

Texas Cave Conservancy Activities - 2012

Submitted by: Mike Walsh—TCC Chair

This year has been a busy one for the Texas Cave Conservancy and it is far from over. Last year we had over 800 visitors go into the TCC educational show cave, Avery Ranch Cave, on CAVE DAY. Since it was getting far too crowded, we made a commitment to add a second deck to the cave before the next CAVE DAY.



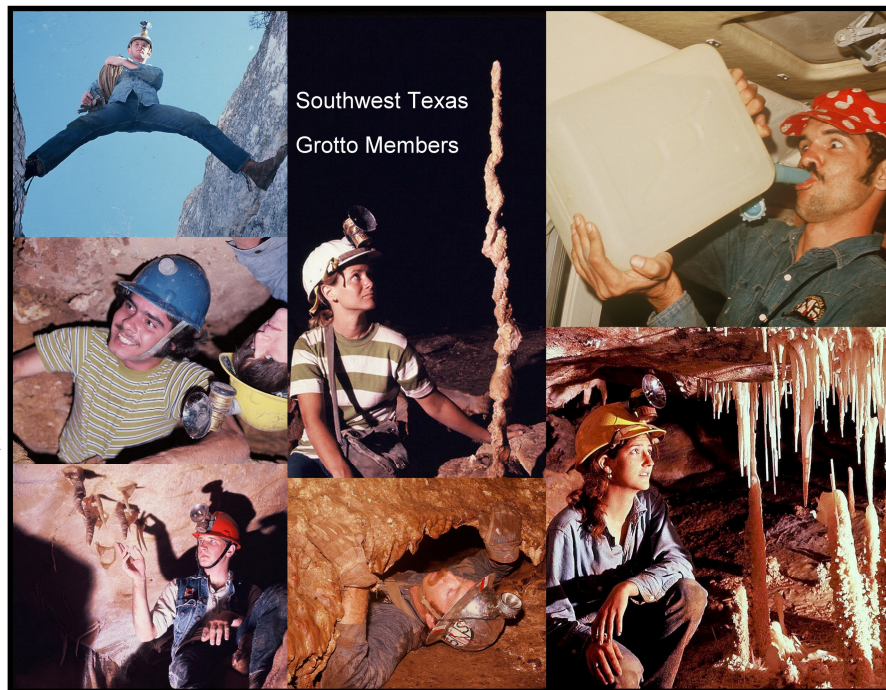
Austin area TV stations arrive at Avery Ranch Cave.

Work In Avery Ranch Cave-New Deck

In order to be ready for CAVE DAY on April, 2012, we had Freddie Poer install a cedar deck base and we ordered the special mold resistant plastic decking from Canada. Freddie and his new wife, Martina Correa installed the decking. We brought Spencer Woods in to do the welding of the vertical poles for the handrails. Avery Ranch Cave is now a first class educational show cave.

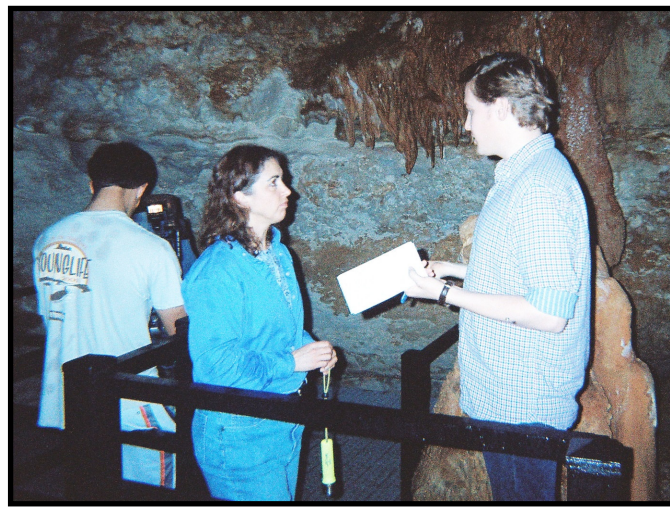
TCC Winter Conference

Each year, on the last weekend in February, the TCC hosts this weekend event in Cedar Park, Texas. The 2012 TCC Winter Conference was held from February 24-26. It was a weekend of caving, camping, a cave digging workshop, a Saturday night party with a meal and guest speakers. Past speakers have included: Terry Rains, Ronnie Fiesler, Ron Kerbo and Mike Warton. This year, Logan McNatt and Mike Walsh had a presentation on the old Southwest Texas University Grotto. Christopher Francke organized a successful cave digging workshop in Die's Ranch Cave. Each year we have had approximately 75-100 cavers attending and 2012 was no exception.



Southwest Texas University Grotto Members

Upper right clockwise: Charlie Yates, Sandi Luker, Dick Montgomery, Brian Peterson, John Chelf-Lisa Wilk, Joe Sumbera and Mary Kay Krauska. Photos by: Keith Heuss



City of Austin-Sylvia Pope interviewed on the new Avery Ranch Cave deck.

National Groundwater Week

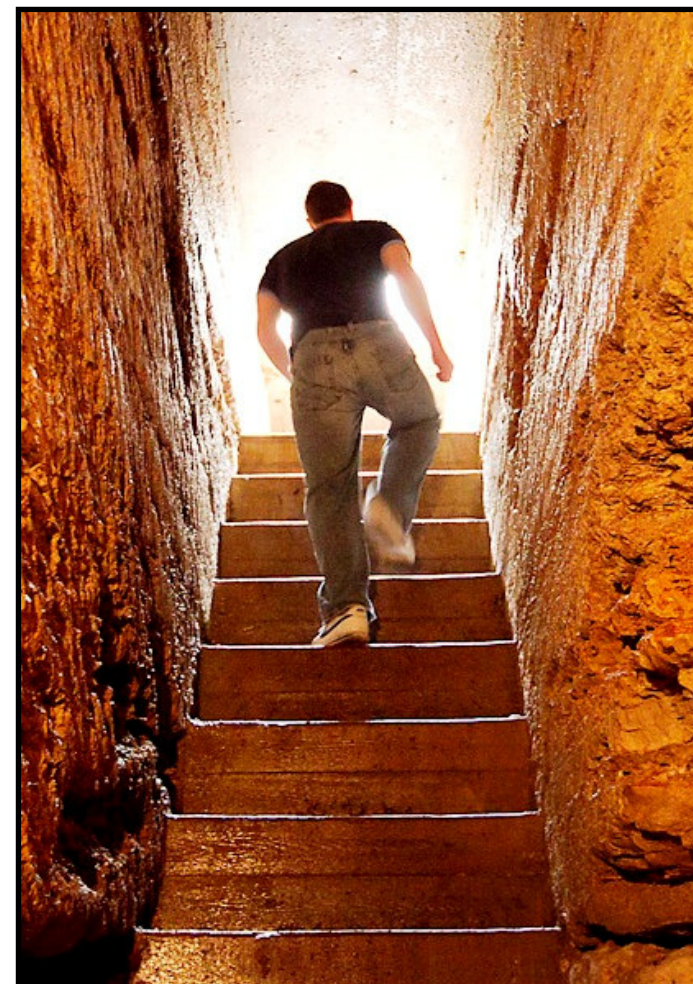
The TCC received a telephone call from Sylvia Pope with the City of Austin Watershed Department. She asked if they could have a few television stations out to Avery Ranch Cave to promote the National Groundwater Week. On March 13, 2012, every Television Station in Austin and many of the newspapers showed up at Avery Ranch Cave. The TCC President, Mike Walsh was even interviewed live from within the cave. The resulting publicity created a situation where we had to deal with incredible numbers of visitors on CAVE DAY.



Avery Ranch Cave. (Above and below)

CAVE DAY Preparation

We knew we were in over our heads when we saw all the television and the newspaper publicity that week. We had over 30,000 visits to our web site in the twenty-eight days prior to CAVE DAY on April 14th. The Avery Ranch Cave was in fairly good shape, however, we had a good deal of work to make the Die's Ranch Treasure Cave safe for visitors. Walter Beck, Martina Correa, Freddie Poer and Mike Walsh installed four metal safety barriers in order to make the cave safer for the large numbers that we expected.



CAVE DAY- April 14, 2012

The big day arrived and we had not overestimated the numbers created by the media storm. We passed out tickets and we had 1800+ visitors in Avery Ranch Cave and 600+ visitors in Die's Ranch Cave. These are not large caves and everyone going down the stairs and or ladders have to leave the cave the same way. We could not have made it without the following volunteers: Lynda Beck, Walter Beck, Leslie Bell, Martina Correa, Christopher Francke, Bob Heart, Freddie Poer, Mike Walsh and Cindy West. We really need caver support on this high profile public education activity.

Jollyville Plateau Salamander

The Jollyville Plateau Salamander is a candidate for the U. S. Fish & Wildlife listing as an endangered species. The TCC works to protect caves, cave life and the aquifer as related to caves. Toward that end, we are developing a monitoring plan that will help identify, monitor, and mitigate potential contamination situations concerning the Buttercup Creek Watershed. Within this narrow watershed, there are miles of cave passage. It is in the interest of the City of Cedar Park and others to work toward the protection of this watershed that leads to Cypress Creek and on to Lake Travis. The TCC will continue to work with interested parties on a watershed protection plan.



TCC Web Site – 600,000+ visitors

When the new TCC Website went on line in April, 2010, we had no ideal that it could generate as much interest as it has. We expect to reach 600,000 visits by June 25th, the opening day of the NSS Convention in West Virginia.

We must thank the following cavers for their assistance in the creation of the TCC Website: **Christopher Francke, Martha Meacham, George Nincehler and Mike Walsh.** Check us out at TexasCaves.org.

The Texas Cave Conservancy invites you to visit us in Cedar Park, Texas.