

The Cave Conservationist

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The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the NSS



Ralph Lewis removes graffiti from a stalagmite

Multi-Grotto Cleanup in Meramec State Park, Sullivan, Missouri Targets Well-Used Beginner Caves

Jo Schaper, photographs by Eugene Vale

Beginner caves have a rough life.

If you are a shallow, easy, basically harmless wild cave near roads and campgrounds in a state park, your life is even rougher. Every person with a flashlight (and a dog, and small children) and a hankering to see the underground can find these caves. And they do.

This is not a bad thing. After all, we need to keep more cavers coming along to preserve and protect caves in the future, and well, going to show caves just produces more people going to show caves. We really don't want these weekend folks venturing into some really hard or dangerous or pristine cave without proper training. These caves are more like a hike in the woods, with no light and a roof overhead.

On August 27, 2006 members from Middle Mississippi Valley, Meramec Valley and Chouteau Grottos did a cleanup of two of these well-known, and hard-traveled caves: Indian Cave #1 and Sheep Cave, in Meramec State

Park, near Sullivan, Missouri. Participants were (in alphabetical order): Brian Biggs, Serena Crisp, Ralph and Vicki Lewis, Bryan McAllister, Jo Schaper, Matt Tenney and, Eugene Vale.

Sheep Cave is a 650 foot long cave that starts as borehole, and ends as a flowstone and gravel choke. It contains a stream, rimstones, and badly vandalized speleothems. The cave has been in poor shape since its initial use as a home for captive bear and some sort of wild sheep or goats in the late 1920s as part of a small zoo shortly after Meramec became a state park. Even though it has been badly abused, it still contains really neat spathites, aragonite crusts, and other small scale (and overlooked) speleothems. Unfortunately, it also has smooth walls which just invite writing by spray paint, smoking, incision in the mud, and just about any other vandal method known. Sheep has a small population of pipistrelles – perhaps a salamander or two but to anyone's knowledge isn't biologically significant.

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Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society



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Multi-Grotto Cleanup



Serena Crisp removes red spray paint from the ceiling of the entrance to Indian Cave

Indian Cave #1 was actually my first wild cave, when at age ten, we were required to bring flashlights on a Girl Scout campout. The cave was pointed out just above our campsite, and we were instructed not to go there. Although I openly admit to being disobedient, I was never tempted to leave my initials and the date of the infraction, as others have over the years. (In later years, I was thoroughly discouraged from graffiti since I was on a Scout trip where others stupidly put the troop number on a bunkhouse, (I didn't, I swear!) and yet, I had the privilege of washing others' artwork off the walls for the most part of an afternoon.)

Indian Cave is high on a bluff, very short, and except for a bit of sticky mud on the floor, bone dry. It contains cave insects, but because it is barely long enough to leave twilight, it does not appear to be a permanent home for any significant cave dwelling species. Both caves are in the Eminence dolomite, a sandy, buff-colored thickly bedded rock.

Last June, I took my ten year old niece to these two haunts of my childhood, and found the writing crew had been there before us. All it took was a call to Brian Wilcox, park naturalist at Meramec State Park, to set up a date for a cave cleanup project, and a trip to the local discount store to gather tools of graffiti destruction.

Lest any historical preservationists be concerned, (and yes, it is unfortunate, but is the truth) neither of these caves, after being open to the public and gate-less for nearly eighty years, have a shred of a chance of containing anything of historical or archeological significance on the walls.

What to say about the cleanup? We came. We brushed, wire brushed and otherwise cleaned names, dates, phone numbers, and pronouncements from the walls, which had been brightly festooned in blue, pink, and red spray paint, and black soot. Mostly, we worked with water and muscles, backpack and hand sprayers, nylon and wire brushes. Always try a nylon brush first. Then go to the wire. The one advantage of the relatively coarse dolomite is that even wire brushing generally does not leave gouges, even though it does loosen the soft surface layer. It doesn't take a lot of pressure to obliterate graffiti doing this.

We briefly tried out some citrus-based, non-toxic biodegradable orange gunk only to find that instead of softening the paint as advertised, it tended to sink into the stone, adding orange to the color mix. (Yes, we got all the orange off before we left, were careful not to let it drip, and to wash down the walls with water afterward.) One problem was that cave temperature in Missouri is below that specified on the can. Another is that



Brian McAllister uses a wire brush, water and elbow grease

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Multi-Grotto Cleanup

the instructions said it could be left on the paint for up to 24 hours, and we didn't have that long. The orange stuff has gone away, but we're still looking for something to use on the really tough cases (like enamels) that is relatively non-toxic to cave life.

In a couple of places, we used the two person method of graffiti detection. That is: First person says: "Hey, you see this writing scratched in over here?" Second person: "Where?" First person: "Well, maybe we just need to lightly brush over it, anyway, if you can't see it."

We tried, first and foremost to do no harm to the cave, and secondly, to make the graffiti go away, and mostly we succeeded. Another thing: although some of the participants brought their own cave cleanup kits, the items we purchased were washed afterward, and now reside in our basement. We were partly reimbursed for them by generous donations from the three participating grottos-- (hey, when a trip to get new cave cleanup stuff costs nearly \$100, why not at least ask?) -- with the understanding that this kit will be available for loan when other cavers from those grottos find caves to clean.

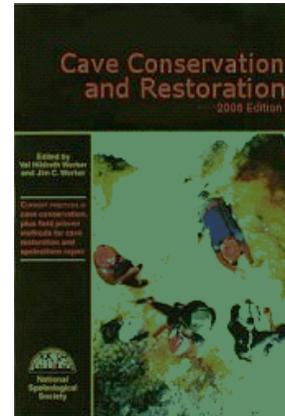
Thanks to all the helpers, MVG, MMV and Chouteau Grottos for financial support. No doubt, in caves like these, the graffiti will be back.

And so will we.



Ralph and Vicki Lewis use ice and dental picks to remove paint from crevices

Cave Conservation & Restoration



The new book, *Cave Conservation and Restoration*, edited by Val Hildreth-Werker and Jim C. Werker is on the market. The 600 page volume contains contributions from more than 40 speleological authors. The book introduces a philosophical conservation ethic: For every decision related to a cave, the foremost concern should be the perpetuation of speleological processes, values, and resources. Containing a wealth of detail, the manual describes tools and methods for cave conservation, cave restoration, and speleothem repair. It is available to NSS members for \$37 through the NSS Bookstore. <http://www.NSSBookstore.org>

The Cave Conservationist

The Cave Conservationist is only as good as the contributions cavers make to the newsletter.

You can help the Section have a top of the line newsletter by sending your cave restoration, cave clean up, cave management or conservation projects to the Editor. See page 7 of this issue for information on how to submit your articles, news, and photos.

Call for Articles—Annual Conservation Issue NSS News

Help produce a thorough NSS overview of worldwide conservation research, projects, and cave/karst outreach awareness efforts. Youth speleo-conservation activities will receive special emphasis in this issue.

- Submit articles, protection concerns, editorials, updates, cave/karst conservation activities, conservation opportunities, and appreciation for individuals or groups to werks@zianet.com

- Send conservation pieces from one paragraph to several pages. Please do not exceed 2500 words (or a 15,000 character and space count). Submit photos as slides, prints, or e-files. Check the NSS News Submission Guidelines and Style Sheet available on the NSS Web site <http://www.caves.org/pub/nssnews/>

- Deadline is December 31, 2006. Send submissions by e-mail before the end of the year. (Nothing is accepted after the final submission date of January 15, 2007.)

- Jim Werker and Val Hildreth-Werker serve as editors for the annual conservation issue of the NSS News. Please give them notice that you plan to submit. Send an e-mail now. werks@zianet.com

Please reprint, resend, or re-post this message for caver audiences. Thanks for helping get the word out!

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Conservation Committee New Appointments

We are happy to announce several new facets of the Conservation Committee. We welcome these conservation-spirited individuals and thank them for taking on leadership roles in national tasks promoting cave and karst protection.

Steve Smith of Arizona is initiating a new program for coordinating conservation information with NSS Grottos.

Justin Epps of Utah is tackling the promotion of low-impact caving techniques and cave softly ethics.

Merideth Hildreth of New Mexico is coordinating the new NSS Partnership Building Forum.

Short Scoops....

On August 14, 2006 *The Prague Daily Monitor* reports during 2005 six German tourists destroyed a unique gallery in an ice cave which was part of the Vlci jamy nature path. The men used the cave's ice and snow to build snowman in a competition. After police conducted an investigation the tourists were fined.

Due to pollution and new development the Floridan aquifer, springs and cave systems are being threatened. Concerned citizens attended the Springs Protection Summit which as hosted by the Santa Fe Springs Working Group in Alachua county to learn more about protecting the groundwater.

(September 21, 2006, *Independent Florida Alligator*)

WALB News reported on September 23, 2006 that the National Speleological Society has taken interest in Radium Springs and sent a cave diving team to map and research the caves. The cave divers as well as other concerned citizens want to preserve and protect the springs.

Reported in *The Hamilton Spectator* October 23, 2006, a fragile geological formation in Canada known as Eramosa Karst was given to the Hamilton Conservation Authority and has become a new conservation area.

The October 30, 2006 article in *The Evening Telegram* reports experts studying the proposed Jordanville Wind Energy Project are looking at the impact the project will have on the area's karst topography, sinkholes, groundwater and caves. Opponents say the impact on karst features could risk groundwater safety.

Biologist Consultant Jerry Lewis and The Nature Conservancy's Cory Holliday visit caves near Nashville Tennessee in an effort to trap, inventory and study the species that live in these fragile underground ecosystems. (*National Public Radio*, October 31, 2006)

Reported in the *The Lexington Herald-Leader*, November 3, 2006, for reasons of public safety the historic section of Mammoth Cave National Park was closed to tourists after elevated levels of E. coli bacteria and fecal coliform were discovered in the groundwater. The staff will continue to monitor the cave water.

Ozarks Newsstand November 08, 2006, Christian County residents and The Citizens for Ground Water Protection voice concerns over the proposed ethanol plant that Gulfstream Bioflex Energy, LLC has planned in a karst region. The Fordland location is a geologic location containing sinkholes and sinking streams.

An article in *AGI Online*, November 11, 2006 reports the commissioner for emergency waste in the Campania region signed an agreement that will allow combustible plant waste and garbage from Santa Maria Capua Vetere to be placed in a cave in Lo Uttaro, in the Caserta area.

Written by Canadian science writer, Jacob Berkowitz, a new children's book is now available. *Jurassic Poop* is the first all-inclusive book on coprolites. Interesting to note the biggest human haul was the collection of more than a 1000 human coprolites from Hinds Cave, Texas. (*Public Release*, November 15, 2006)

The Cave Conservationist

The Cave Conservationist © 2006 is the official publication of the Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society. The contents of the newsletter rely on contributions made by section members and others who are interested in cave conservation, cave restoration and management. Newsletter contributions should be submitted to the Editor, Lynn Roebuck pretzlgirl@charter.net as an attachment formatted to MS Word. Typed/emailed contributions are preferred. The Editor reserves the right to edit any and all submissions for length, clarity, style and/ or content. Digital photo contributions for the newsletter may be emailed as an attachment to the Editor. Articles and unsigned materials may be attributed to the Editor. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Cave Conservation and Management Section, NSS or the Editor. Permission is granted to NSS publications to reprint articles published in *The Cave Conservationist* providing credit is given to the Author, Editor and *The Cave Conservationist* except where a copyright accompanies a specific item. Others who want to reprint material should contact the Editor. Future Newsletter Deadlines: February issue: January 15; May issue: April 15; August issue: July 15; November issue: October 15.

Membership in the Conservation and Management Section

The Conservation and Management Section is open to all members of the National Speleological Society as well as those interested in the conservation, management and protection of caves. Members receive the newsletter *The Cave Conservationist* and are entitled to vote at the annual meeting. Annual membership dues: \$5.00/ year to receive *The Cave Conservationist* electronically and \$10.00/year to receive *The Cave Conservationist* by regular mail. A section membership application can be found below or on our website <http://www.caves.org/section/cms> Membership dues may be sent to the Treasurer, Eugene Vale eugenevale@socket.net Newsletter printing or postal distribution information may be obtained from Robert Hoke bob@hoke.net The Section presents two annual awards to a NSS Grotto and a NSS Group that have made significant contributions towards conservation or management of cave or karst resources. For more information concerning The Cave Conservation and Management Section of the NSS please visit our website. <http://www.caves.org/section/cms>



Cave Conservation and Management Section of the National Speleological Society Membership Form



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Check one:

- I wish to receive the *Cave Conservationist* electronically via email -- \$ 5.00 dues.
- I wish to receive the *Cave Conservationist* on paper via regular mail -- \$ 10.00 dues.

Checks should be made payable to Cave Conservation and Management Section and sent with this form to:

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