TCMA PASSAGES

FALL 2002

Western Oaks Karst Preserve Opens

by Julie Jenkins

By the end of the day, about 400 people had walked the trail of the Western Oaks Karst Preserve, talking to exhibitors, visiting the caves and enjoying the day. To celebrate National Groundwater Awareness Week (March 17-23), staff members of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, located in Austin, along with the TCMA coordinated the grand opening of the preserve on March 23, 2002. The event was a huge success, not only due to the large number of visitors, but because of the overwhelming positive response from the those who came to learn about our local Austin karst and caves and in particular about the caves in their neighborhood.

The preserve occupies approximately 18 acres of land set aside as mitigation by Lumberman's Investments Corporation, Inc., developers of the New Villages of Western Oaks subdivision. Several small caves are located in the preserve, one of which is significant for its biology. Get Down Cave is home to the fast moving, elusive Rhadine Beetle, classified as a species of concern by US Fish and Wildlife. Equinox Cave, located in the bed of a tributary creek that runs the length of the preserve, is the primary recharge cave for the preserve. The TCMA has a long history with Lumberman's and has managed several caves in their Buttercup Creek subdivision located northwest of Austin in Cedar Park.

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Western Oaks Karst Preserve: *This sign greets visitors to the preserve.*

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View from the Palit

by Linda Palit

Sitting in front of the computer, I am throwing a rubber ducky for my dog, Ixta, trying to find words to communicate without a dozen cliché's. I sometimes feel like Ixta looks to me, chasing the same ducky as it is thrown over and over again making little or no progress. My "ducky" is preserving, protecting, and making more Texas cave accessible. Some times I have the perseverance of Ixta, chasing the duck over and over, bothering anybody to have them "throw it to me" and sometimes I am the onlooker wondering if doing all this movement is really getting nearer the goal. Ixta takes huge joy in the process, and I try to do the same, hoping that the result will also bring satisfaction.

So what is TCMA doing now, and for the last few years? We have:

- Purchased two caves in northwest Bexar County from the U.S. Marshals. Hopefully, they will provide a little caving and a little protection of an endangered environment.
- Developed a web page that is usually up and running, and provides some information about the organization and about caving.
- Learned more about conservation easements and ways to assist landowners in saving their caves and saving money.
- Developed a relationship with some conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, making us able to investigate land looking for caves on their property.
- Continued educational initiatives concerning caves and their resources.
- Begun the process of re-gating Robber Baron Cave, stabilizing the entrance, and wildscaping the grounds.
- Raised a few thousand dollars for the purchase of more caves.
- Worked with the city of Austin on planning for their caves and cave preserves.
- Established an ongoing relationship with Texas Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, voicing our view that caving and cave conservation are eternally entwined.
- Published *Passages*, our bi-yearly news magazine for the last few years.
- Serve on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Recovery Team to identify means and assist with the conservation of the endangered cave species in Bexar County.
- Hosted a fieldtrip for a national conference on bat caves.

What do we want to do? Protect caves, buy caves, visit caves, educate the public on the value of caves, gate caves **if** needed, and generally preserve and wisely use the incredible underground. It takes lots of money and man-hours to do all this. Caving gets in the way of my conservation activities and working gets in the way of life. But there are acres and acres of karst, lots of caving to do, and lots of work on those activities begging to be done. Thinking about all the "duckies" TCMA activities have "brought back" in the last few years, I'll keep chasing that ducky, and hope many other people will do the same.

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PO Box 202853
Austin, Texas, 78270-2853

Editor:
Joe Mitchell
11463 Enchanted Sunset Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78253
e-mail:<joemitchell@satx.rr.com>

Back issues of the *Passages* are available online at the TCMA website at www.cavetexas.org/tcma

WESTERN OAKS *(from p. 1)*

The event was open to the public, although much effort was invested in reaching the local residents surrounding the preserve and schools in the neighborhood. The Western Oaks neighborhood is located on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone and thus was the ideal target group for educating about the impact humans have on the recharge zone and about prudent landscaping practices that minimize negative affects to our aquifer.

Several local agencies and organizations involved in protection of the karst and associated species participated in the event. Among those who had booths was the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District, who brought a groundwater model that the kids could actually interact with, a model that shows how the water travels through the aquifer. A full size cast of a dinosaur footprint was on display from the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department. City biologists brought live specimens of the endangered Barton Springs Salamander, which were available for a few hours of viewing in the early morning and were then returned to the safety of their cool laboratory "aquifer" environment.

Later that morning, after it had warmed up, Bat Conservation International arrived with several different species of bats. Needless to say, everyone was excited and amazed by these little night flying mammals, and BCI staff was inundated with bat questions.

Western Oaks Karst Preserve: *Displays describe the caves at the opening day event.*

Texas Cave Management Association took up the task of guiding tours to and through the various caves and answering hundreds of questions about the aquifer, caves, recharge zone, and the TCMA. A veritable feeding frenzy ensued after several kids asked if they could have one of the hundreds of goat bones found in the caves. Before long, the parents had become involved, each leaving the preserve with a memento of their experience and having unknowingly helped make Live Oak Cave just a bit larger by the removal of the bones. Our thanks to the neighbors for their help! TCMA had literally made the whole preserve into a booth by adding signage and pictures along the trails and at each cave and feature, creating the potential for self-guided touring as well as being able to ask questions of the TCMA staff. On hand to represent the TCMA, was vice president Julie Jenkins, and board members Bill Russell and Aimee Beveridge. board member, Faith . Faith Watkins, of Bat Conservation International and recent newcomer to Austin caving, along with James Lopez from the UT Grotto, helped out by doing a reconnaissance trip into Get Down Cave. Faith and James 'wowed' the non-caver audience

See WESTERN OAKS next page

WESTERN OAKS *(from p. 3)*

who watched their descent. Later, we discovered from Faith that there was a dead raccoon in the bottom of the cave. (Whew, or should I say pee-u; glad we didn't send any of the visitors down to find that bloated, odiferous display!)

The National Wildflower Research Center had a booth and answered questions about xeriscaping. Splash, of the Austin Nature and Science Center, brought an interactive game to teach kids about the hydrologic cycle. The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve staff was present to educate neighbors about preservation efforts for the Golden Cheek Warbler and Blackcapped Vireo. Texas Parks and Wildlife was also on hand with a wonderful education display and numerous handouts about plant and animal species in Texas, with an emphasis on endangered species.

All had a fabulous time; hundreds of people who otherwise would not go underground actually entered and visited the caves. TCMA is proud to have been a significant contributor in yet another urban karst preserve and fulfilling its mission of cave preservation and education for our Texas caves and karst.

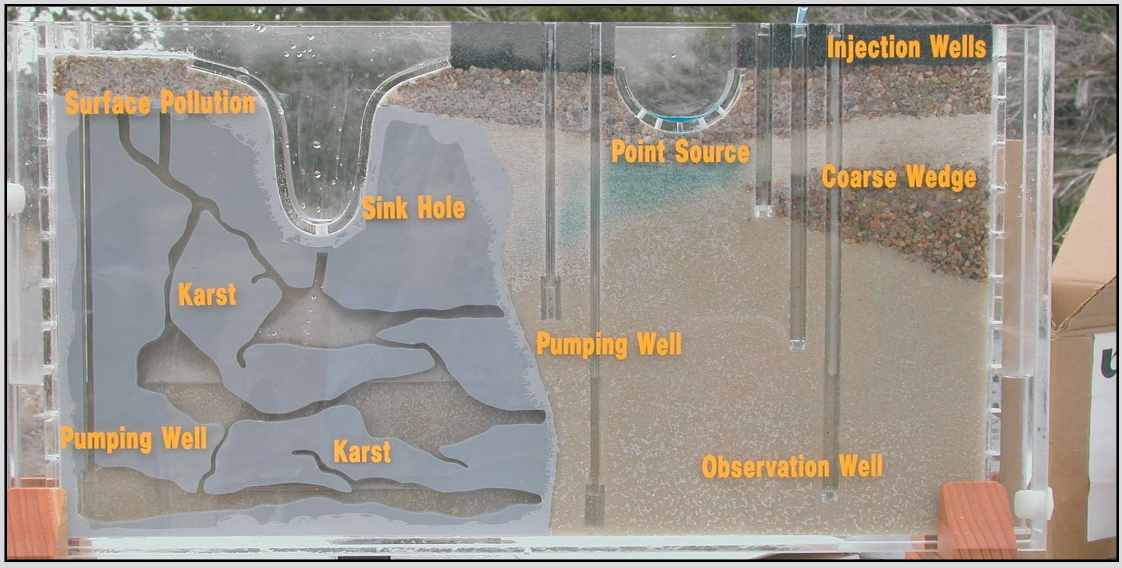
Caves of the Western Oaks Karst Preserve

The TCMA Karst Groundwater Model - See it at the TCMA booth at TCR

A fun, educational, hands-on demonstration of many groundwater concepts including:

- How groundwater moves.
- Flow rate of groundwater is dependent on the type of aquifer (eg: karst, gravel, fine sand).
- Human activity at or near land surface can contaminate groundwater.

If you are interested in borrowing the model please contact Aimee Beveridge at aimeebev@hotmail.com or call her at 512-463-7995 during the day or 512-444-4881 in the evenings.



Robber Baron Entrance Project Update

by Evelynn Mitchell

The committee organized to rebuild the entrance to Robber Baron has been more active this fall than in the past year. The group has already held two meetings in September to discuss potential plans, and has slated October 21h as the date of the next meeting. At the last meeting, the group reviewed the project objectives to be certain that any plan that is chosen will meet all the goals that are required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Grant, and the caving community.

The goals of the project are to:

- Provide a system where nutrients can filter into the cave and allow for leaf litter into the cave
- Provide a system where air circulation can be restored
- Provide a system where the cave is protected from vandals
- Restore native species of plants to the area surrounding the cave
- Allow for safe exploration and excavation in the cave
- Monitor and control the fire ant population

In order to achieve these objectives, TCMA has a grant of $6500 from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, which requires that the recipient match the grant in labor costs. Thus, any plan to reopen Robber Baron must be within the budgetary confinements of the grant, and will require a good amount of labor and time from the caving community.

The committee is currently exploring three different plans to change the entrance design. One involves placing a concrete standpipe into the entrance for human use along with additional smaller pipes for water and leaf debris. The other two plans each involve digging out the trash debris filling the sinkhole to open up the natural entrance further. One of these is evaluating digging out the entire sinkhole, while the other plan would involve digging out a portion of the sinkhole and adding to the current terraced design. Both of the dig options are planned open up the entrance far enough to walk into.

Each of the plans is currently being evaluated for cost, impact and feasibility. The next meeting will be at the sinkhole to examine the site more thoroughly and take measurements of the current opening.

Evelynn Mitchell will serve as the project manager to coordinate the planning and execution of the work, and to collect the totals on man-hours and money spent on the project. If you would like to volunteer your services in working on the project once the plan has been established, she can be contacted at evelynn@satx.rr.com or by phone at (210)679-8408.

Photos by Daniel Zucker

The Robber Baron Cave Entrance: *sinkhole (top) and bunker closeup (bottom).*

MINUTES
Board of Directors
TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
Meeting Date: Saturday, September 14, 2002
Location: Home of Linda Palit in San Antonio

Directors/Officers Attending	Absent:
Linda Palit, Pres. & Director (Jan 2000-Dec 2002)	Jay Jorden, Director (Jan 2002-Dec 2004)
Bob Burnett, Director (Jan 2000-Dec 2002)	Bill Russell, Director (Jan 2002-Dec 2004)
Sue Schindel, Treas & Direc (Jan 2001-Dec 2003)	Julie Jenkins, VP & Director (Jan 2000-Dec 2002)
Joe Mitchell, Director (Jan 2002-Dec 2004)	Aimee Beveridge, Director (Jan 2001-2003
	Walter Feaster, Director (Jan 2001-2003
	Noted Attendees:
	Ron Ralph, Past Director
	Susan Souby, Secretary, w/ proxy for Jay Jorden

Opening

The meeting was called to order by president Linda Palit.

I. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on April 27, 2002 at the TSA Spring Convention at Colorado Bend State Park were approved with the correction/clarification submitted by George Veni about the 'Laurel Ridge Caves from US Marshall Service,' Item F. under Old Business. George added the following: The "Laurel Ridge Caves" are located in the rolling Oaks Subdivision on Laurel Ridge Lane. They include Obvious Little Cave, Niche Cave, and World Newt Cave. Chimney Cricket Cave and 4L Cave are nearby but probably on a different property. Niche Cave and World Newt Cave are described in Caves of Bexar County, second edition. Only Obvious Little Cave contains endangered species. Chimney Cricket Cave, 4L Cave, and World Newt Cave are unlikely to contain endangered species. Niche Cave may prove to be a more significant size cave, to possibly include the listed species, once the trash is dug out of its entrance. I would support TCMA acquiring the caves even if they do not offer any notable recreational caving opportunity.

II. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Sue Schindel reported that TCMA now has a balance of $16,297.48. She just received notice that TCMA was paid by Camp Bullis for January 2002. Sue has paid Peter Sprouse for invoices submitted through May 2002. Sue will pay Peter for more recent invoices submitted. Sue received a check from BCI (Bat Conservation International) for $805.00 and reimbursed Ron Ralph for his expenses of $505.28 resulting in an income of $299.72 for the BCI cave gate field trip. TCMA has been paid by Lumberman's (LIC) for the invoices Sue submitted for work done in the Buttercup Creek Subdivision in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

III. Other Committee Reports

A. Membership

Susan reported that there have been 6 new memberships and one donation of $100.00 (Explorer's category) received since the last meeting at the TSA Spring Convention. Susan will mail out membership renewal notices and requests for donations from life members before TCR. Susan reported that there are about 50 current members and 60 life and honorary members. Susan will contact Joe Ranzau about the status of the TSA membership list and the possibility of using that list as a mailing list for contacting potential new members or old members who have not renewed.

B. Cave Acquisition

Joe Mitchell recently checked on the availability of two properties for possible acquisition. One is a property near Bracken Cave with a house. Joe contacted the realtor and landowner. The asking price is $250,000 - 300,000 and they require a signed agreement of our interest to look at the property. Joe believes that the cave has been surveyed by a geologist from Corpus, but reported that George Veni doesn't know who it is. There is no known name for the cave.

The second property includes Deepwater Cave. It includes 2 lots in a subdivision in Comal County on the north side of the Guadalupe River near Hwy 281. The subdivision is not developed; there is no infrastructure and the survey markers appear to have been in place for a long time. Joe found 2 entrances to the cave. The entrances are on one lot and the cave on another, lots 19 and 20. George has a map of the cave, but it does not show 2 entrances. Linda described the cave as very nice with vertical drops; an upstream lead that has not been pushed and downstream passage that goes quite a way. There is bad air in the summer. Linda said it would be a good cave for a recreational cave. Linda and Joe have sent a letter from TCMA to the owners/developers stating our interest in the cave and asking for a meeting.

IV. Old Business

A. Bullis - contract and payment schedules

The contract with Camp Bullis will renew in September. Linda has been managing the contract and except for having to resubmit the invoices since January 2002, everything is on target. The new contract includes 4 new caves, increasing the total to 36 caves. The contract includes an increase for the new caves and a 5% cost of living increase. Linda will continue to manage the contract until she has documented the procedure. At that time someone else could take over.

B. Robber Baron Meeting and Project

There will be a meeting at Linda's house on Monday, 9/16 about Robber Baron. The cave has been closed for a year because of instability of the entrance. As a TCMA owned cave, it is the responsibility of the TCMA Board to appoint a project manager for directing the work on the entrance and for proceeding with the US Fish & Wildlife partnership agreement. Linda will facilitate the selection of a project manager. There is some urgency in completing the entrance and beginning the partnership project as the federal

money must be spent by January 2003.

C. 0-9 Well and Amazing Maze

Since Walter Feaster has been ill, Linda will proceed with contacting James Benson & Steve Hartman with UT Lands in Midland to finalize the agreement for TCMA management of 0-9 Well and Amazing Maze. A draft was reviewed by several TCMA board members and an attorney in Austin and returned to Walter earlier in the year. Jay checked on a rider for our insurance that is required in the agreement and it is affordable. When the final agreement is returned to TCMA, the attorney will review it again before being sent to the TCMA board for final approval and signatures.

D. Land Trust Rally

TCMA is leading cave trips on Saturday October 26 and Sunday October 27 as part of the Land Trust Alliance Rally 2002. Linda will contact Julie Jenkins and Bill Russell about leading the trips to Whirlpool Cave and possibly District Park Cave. If Julie and Bill are not able to commit next week, Linda will call Rune and Ron to lead the trips. Several volunteers have committed to participate: Linda will be there both days, Joe Mitchell will help Saturday, and Mark Gee from Dallas will help. The Board discussed providing helmets and lights and charging the Land Trust for use of the equipment. The helmets and lights will come from the UT or Bexar Grottos or possibly be purchased. The Board also discussed providing knee and elbow pads.

E. TCR Publications

Joe will send out a request for articles for the fall issue of Passages. He has an article from Aimee about the karst model and expects to have several additional articles: the 0-9 Well agreement from Linda, the Western Oaks Karst Preserve from Julie or Bill, and the NSS Convention this summer in Maine from Jay.

F. TCR - T-shirts or Other?

The Board agreed that the T-shirt sold last year was handsome and agreed to selling TCMA logo T-shirts but suggested a different type of shirt. Rune will check with Vreeland Graphics on a different style of shirt and a different color. Linda will get the original art for the brochure from Julie and Joe will get additional brochures printed. There are quite a few decals remaining and will not be reprinted at this time. The decals will be given to new or renewing members and sold for $1.00 to others. The tent will be set up as last year. Linda will determine a time and date for the meeting of the Board of Directors and the general membership at TCR and make that time and date known.

G. Marshall's Caves

TCMA sent a check to the U.S. Marshall's for purchase of the confiscated caves in the Rolling Oaks Subdivision on Laurel Ridge Lane. The check has not cleared, and Linda will verify the status of the check and receipt of the titles to the caves. Linda had information on several grant programs that may be appropriate for these caves. See A. Fish Land Incentive Program under New Business.

H. Buttercup Creek Caves

Linda will check with Bill Russell about the status of the work on the Buttercup Creek Caves and the management agreement with Lumberman's (LIC). Bill will determine if Sue should send another invoice to LIC for work done by Mike Wharton in 2001-2002. As Sue reported in the Treasurer's report TCMA received payment for work done in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. Linda will also ask Bill to check on the status of invoices from Mike Wharton.

V. New Business

A. Fish Land Incentive Program - similar to Partner's

Linda distributed information on 2 grants programs that were presented to her by Tannika Engelhard, Fish and Wildlife Biologist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, as programs for which TCMA would be eligible: the Private Stewardship Grants Program (PSGP) and the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). Linda mentioned Robber Baron and the US Marshall's caves as being good candidates for these programs.

B. MOU Edward's

Joe will pursue developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Edward's Aquifer Authority for monitoring and managing caves. Hills and Dells and Valdina Farms Sinkhole were mentioned specifically as candidates for management agreements.

C. Other

Sorcerer's Cave

Linda will check with the Nature Conservancy on the status of Sorcerer's Cave.

Nominations Committee-Terms of 3 Board members expire Dec 2002

Linda appointed a Nominations Committee consisting of Ron Ralph, Joe Mitchell, Sue Schindel, and Susan Souby. The terms of 3 Board members will expire in December 2002, and new members will be elected at the TCR in October. The 3 members whose terms are expiring are Linda Palit, Julie Jenkins, and Bob (Rune) Burnett. The Nominations committee will solicit nominees and present them to the general membership at TCR for a vote. Ten percent of the general membership must be in attendance for the vote to take place.

Reducing the number of the Board of Directors from 9 to 7

The Board discussed the advantages of reducing the number of members of the Board of Directors from 9 to 7 members. One of the advantages mentioned was that fewer Board members would facilitate meetings and allow active and interested members more time to work on specific projects and issues. Committees that would report progress to the Board would direct these projects. Also discussed was that the Board is authorized to appoint officers such as Executive Director, President, Secretary, and Treasurer to help with the administration of the organization. With fewer Board members, the Board would direct committees to work on projects or issues and would direct appointed officers to take care of the administrative issues. The Board reviewed the by-laws regarding changing the number of members of the Board of Directors. This change requires a vote by the general membership on a resolution. Attendance by 10% of the general membership is required to take a vote. The Board concluded discussion by saying that further discussion is needed when more board members could participate.

The meeting was adjourned.

The Board and Officers of the Texas Cave Management Association express their appreciation to the following recent contributors to the TCMA:

New members:
Edward Gemar
Clayton & Janna Griffis
Scott Killen
Logan McNatt
Marvin Miller
Mike Quinn
Chris Saizan
Scott Serur

Special thanks to
Logan McNatt
For his generous donation of an Explorer.

TCMA Board of Directors/Officers 2002

Linda Palit <lkpalit@swbell.net>	President
Julie Jenkins <jjules@ccms.net>	Vice President
Sue Schindel	Treasurer
Susan Souby	Secretary
Aimee Beveridge	Board
R.E. Burnett	Board
Walter Feaster	Board
Jay Jorden	Board
Joe Mitchell	Board/Passages
Bill Russell	Board

Texas Cave Management Association

Since 1985, dedicated to the conservation and protection of our underground resources.

Cave Science - Cave Management - Cave Protection

TCMA welcomes and encourages cavers to become new members. We have dedicated years of field work and research to the preservation and protection of caves for the caver, the community, and the future.

Email: tcma@cavetexas.org
Web Site: www.cavetexas.org/tcma

Regular - $15.00 year
Associate - $10.00 year
(Students Under 21)
Family - $22.50
Institutional (Non-profit) - $50.00
Corporate - $100.00

Texas Cave Management Association Inc
PO Box 202853
Austin, TX 78720-2853