).



The famous skull from Cascade Cave. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).



Broken formation from the cave ceiling. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).



Getting the vertical gear off to continue exploration of the cave. (Photo by Zeljko Tahi Medjurecan).

(Caving in Croatia's Karst, continued)

vertical drop at the end of the passage. This is where our trip ended, and we turned around.

This was no trivial trip, and it took us an entire day. I am thankful that my sprained knee cooperated, and that besides few bruises, nothing hurt. Thanks to the Željko Tahi Međurečan, who organized this amazing experience, and all the folks who joined! Would love to host you in Seattle with Cascade Grotto !



Look up to the Biokovo mountain range. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).



Look down from the approach to the cave, with the view of Makarska and Brac Island. (Photo by Mariana Tomas).

# Cascade Grotto Officers

James Mooreshire, President

Josh Edwards, Vice President

Talon Swanson, Treasurer

Mariana Tomas, Secretary

# Cascade Grotto Meetings

The Cascade Grotto meets on the third Friday of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 pm.

**Our meeting location is currently Arts Room B in the Tukwila Community Center, which is located at 12424 42nd Ave S, Seattle, WA 98168.**

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about us, our trips, meetings, and members:

### Cascade Grotto

P.O. Box 66623, Seattle, WA 98166

Email us at:

[cascade\\_grotto@caves.org](mailto:cascade_grotto@caves.org)

Visit us on the web at:

<http://cascadegrotto.caves.org>

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