



ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER

Solutions To Cave Related Problems

Volume 1, No. 2

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***** WHIRLPOOL PROJECT JULY 27-29 *****

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TCMA WORK PROJECT
WHIRLPOOL CAVE

Friday, July 27-Sunday, July 29
at the
Whirlpool tract off MoPac and
Convict Hill
Austin, Texas

COVER: Pen-and-ink drawing by
Ted Tutor.

Texas Caves Interesting, Valuable

This article on Texas caves was prepared for the Texas Almanac by William R. Elliott, Ph.D., of the Texas Cave Management Association, Austin.
About 2,000 caves are known in Texas, and many probably remain to be found. The Balcones Escarpment, Edwards Plateau and Stockton Plateau contain numerous limestone caves, while gypsum caves are found in Permian-age rocks in Northwest Texas and in Culberson County. Most of the limestone caves occur in rocks of the Edwards Group or Glen Rose Formation of Cretaceous age, or in the Silurian Group of Ordovician age. A few caves around the state occur in unusual rock, such as clay, calcite, conglomerate, granite and shale.
Commercial caves with lighted paths and educational tours are recommended for the public: Caverns of Sonora near San Antonio, Natural Bridge Caverns near New Braunfels, Inner Space Caverns near Georgetown, Cascade Caverns and Cave-Without-A-Name near Boerne, Lamphear Caverns near Burnet and Weaver Cave (Wonder World) in San Marcos. These caves have interesting histories and many different types of mineral formations, or speleothems.
Undeveloped caves are explored, mapped and studied by about 300 speleologists, or "cavers," belonging to "grottos" (clubs) located in Austin, San Antonio, San Marcos, College Station, Houston, Galveston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Abilene, Lubbock and Midland. The grottos are affiliated with the National Speleological Society. For safety and conservation reasons, persons interested in caving should contact one of these grottos to obtain proper training and equipment. The delicate mineral, biological and cultural contents of caves are easily destroyed by uninformed visitors. The Texas Cave Management Association, P.O. Box 310732, New Braunfels 78131, welcomes inquiries from persons interested in Texas caves and cave conservation.
Recent explorations have pushed Henry Creek Cave in Comal and Kendall counties to more than 76,000 feet in length, making it the state's longest. The cave is a network of stream passages that demand that it caver have experience and special equipment. Pappas' Cave System (Jack Piff Cave) a maze of crawlways in Menard County measuring about 15,000 feet, a 1/2 mile being existing educational programs about bats and bat manure. Other long caves include Caverns in Sonora in Sutton County (estimated at 20,000 feet), Indian Creek Cave in Uvalde County (18,000 feet), Inner Space Cavern in Williamson County (14,850 feet), Cave-Without-A-Name in Kendall County (14,151 feet), Almond's Cave in Travis County (11,950 feet), Lamphear Caverns in Burnet County (9,850 feet), and Spring Creek Cave in Kendall County (9,209 feet). Eight other caves longer than 3,000 feet are known.
Deep vertical caves, requiring special equipment and skills to explore, are found mainly in West Texas: Sereno's Cave in Terrell County (558 feet deep), Whispers Well in Terrell County (388 feet), Big Tree Cave in Val Verde County (188 feet), Dewey Sinkhole in Edwards County (142 feet), and Plateau Cave in Culberson County (120 feet) are but a few. The deepest shafts in these caves are up to 140 feet deep. One water-filled bat, Janice's Well in Hays County, has claimed the lives of numerous sport scuba divers who were not trained and certified as cave divers.
Texas caves contain many natural phenomena of esthetic, scientific and environmental value. Six-thousand-year-old human remains and fossils of extinct so-called animals up to 25,000 years of age have been excavated in several caves and shelter caves by university researchers. These caves are important repositories of natural history. Eyesee crustaceans, insects, millipedes, arachnids and salamanders are sometimes discovered by biologists, adding to our knowledge of animal distribution and evolution. Such creatures are called "troglodytes."
Large colonies of the migratory Mexican freetail bat occur in Blanco, Burnet, Comal, Edwards, Mason, Medina and Uvalde counties. The summertime nursery colony in Bracken Bat Cave, Comal County, may reach 30 million individuals. Several other species inhabit caves and structures. Bat caves are increasingly protected by private landowners and the state government by private landowners and the state government. The bats are beneficial, eating many harmful insects nightly and providing excrement, or guano, which is mined during the winter, when roost bats are gone, and sold as fertilizer. Contrary to popular belief, bats are not an important source of rabies. Bat Conservation International, with headquarters in Austin, is sponsoring educational programs about bats and bat manure to the public. A research program is aimed at determining the causes of the drastic declines in several bat species in Texas. The organization's address is Bat Conservation International, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin 78712.

FUTURE OF TEXAS CAVING

by Mike Walsh

For the past 35 years, we have been exploring the caves of Texas. Our visits often have been more than caving trips. They make up some of the great moments in our lives. We are a family and we attempt to work together to obtain our goals. It is with this philosophy that we request your help.

The owner of Whirlpool Cave, located in south Austin, has offered to give the cave and 4.25 acres to the Texas Cave Management Association (TCMA) when the \$1,200 in back taxes is paid. This 3,000 (914-meter) cave is a real cavers' treat. It has mud, crawls and even some large rooms. Out-of-town cavers may camp on this land while caving in the Austin area. To get access to the cave, call Bill Russell, (512) 453-4774, or Doug Allen, (512) 476-9031. Both cave managers have keys to the gate. Eli Grimm is the Whirlpool Cave caretaker. Expect to be in this cave for 4-6 hours. This cave will belong to you, the cavers of Texas.

Why should you support the TCMA in the fund raising effort? Why should you take out your checkbook and write a check for \$25, \$50, or \$100? The answer is that you are really doing it for yourself. At some point in your life, caving has something very important to you. You care about caves and the friends you made while caving. Perhaps jobs, family or children came along and you dropped out or cut down. You can never forget

that special thrill you got when people say, "You go into caves? I would never go into those things."

You may have lost contact with that special rancher who would let you into his cave, but now thanks to cavers who care, all you have to do is give them a call and you have a place to show your children what caving is all about. Thanks to people like Randy Waters, Robber Baron Cave (San Antonio) is open for your visits. Joanne and David DeLuna bought Wurzbach Bat Cave in San Antonio so we can visit and enjoy it. Along with cave management and cave ownership come problems. Taxes, gate material costs, legal fees, etc. are all part of the cost of saving these caves from vandalism.

To assist in these costs, a Save the Caves Fund has been established. Recently, \$300 was given to assist in gating Wurzbach Bat Cave. What about the active cavers who say, "We don't have to go these caves. We can find our own." It is true that there are many good caves open here in Texas, but many of the best are closed. Deep Cave, Pumpkin, Blowhole, Indian Creek, MFP, Big Mother, Felton, Harrison and others are closed. Never heard of them? They are among the best. What about Langtry Lead, Emerald Sink, and Langtry Quarry? There is a new owner and we may not have access.

The point is that we must act to protect our interests. Many cave owners are open to turning access or ownership over to

cavers. With the TCMA, Texas cavers have the legal structure to own caves. These are exciting times for Texas cavers. We will be able to look back to 1990 and say this is when we acquired our first cave. How many caves will be owned and managed by Texas cavers by the year **2000?** While it is not possible to say, it could be 20, 30 or more. It will not happen without caver support. Grant money is available but it will take time. Caver support is needed until the grants come in.

With the Texas Cave Raffle available, and a drawing at Old Timers Reunion on Oct. 13, now is the best time to write that check and receive raffle tickets in exchange. Altogether, more than \$2,000 worth of prizes will be **given** away. It is not necessary to be present at OTR for the drawing to win. If you are really broke, look around and see if there is something you can donate to the raffle. Anything of value will be accepted. More than money, we need you! We need you to assist in the Texas cave protection and education efforts. If you honestly don't have the time to participate, join TCMA so others can see that you support the efforts to make Texas caving better. Join the Texas Cave Revolution!

Send all donations to:

TCMA
P.O. Box 310732
New Braunfels, TX 78131

**TCMA WORK PROJECT,
JULY 27-29
by Mike Walsh**

We will have our Whirlpool Cave work project the weekend of July 27-29. Members and other volunteers will be at the site in Austin all weekend.

Doug Allen will manage the cave cleanup, Mike **Warton** will do work at the entrance, Peter Strickland will put up the fence and a gate and Carl Ponebshek will head the surface **cleanup/restoration** work. Carolyn Biegert will work on landscaping activities.

We need someone to head up putting in a water line and another person to help rebuild the rock wall. Keith Heuss is in charge of the Whirlpool sign.

Cavers can arrive as early as Friday. Refreshments, including soft drinks, and food, including hamburgers, will be provided for workers on Saturday night. The big dedication will be at noon on Sunday. Everyone is invited. As can be expected in the Texas summer, it could be hot.

The cave and tract is located off Mo-Pac, or Loop 1, in south Austin, in the Western Oaks area, off Convict Hill Road and Mo-Pac. The tract is at that intersection and is also near Convict Hill and Islander. For more directions, please call Doug Allen at (512) 476-9031 or me at (512) 625-7229. You can also call Terry Holsinger at (512) 445-7340.

WHIRLPOOL CAVE PROJECT

by Mike Walsh

The owner of Whirlpool Cave, located in South Austin, Texas, has offered to give the cave and 4.25 acres to the Texas Cave Management Association when the \$1,200 in back taxes is paid. This 3,000-foot-long cave is a real **caver's** treat. It has mud, crawls, and even some large rooms. Out-of-town cavers may camp on the land while caving in the Austin area. Two cave managers will have keys to the gate. Eli Grimm of Austin is the Whirlpool Cave caretaker. TCMA intends to protect and manage the cave. Visitors there should expect to be inside for one **to** six hours.

Texas Size Raffle

In order to pay the back taxes and to have money for future "Save the Caves" projects, we are holding the Great Texas Cave Raffle. The kickoff was at the Texas Speleological Association convention and the giant drawing will be at the Texas Old Timers' Reunion in October. You do not have to be present to win. Prizes are arriving almost daily. If you have items to donate, let us know as soon as possible. For each \$2 you donate, you will get one raffle ticket. If you wish to join the TCMA, now is the best time.

TCMA Membership

With membership, you get the TCMA Activities Newsletter, discounts on T-shirts, patches, publications, etc.,

and tickets! The Associate Membership is \$10 a year, with five tickets awarded. For the \$25 payment on Lifetime Membership, you will get 13 tickets. With the full payment on the \$100 Lifetime Membership, you get 50 chances to win. Another advantage is that **you may** take contributions off your income taxes since the TCMA is an official IRS non-profit organization.

Grotto Support

If a grotto could raise as much as \$100 or more, the taxes could be paid and money would be available for the Save the Caves activities.

One reason we need to build the fund is that the TCMA will acquire more caves. To help motivate groups, the grotto or internal organization that raises the most money for the Save the Caves Fund will get a 30-meter rope from Pigeon Mountain Industries.

Some of the prizes currently include: a 6-volt rechargeable Nite Lite caving light, a pair of **Petzl** ascenders, a complete rack, a brass Justrite, a \$150 NSA Water Treatment unit, a pseudo Seiko watch, David Foster's "Nylon Highway" record and several publications, including "Mexican Caving," the 1964 NSS Convention Guidebook to the caves of Texas, Cave Carson comic books, "Caves of Mexico" and others. Caver T-shirts, drink holders, caps, Texas and Mexican flag bandanas and much more will be given away. We will have **more**

TCMA MINUTES**by Jay Jorden**

The following are minutes from the Texas Cave Management Association meeting on May 6, 1990 at Bee's Campground near Concan, Texas.

Present: Claire Snider, Jack Ralph, Carl Ponebshek, Mike Walsh, Carolyn Biegert, Keith Heuss, Ron Ralph, Terry Holsinger, James Jasek, Dave McClung, Jay Jorden, Joe Ivy.

Call to order: 11:30 a.m., by Mike Walsh. He said that a vote at the last TCMA meeting had authorized the signing of a deed for Whirlpool Cave in Travis County. Upon research, it has been found that 1989 taxes, amounting to about \$1,200, have not been paid. The goal is to acquire the cave without spending money from the treasury. Toward that end, a Tennessee member has donated \$500. Janet Thorne, former NSS conservation chair, suggested that TCMA ask for a \$400 **grant/loan**. Walsh has begun the TCMA 'Save the Caves' program, including a raffle at Old Timers' Reunion. The Whirlpool owner, when last contacted in California by phone, said he would sign the deed and send it to Texas. (That apparently has been done.) Paperwork has been set in motion for a TCMA property tax exemption in the future. Walsh envisioned a TCMA work project at Whirlpool once the deed went through. (See related article elsewhere in this issue.) Walsh proposes TCMA write a check from available funds for property acquisition,

with reimbursement later. Several members have guaranteed the loan.

Stewardship of the cave will involve a neighborhood concept, with residents helping on security, etc. Mike **Warton** continues to help secure better drainage around the entrance. The Texas Highway Department has dumped dirt for landscaping. **M/Walsh** for TCMA to cut a check in partial payment for property acquisition, **s/Jack** Ralph. Approved unanimously.

Walsh reported that the gate installed in a project organized by Mike Grimm had been broken into in the past several weeks, but that **Warton** had quickly repaired the damage. His efforts to fix the drainage problem continue but the highway department has done work, also. Landscaping will involve grass planting where the department bulldozed for drainage. Carolyn Biegert was suggested as landscaping committee chair by Ralph. She volunteered and was approved after **m/Walsh, s/Carl** Ponebshek. The owner, Col. Beckett, wants the property to be named Olga Latta Park. **M/Walsh, s/Jay** Jorden to adopt. Vote was unanimous. Walsh urged that Eli Grimm be official caretaker, with William Russell and Doug Allen as managers. **M/Walsh, s/Ralph,** Ponebshek for same, which carried unanimously.

Jorden, chair of acquisitions committee, reported on work. It was mentioned that guidelines on acquisition must be developed. **M/Walsh, s/Jorden** on

TEXAS CAVE MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION
Minutes

from Mike Walsh

The following are minutes from the Texas Cave Management Association meeting on March 8, 1990.

The meeting began at 7:30 p.m. in Austin, Texas. Jack Ralph arrived at 8 p.m. to constitute a quorum. Mike Grimm reported that he had talked with the owner of Whirlpool Cave, Col. Beckett, who stated that he did not want to pay property taxes to the city for 1989 due to numerous donations to the city of Austin.

Walsh suggested that TCMA send out requests for donations from cavers and others in an attempt to raise the taxes. He also suggested a donation from a certain prospective donor might be solicited for as much as \$5,000 to TCMA.

It was reported that George Veni of San Antonio had been contacted by the owners of Caverns of Sonora, a commercial cave, to resurvey it.

Walsh said that Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has agreed to print the inside of the 1989 National Cave Management Symposium proceedings. Arrangements are also being made for printing covers for the proceedings and the Texas bat cave owners' publication that is in preparation.

It was reported that the owner of **Rambie's** Cave might be interested in working with TCMA. A letter was also sent to the management of the Fair Oaks development in Bexar County, Texas to determine if there was interest in working with the group of Fair Hole.

The first issue of a TCMA newsletter has been prepared by Jay Jordan. He is working to secure patches for the group.

The management of Natural Bridge Caverns are donating \$300 to TCMA for the gating of Wurzbach Bat Cave in San Antonio, and a homeowners' association was also helping in the project. James **Loftin** and Randy Waters were working on possible designs. Carl **Ponebshek** will be in charge of this fund and will return any difference in the amount donated by homeowners.

Possible sources of TCMA income were the bat cave publication, the Cave Management Symposium, a cave management guide, other guidebooks and promotions, including caps and T-shirts. Rod Goke said he is cleaning out his garage and will donate goods for a garage sale.

Carl moved that a T-shirt and patch be given to any member who can bring in four new recruits. Ralph seconded and the motion passed.

A meeting was scheduled for 2 p.m. March 21 at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Building in Austin with Mike Herring for

TCMA ACTIVITIES HISTORY

by Mike **Walsh**

Several people have expressed interest in what the Texas Cave Management Association has been doing recently. Here is a list of some of our activities for the past several years.

1986

- * TCMA was organized and incorporated;
- * Co-sponsored with the City of Austin a Goat Cave conference;
- * Developed a TCMA brochure;
- * Built a 6- by 12-foot mobile cave education display;
- * Constructed a box for pamphlets;
- * Constructed a rear-projection slide display for conferences;
- * Exhibit at conference on Edwards Aquifer north of Colorado River;
- * Assisted in development of a cave protection bill;
- * Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the American Cave Conservation Association;
- * Developed and took the Caver Conservation-Cave Management Opinion Poll;
- * Developed a Texas' significant cave rating system;

1987

- * Received a \$350 grant for a bat publication and guide to development over karst areas;
- * Became a National Speleological Society Conservancy;
- * Signed a contract with The University of Texas to manage Q-9 Water Well near Ozona;
- * Organized the Kickapoo Cave State Park project. With help from the Texas Speleological

Association, doubled the known number of park caves;

1988

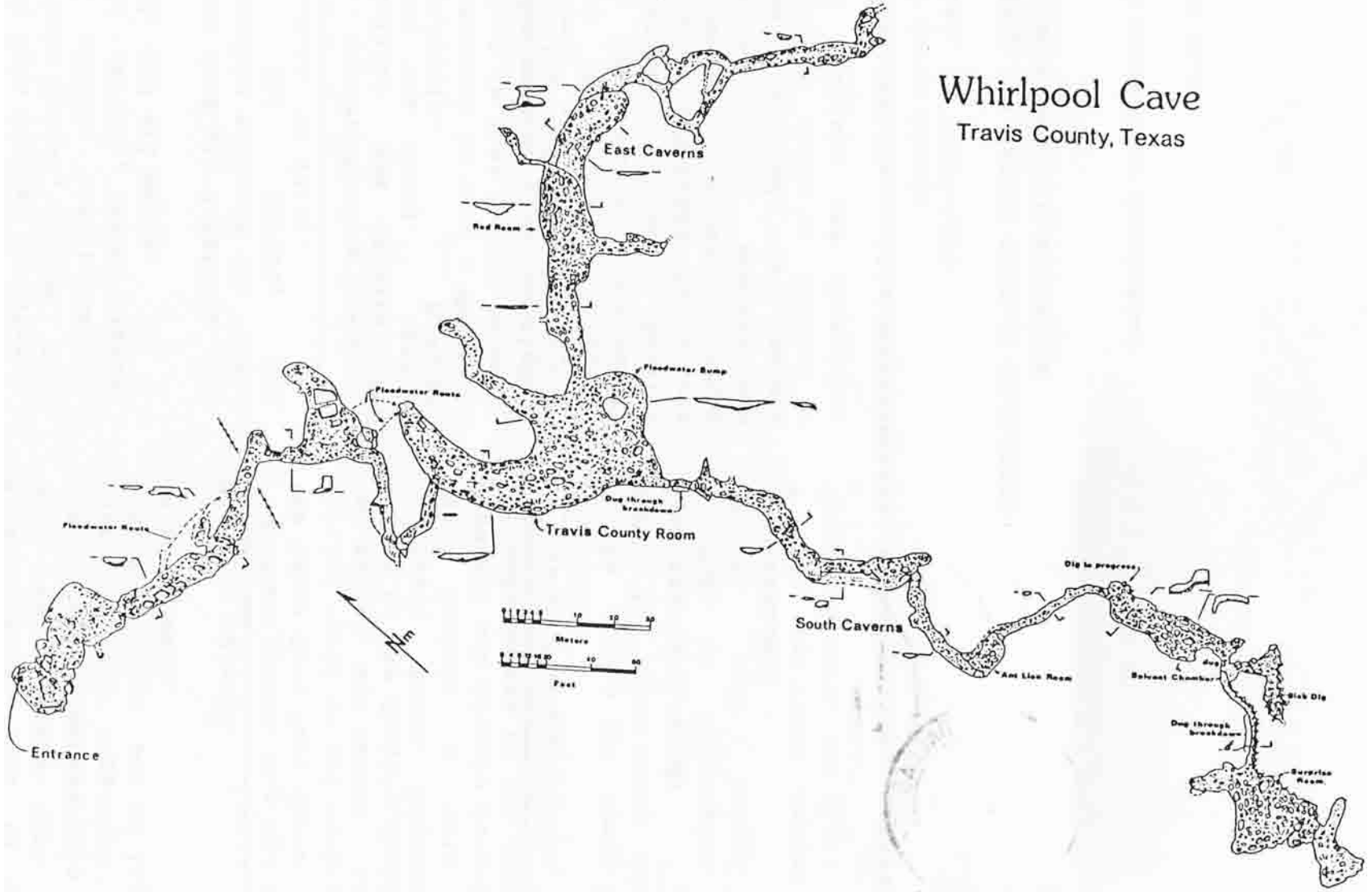
- * A 40- by 40-foot tent frame was donated to TCMA;
- * Organized the Longhorn Caverns State Park cleanup project. TSA workers removed tons of trash from the cave and sinkhole;
- * TCMA listed in the Texas Almanac as a cave information resource;
- * Internal Revenue Service nonprofit tax status granted;

1989

- * Developed a proposed 40-page cave management plan for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department;
- * Co-hosted the 1989 National Cave Management Symposium with TPWD;
- * Assumed management of Whirlpool Cave in Austin, Texas and assisted in building a gate;
- * TCMA Director Mike **Warton** gates biologically important Tooth Cave and others;

1990

- * Through efforts, the Texas Highway Department moved a drainpipe outflow away from Whirlpool;
- * Owner of Whirlpool offers to donate the cave and 4.25 acres of land to TCMA. Board votes to accept;
- * TCMA will assist a member in installing four gates at her Wurzbach Bat Cave in San Antonio. \$300 donated for materials;
- * TCMA will propose to TPWD an access plan for the Devil's



(SAVE cont. from Page 5)

than \$2,000 in prizes. Bob and Bob, Speleobooks, Terry Raines and others are sending prizes. The big prize will be a first-class trip for two to the ghost town of Real de Catorce, San Luis Potosi, Mexico. This will include transportation, guide service, three nights' motel, and all meals.

Please send all donations and membership requests to: TCMA, P.O. Box 310732, New Braunfels, TX 78131.

(MAY MINUTES from Page 6)

guidelines and details for Save the Caves," carried unanimously. M/Walsh, s/Ponebshek to have a Whirlpool project in four to six weeks. Jordan reports first newsletter issue was printed, distributed. Walsh discusses negotiations with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for Devil's Sinkhole, and plans for a cave procedures manual. Trips involving TCMA members are being planned. A permit initially would be limited to TCMA officers and directors.

TPWD wants safety experts, bat studies. Also, TPWD has asked TSA to submit a report on opening Gorman Cave. Ron Ralph reported on damage to rock art in a Texas cave where archaeological work is being done. He suggests that TCMA might help manage/gate the cave. It was suggested that TCMA could also act as liaison in management.

M/Ivy to adjourn.

(MARCH MINUTES, from Page 7)

the Texas Cave Task Force. Herring wants to get machinery in motion to secure caver access to the Devil's Sinkhole in South Texas. Discussion will include a trip to research and prepare procedure for safe access to the cave.

(ACTIVITIES from Page 8)

Sinkhole;
* TCMA starts the Great Texas Raffle to raise money for the Save the Caves Fund;
* TCMA in discussion with several cave owners for acquisitions;
TCMA and Texas cavers own Whirlpool Cave, our first!

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TCMA Activities Newsletter

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