

## Angel Pit

While at this year's Karst-O-Rama, I took the opportunity to drop a new pit that I found in the valley south of Crooked Creek Ice Cave. This pit was found last February after a disappointingly short trip to Angel Cave, a place that Jerry Nichols of Bluegrass grotto and I had looked at some years ago. We thought it had great promise due to the large amount of water that enters the cave. I finally talked Bill Thoman, Nancy Swartz, and Harry Delk into pushing this cave, but it turned out to be a bust after 200 feet of bellycrawl over rocks and moldy raccoon shit. "A nice entrance", was the only comment. It was a beautiful day, so after we exited the cave, we scouted for more entrances on the hike back to the Trooper. Not far from Angel Cave, I came across the sink containing Angel Pit. It was about 8 feet across and appeared to be about 50 feet deep.

I told Jerry Nichols about the pit since I felt a little guilty over our attempted scoop at Angel Cave. He and some friends from Lexington, plus Nick Sena of Cincinnati, dropped the pit in mid June finding several hundred feet of virgin passage at the bottom of a 100 feet drop. The pit had appeared to be 50 feet deep due to a large breakdown block that straddles the mid-level of the pit. At Karst-O-Rama this July, I met John Micholson, who accompanied Jerry on the first trip into the pit. We drove to the cave, coming down from Rt 1955. By the grace

of John's 4-wheel drive we were able to get within about 100 feet of the cave entrance. We rigged the drop making good use of a solid little Maple tree growing at the edge of the pit. We also tied off to a more substantial tree further away just in case. The pit started out at 8 feet wide and quickly belled out to about 35 feet wide. The rappel was free for

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the first 50 feet, although we hung a pad on a "claw" of rock that would interfere with the rope on our ascent. About 55 feet down we installed another pad on a large breakdown block that interrupted the drop. It was another 45 feet to the bottom. Once down and off rope we explored several hundred feet of recessional canyon, some of it nearly filled with breakdown. There were two waterfalls, one flowing and the other nearly dry. We also checked out a couple hundred feet of tube passage. One entrenched canyon lead looked promising, but required a very exposed climb. It

would be worth returning to check it out. It would be worth surveying Angel Cave and Angel Pit, as these two are probably related, and possibly connected. We (Jerry Nichols and I) have longed believed this valley and the ridge to the south of Crooked Creek Ice Cave may contain a major cave. We have poked into dozens of entrances and pits blowing air, but so far we have been stopped by breakdown and fill. This pit is one more frustrating entrance to add to the list. A couple of hundred yards away from Angel Pit is a 75 foot pit that we call Dead Horse Pit. The late Mr. Wynn told us about this one saying that when he was a boy, a horse fell into it, and "it was so deep that the buzzards didn't gather". We didn't find the remains of the horse, but we did see some impressive canyons and some breakdown with black air space beyond and a breeze. Also near Angel Pit is a pit that Bill and Harry found in a creekbed. This one is unexplored as of this writing. Angel Pit is well worth a visit when you're in the vicinity of GSP. There are no formations to speak of, and no signs of significant bat population, but it's an impressive hole in the ground. Please do be cautious of the unstable breakdown halfway down.  
John N. Agnew