

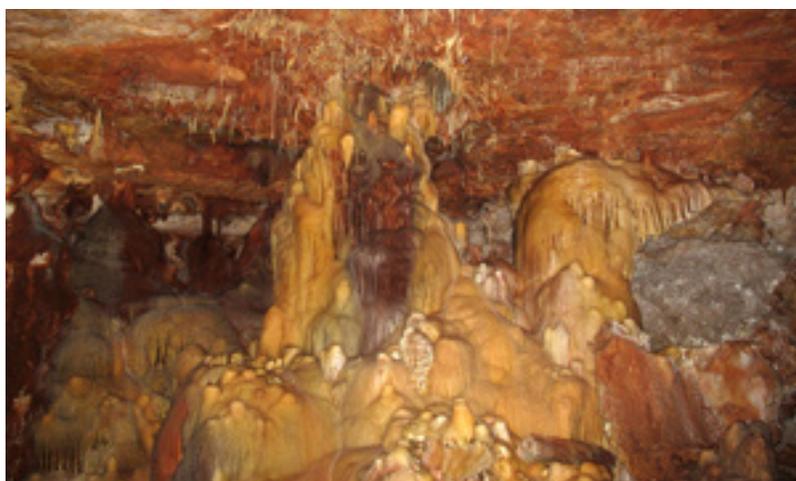


TCMA



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TCMA buys Avery Ranch Cave



Heavily decorated main room at Avery Ranch Cave

We own a new cave! The Texas Cave Management Association Inc. (TCMA) has acquired Avery Ranch Cave in Williamson County, ensuring that this unique underground resource in suburban Austin will continue to be preserved. TCMA, the state's oldest non-profit organization dedicated to the study and management of Texas cave resources, closed on the property just before the beginning of this year following negotiations that began last summer.

The Texas Cave Conservancy, previous owner of the property, had enabled public access to the cave for educational events. John Brooks, TCMA president, said Avery Ranch Cave will continue to be a venue for community outreach

Support TCMA!

At **TSACon 2016** in the Rocksprings, Texas fairgrounds on April 23-24, please join TCMA if you're not already a member. Go to our **auction** (Saturday night), **breakfast** and **meeting** (8 a.m. and 9 a.m. Sunday, respectively).

programs, with a focus on helping people understand the importance of protecting caves and the role karst plays in channeling the area's groundwater.

"If you had to set up a cave to be used for educational purposes, the way Avery Ranch is set up is perfect," Brooks said. "It's great for this type of program."

Discovered in 2001 by contractors excavating a sewer line with a rock trencher, the cave is located at a housing subdivision in far Northwest Austin, north of the Travis-Williamson county line. A set of stairs, lighting and a deck allow visitors to see the one-room cave.

The TCMA acquisition generated news media coverage in Central Texas by the *Austin American-Statesman*, *San Antonio Express-News*, National Public Radio and other broadcasters. An open house for cavers is in the planning stages for this summer at Avery Ranch. Stay tuned for details.

Robber Baron sets records!

By Joe Mitchell, Preserves Coordinator

The sixth Robber Baron Cave open house in San Antonio on April 9 topped attendance and donation records. A total of 546 visitors signed in, with 506 entering the cave. Donations totaled \$3,620.

Donations nearly doubled from the previous open house, when 439 people visited the cave. A shout-out to our 66 volunteers, who coordinated the crowd. And thanks to Edwards Aquifer Authority, Bat Conservation International and St. Mary's University for hosting booths. Besides a brief rain threat, it was a great day!

23rd Punkin Cave Survey Expedition

By Jim Kennedy, Preserves Coordinator

[Continued from Vol. 15, No. 3]

Chris took Matt Zaldivar, Ryan, and Jake back to leads he left on his February survey. This headed to a nice blank spot on the map. They surveyed six shots for 16.21m (2.70 m per shot), but didn't connect back into existing survey. Chris couldn't even fit through one restriction, so he waited while his team finished their survey. Will and Kris took Kathryn over to the start of the Fifty Fathoms survey and mapped another 11 shots for 31.61 m (2.87 m per shot), making a nice loop. There is still more to do in this area. Ellie and Galen took Graham and followed me to the West Maze, where I pointed out 4-5 leads. They surveyed one of them for three shots, adding 6.29m to the cave's length (averaging 2.10m per shot).

Meanwhile, on the surface, Matt Turner worked on the cabin dig with his jackhammer, assisted by Yaz and Jay Jordan. Ann showed up and helped Yaz complete the dinner preparations, for which we were all extremely grateful when we finally got out of the cave after our nine-hour trip. More TCMA Board members were showing up in readiness for the meeting the next morning. We showered, cleaned up from dinner, and watched the tweeky movie, *The Sorcerer and the White Snake*, which included movie snacks. The next morning, I again got up early to start on breakfast (egg McMuffins, sausage biscuits, muffins, fruit, etc.), making sure no one went away hungry. The Board and guests met on the back porch for about an hour or so while the rest of the expedition members started cleaning the cabin. After the meeting, we all packed our personal gear, loaded the vehicles, and finalized the cabin shutdown.

Although there are still hundreds of leads left in Punkin Cave, they take more work to get into and are hard to find for people not familiar with the cave. I have been keeping records, and out of the 96 cavers who have actually helped survey in the cave, only 14 have been there six or more times, and about a third of those haven't been active in the survey the past few years. Even though I have been working very hard to give as many cavers as possible the opportunity to participate in these trips, to learn the cave, hone their vertical skills and survey techniques, the amount of effort needed to successfully stage these large expeditions is far greater than the resulting survey footage. I think we would be much more efficient with smaller groups of experienced cavers, concentrating our efforts into smaller sections of the cave, and working for longer periods. ... I hope to field one or two teams for a single multi-day expedition, entering the cave day after day and learning one section in greater detail, mopping up all leads as we come to them. Right now we are only 267m from overtaking Longhorn Cavern again and regaining a spot back on the list of top ten longest caves of Texas. We are about 308m from passing See My Shovel Cave for the #9 spot, and 557m from re-passing Deep Cave for #8. In another kilometer, we could pass both Indian Creek Cave and Cave Without an Name and be #6, but not at our current rate. Many of the remaining leads involves infill and needs dedicated surveyors who aren't afraid to pound through restrictions, and who don't waste time getting to (and from) their survey objectives. I'm afraid the glory days of just heading out in some direction and surveying anything you could find are long over.

Texas Cave Management Association - a 501(c)3 nonprofit since 1986

Visit us online! <http://www.tcmacaves.org/>

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Membership information

Membership Fees:

Regular - \$15.00

Associate (Students under 21)
- \$10.00

Institutional (Non-profit) -
\$50.00

Corporate - \$100.00

Life (Regular Rate) - \$500.00

Joining is easy! Go online at
www.tcmacaves.org - or send a
check to:

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Association Inc.

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Austin, TX 78713

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Godwin Ranch – Andrea Croskey

Lost Oasis – Drew Thompson

Robber Baron – Joe Mitchell

Rolling Oaks – Ellie Falgout

UT Lands (Amazing Maze, O-9 Well) –

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Austin caves – Matt Turner

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