

Trip Reports

Sunday, January 7, Howard Kalnitz and I met Beth Kennedy, of the Berea Ranger District of the National Forest Service, to do a bat count in String cave, Jackson county. This is a relatively unvisited cave on forest service land near Horse Lick creek. My first time to this cave was while hiking with Mary Gratch early in the summer of 1989. We had one minimag and no gear, and only saw the very top portion of the cave. We did see several bats up there that trip. Later that summer, in August, Mary and I returned with Paul Knasel to begin a survey. We had seen flagging tape all over the hollow above the cave, and expected the area to be logged-out soon. So we were to a survey of a cave we had little hope would remain natural for long. We started in, surveyed down a climb, ducked under a wall, came to a small waterfall, and saw our first string. Apparently we weren't the first here, and whoever it was used a string to mark their way through the cave. Strings were to be found in nearly every sizeable passage of the cave. That day we surveyed around 800 feet.

A week later, Mary and I brought Jerry Gratch and Steve and Janet Hauser to do more survey. That day we reached over 1000 feet. Mary and I pushed a low wet lead after the end of the survey to a breakdown area, within earshot of the out-of-doors (we could hear an airplane flying nearby) This encouraged me to dig and move rock, until I could see daylight through the breakdown. I got as far as I could from within, but this won't be an entrance until it's opened from the outside. That fall, Ron Crawford, Dennis Green, and I entered nearby Blowing cave to try to connect with String. After climbing around in some very

nasty domes, we went to a lead at the end of a decorated passage Steve Hauser and I had found. Pushing a low lead we found a muddy stream passage with strings. These led over a breakdown and directly into the A survey of String Cave. Also, some pushing up the muddy stream passage led to breakdown and dome area connecting to a streamsink entrance just north of the String cave entrance.

This was pretty much of what we did at the cave, until I had a call from Bill Simpson in January. He told me that the Forest Service had been in the cave to look for certain bats, especially *Myotis Sodalis*, and to do a survey to include in their evaluation of the cave and surrounding property. They had seen our survey, and

were eager to talk to us. So I followed up with a call to Beth Kennedy in Berea, and we decided to do a bat count on the following Sunday.

This turned out to be a very successful trip, for Beth logged over 60

Indians as well as even more Big Browns and Pips. This is a significant number, and may prove to protect the cave from any outside development which could be detrimental, like logging. We also saw a few Indians in connecting Blowing cave. Later, in Horse Lick Creek, Beth found two mollusks on the Federally Endangered List.

I was very happy with what we accomplished there, for we not only did a service to Bats, caves, and trees, we also finally established an active relationship with the Forest Service. NEACK

