

# Mullen Spring Cave

Mullins Spring Cave has two entrance within about 500 feet of each other; the west entrance being basically dry and usually the starting point for a trip. The other 'wet' entrance is just further down the road and is under a scenic little overhang with a stream emerging and flowing into Crooked Creek. During wet weather or heavy rains, this entrance will flood completely.

Staying dry is a real challenge. Just inside the dry entrance, one encounters a large pool which usually requires wading, sometimes to waist level. A mazy section of lower water passages prevail and can be chimneyed to avoid the water, although it may not be worth the trouble. From here the upper level routes can be followed. One upper level is rather sinuous and involves plenty of climbing, crouching, and occasional crawling through a stream. The other is almost dusty dry in places and is similar in difficulty.

The main trunk is the preferred choice of route but should only be attempted under favorable weather conditions. To reach this main high and wide passage, a near siphon bathtub section approximately 100 feet long must be negotiated. This is where the cave gets interesting. Emerging from this section straight into large walking passage, one gets a sense of great discovery just ahead. An impressive waterfall is heard after several hundred feet and encountered in a dome just to the north of the trunk. This is approx. 55' high and attempts have been made to bolt up the wall. The passage continues in the same manner beyond the waterfall and requires almost continual wading through the stream. The stream is fed by several sinkholes and

small pit caves located along the hillsides just north of Rt. 1004 and by large sinkholes in the valley opposite the Poplar Gap road intersection.

Again, it should be stressed that this passage should not be explored during heavy rains. There is no known connection to another entrance upstream, but the water flow testifies to its existence. Several upper level leads and waterfalls beckon further exploration.

The customary exit involves emerging from the wet entrance. This usually means chest deep water (or deeper) and any caver feeling sluggish by this time will quickly perk up.

Mullins Spring Cave description taken in part from 1972 Caves of Rockcastle County by Rebman and O'Dell. Map courtesy of J. Rebman. Additional references include 1980 GCG Annual Meeting, and personal files experiences and recollections of the writer. Thanks also to Gary O'Dell and Bill Simpson for assistance.

Werner Jud NSS 15377

**The Mullins Springs Cave System contains two distinct parts, connected only by a water passage. These two systems are described as youthful and mature. Each system trends in a different direction and have different altitudes.**

**The young passage houses many waterfalls. This passage advances upward until it is near the surface. This route involves turning, climbing, crouching and crawling. In a spot or two, there is enough head room for a person to stand in.**

**The mature section of the cave is an extreme opposite to the young section. The lower wet section is the best route. The passage in this area is high and wide. Large dome pits are found along this route. It is best to avoid this part of the cave when it is raining. This lower area can flood in no time at all.**

**The high level in the mature section is a small passage which requires some climbing. Little water is found in this passage. Speleothems here are old and have an aged appearance.**

**Over time, cave formations have noticeably dwindled. Vandalism is so great that the cave is almost devoid of formations.**