

SEPTEMBER 2003

**B A T S** NEWS

# Features

BATS News Sept. 2003

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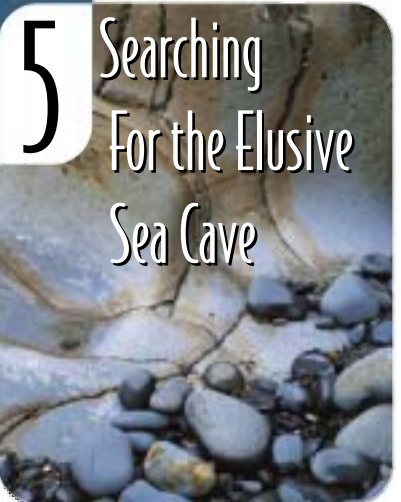
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## 3 Calendar & Events

4

## Sept. Minutes



## 5 Searching For the Elusive Sea Cave

8

## A Wild Tour of Crystal Cave

## 12 The Best VAR Ever...

# From the Editor

This issue—the California NSS Convention issue—has been a hard one to get published. I'm not going to give you a bunch of dumb excuses why. It's late and that's that! The BATS did so much in California that we will continue to get trip reports from Convention in months to come. It seems like that was such a long time ago—the BATS are so active and we've done so many things since then. It was a great convention. You should make plans now to attend the 2004 event in Marquette, Michigan. It'll be a blast!

Allan

# Calendar

November 11

BATS Monthly business meeting, Salem Church Library, 7:00 PM

July 12-17


2004 NSS Convention, Marquette, MI

September 3-6

2004 Old Timers Reunion, Dailey, WV

**Ongoing Events**

Vertical Practice at TinY's house every Tuesday evening except the 2nd Tuesday when practice will be held the Thursday following the 2nd Tuesday



# BATS September Meeting Minutes,

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**Present:** Carrie Bader, Nikki Bennett, Steve Bennett, Avery Giles-Allnock, Meredith Johnson, Seth Lake, Mike Manke, Lance Mitchell, Robin Mitchell, Chris Reasonover, Joe Shepherd, Allan Weberg, Amanda (forgot last name!)

**Membership:** Pay your dues if you haven't yet!

**Trip Reports:** Seth told about going on the Breathing survey and the Harpers Ferry rappel. Meredith gave a report on the Donaldsons Cave gating project she attended in Berkley County, WV. OTR!: The Brew Crew made a total of \$600 for the West Virginia Cave Conservancy. Allan gave trip reports for Bobwhite Cave (which they never found) and a trip to Sharps led by Sarah. The Randy Gandy Run was held again with great success.

**Trip Coordinator:** We still need a volunteer to act as an activities/trip coordinator. Your job will be to make sure a cave trip is planned every month (you don't have to lead it).

**Bridge Day:** We've got Rig spot #16 for bridge day, which is between 700-750'. Bridge day is October 18 th. A trip to Whitesides is scheduled the first weekend in October.

**Holiday Party/Fundraiser:** Nikki somehow got volunteered to be the party coordinator. So, if you have any ideas let me know. We'll probably do it in replacement of the January meeting, like last year.

**Trip Planning:** The October BATS trip will be the Bowden Barricade Trip. Fall VAR is September 26-29th. TAG is October 10-13th.

A Modular Level Cave Rescue course in Jan-Feb-March might be held at Grand Caverns. The course will be held over three weekends.

**V-BATS:** Certificates of Completion were handed out to Lance & Robin Mitchell. Congratulations! Remember: every Tuesday at TinY's, or every Thursday on meeting weeks.

**Survey Activities:** The Endless Cave Campground survey will be sometime this Fall. The Front Royal Grotto has monthly surveying trips, Janet Tinkham is the POC. Also, Gangsta Mappers for Breathing Cave (3rd weekend every other month).

**Presentation:** TinY gave everyone a crash course in basic surveying. We all got to learn how to fill out surveying log books. A good practice before our Endless Caverns survey!



# Searching

For the Elusive Sea Cave

By Nikki Bennett



photo by Meredith Hall Johnson



View of the beach

photo by (Meredith Hall Johnson)

The cell phone is one of the greatest inventions of humankind. Sure, you can use it to call people in an emergency, or talk to your Mom, or your boss, or whomever, but the best reason to have a cell phone is so your caving buddies can call you up as soon as you reach California and tell you exactly where they are—in my case, at Fat Burgers eating lunch—so you can all meet up and go search for sea caves. So our trip to the NSS Convention in California started out with a slight but wonderful detour.



The trail down to the beach

photo by (Meredith Hall Johnson)

I arrived at LAX at around 10:00 Saturday morning August 2nd and got a call from TinY just as I picked up my rental car. TinY, Susi, Meredith, Sarah and Kelsea were all on Route 5 heading down to Palo Verdes because Meredith had heard there might be some sea caves to explore down there. Thank God for the cell phone! Meredith talked me down the whole way to the Pacific Coast Highway where I met them at Fat Burgers (the best burgers in California). After a super burger and milkshake, we headed out.

For those who have never been on the West Coast, it's nothing like the East Coast! Most of the shoreline is composed of steep, rocky cliffs that fall into the tumbling blue ocean. Actual beaches are squished in little coves, and these beaches are few and far between. So, our first mission was to actually find a beach to walk on, with hopefully not too steep a descent. We found a perfect little beach in Palo Verdes—I can't remember the name—that had a nice path running down to it. The beach was interesting because it was all rocks and no sand. It reminded me of cave breakdown and I was glad I had had the sense to bring my trekking poles with me. The beach wasn't that long, and we walked as much of it as we could before we reached the cliffs on the other end. We were hoping to climb them a little bit and see what we could find, but the tide was coming in, and none of us dared to take the chance.

We didn't find a sea cave, but we did have a cool afternoon. The day was blue and clear—you could see all the way out to Catalina Island—and it was fun watching the waves smash into the bigger rocks and send spray way up into the air. And the water made a funny sound when it hit the beach and



then pulled back out. Because it was going over rocks instead of sand, it made a sound like fireworks or popping corn—a very weird, funky sound.

After we climbed up the cliffs back to the cars, Meredith, TinY, Susi, Kelsea and Sarah took off for the convention (which was about a 4-hour drive from L.A.) and I went to a hotel next to the airport so I could pick Gordon up the next day. I don't know how those guys found the strength to drive all the way to Porterville after all that exercise! I sure know I was glad to have a hotel room for at least one night before 6 nights of camping. I think I crashed pretty quickly after I got to the hotel. But it was a great, fun way to kick off our time in California. I think though, that we need to schedule another trip out there, so we can actually find a sea cave (hint, hint!).



BATs on the beach: Mike "TinY" Manke, Kelsea Johnson, Sarah Pearce, Nikki Bennet, Meredith Johnson  
photo by Meredith Hall Johnson



# A Wild Tour of Crystal Cave and Visit to Sequoia National Park, California

By Mike "TinY" Manke

My visit to Crystal Cave in Sequoia National Park came as a surprise to me. I had planned to go caving on Tuesday with Rick Royer and several other Convention attendees. After several of our caving buddies changed their plans on Tuesday morning, Rick and I decided to punt, and planned a trip for Wednesday.

I was awakened by a voice calling from outside my tent, "Earth to TinY...Earth to TinY... Earth to TinY" at 6:00 a.m. Wednesday morning. I did not make it to bed as early as I had planned on Tuesday night. Rick had quite the time waking me up but apparently several other BATS members camped near my tent awakened much easier!

Rick informed me that we were signed up for the guided wild tour of Crystal Cave and we needed to get on the road right now. We were scheduled to meet our guides at 8:30 a.m. in the cave parking lot approximately 3 hours away. The thought of another caver waiting to take us caving motivated me to crawl out of the tent.

My gear was packed and waiting and we were loaded up in just a few minutes. I think I had fallen comfortably back to sleep in Rick's car even before we had made it out of the campground. I slept through a gas stop, two coffee stops, and miles of treacherous mountain roads to awaken in the parking lot of the cave.

Two park employees fishing in the stream discovered Crystal Cave in 1918. It is at an elevation of about 4,500 feet. The air is crisp and thin for us low elevation visitors from the East Coast. The entrance, measuring 30 feet high and 16 feet wide, is quite large for a Sierra cave and easily visible from the stream below.

Before its discovery by people of European descent, Crystal Cave had been visited by the Native Americans. The remains of two were discovered in the cave. They remain in the cave after study, having been re-interred with the help of local tribal descendants.

Crystal Cave was developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and opened to the public in 1940. Over 50,000 paying customers tour its chambers on paved trails each year. It is a profitable commercial venture bringing much-needed funds to the park's bank account. A beautiful spider web design gate at its historic entrance protects the cave. This is surely the most recognizable cave gate in the world for those who have had the opportunity to see it with their own eyes. The spider in the center of the web contains the latching links and must be rotated to open the gate.

Our visit on this trip was with a small group and two guides. We quickly made our way through the 1,800 feet of paved trail in the commercial section of the. Our caving lights seemed dim in the large, highly decorated rooms. Water flowed steadily through bowl-shaped cuts in the marble and limestone, revealing beautiful banding in the rock.

Marble is a metamorphic limestone with a large crystalline structure. In Crystal Caverns it varies from bleached white to a black banded color. Limestone and marble are mixed in many areas of this cave.

We dropped off the paved trail and headed into the bowels of the cave. Movement was tight in several areas but I would still rate the trip as a beginners adventure. Working our way down to the bottom of the cave, we passed through breakdown, solution passage, and water-current-worn passages through the rock. Formations were few and far between in any size. The discerning eye could easily find small hidden formation treasures if one took the time to look for them.

At the bottom of the cave we found a slow-flowing stream and a large, deep, still lake. Our lights penetrated the clear water to depths well over our heads. Pure white, small crystals lined the ceiling and covered the popcorn in several areas. We were careful to place our hands and feet on solid rock while moving over the pool to keep from disturbing it.



After a few side trips to other areas in the lower reaches of the cave, we climbed back to the tourist trail. The lights were on and we could hear a tour being conducted in the background. We quietly waited out of sight for the tour to pass before climbing onto the trail. Under the professionally set up commercial cave lighting, I felt as if I were visiting a different cave. Here on the tourist trail, beautiful views of marble, curtains, flowstone, stalagmites, and stalactites were visible at every turn of the head. This is where the true beauty of Crystal Cave was displayed.

Upon our exit we encountered another commercial cave tour. For what seemed like 15 minutes or more, we stood on the side of the trail while tourists passed by. Most just smiled and nodded as they walked by, but several took the time to question us about our caving attire.

After our visit to the cave Rick and I took the time to see some of the other wonders in Sequoia National Park. Within minutes we were driving through massive towering Sequoia trees. WOW!!! Those are BIG TREES! We stopped to take a close look at the General Sherman Tree. This tree is touted as the largest living thing on Earth. The base of the tree is over 102 feet in diameter! It thrusts its huge trunk into the blue sky for over 275 feet! At an estimated age of 2,300 to 2,700 years, it stands like a giant sentinel in the forest. There are taller trees and there are trees with a larger diameter, but the General Sherman's volume, at over 2.7 million pounds, makes it the world's largest living tree.

Another five-minute drive through the breathtaking sequoia groves led us to the tunnel tree. This is a large sequoia that fell naturally in the forest. A tunnel over eight feet high was cut through its trunk to allow traffic to drive through it.

Our last stop on our visit to Sequoia National Park was Moro Rock. Rick had bragged to me that I missed a beautiful view of this granite rock outcrop from the winding roads below as I slept. Now we were going to view the winding roads from the top of the rock. Rock, did I say rock? This feature is a small mountain for us eastern folks which sticks out of the side of a larger mountain. At an elevation of 6,725 feet, it commands a breathtaking view of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River Valley below.

From the tourist parking area, it is only 200 stair steps and a 300-foot elevation gain above the parking area to the top. It sounds close but the thin Sierra mountain air made me suck hard for oxygen as I climbed to the top. The view was spectacular! Imagine Whiteside Mountain on steroids and you can begin to get the picture.

The day was getting late and we wanted to get back to Convention for the Wednesday evening dinner so we hit the road. Kudos and "hats off" to Rick for driving all the way back again. I quickly settled back into his reclining front bucket seat and snoozed all the way back to the campsite. Before I drifted off to sleep I thought, "I will have to buy Rick a beer at for doing all of the driving."

# BATS Go to TOWN

By Meredith Hall Johnson

**They actually let us  
out in public.  
Maybe they're sorry now...**

Long-hair Steve's band played in Fredericksburg Friday night (9/5/2003). Several BATS went. The band was great. The BATS misbehaved as expected.

Josh was particularly funny with his dinner order... ANTIPASTA. (It was NOT spaghetti!)

Kelsea got hit on by an older-than-me gentleman who claimed he was drinking river water.

Apparently Sarah cannot hold her beef...and we're NOT talking about Russell, also known as Russell the Love Muscle.

Meredith tried to cave under the table but came to a passage that was too tight. She wanted to justify this trip report.

All in all, we had fun.

*Who was there: Long-hair Steve Bennett, Kelsea Johnson, Meredith Hall Johnson, Sarah Richards, Russell Loynes, Josh Babcock, Dave Johnston, Mike Miller, and numerous folks who work with both Steve and Dave.*

# Who is Sister Winkie?

By Kelsea Johnson





Now, before I start this little piece on Sister Winkie, I would just like to preface it by saying that the security people didn't want us to have any fun during Convention!

Ok, so, that being said, Sister Winkie is, basically, a cave goddess, who, with proper homage, assures us a rain-free week for the next Convention. Well, at least not a whole week of rain!

So—I think it was by Tuesday night—TinY was telling Sarah and me that we needed to get the Sister Winkie tribute together. Gathering help was not the hard part! We got it going, and then some of the Shreds and some other people took over constructing it. By morning, it didn't look half bad and we still had the rest of the week to continue working on her!

Honestly though, I think the security people wanted us to have rain in Michigan, because by that night Sister Winkie was gone! Once again, we got it going, and once again, it was taken down. Friday morning we were planning to capture Sister Winkie and take her to the noisy side, but we realized that, once again, she had been taken down!

So this time, we did it the right way. We had a big box for the center and support. Two-by-fours somehow appeared from the construction site on campus as well as a kiddie pool, a golf set, beer bottles and boxes, undies, posters, a bat kite, and Christmas lights. Sister Winkie should be very proud, and we shouldn't get any rain in Michigan!





# The Best VAR Ever...

By Anya K. Crane

You know how relaxation experts tell you to visualize a flame or flower or some other pleasant thing? Well, for me, it's the flame of the campfire at the best VAR ever—the Fall VAR at Endless Caverns. And, despite the issue, everything was good. (I hate cold showers, and, I hate not being able to take a shower. That VAR, they were so cold that I did not get a shower—gross. For whatever reason, it didn't bother me.) I guess I should just lower my standards about showers, then, I'll never be disappointed—hmf.

It was a perfect VAR to me because all of the elements were in place: good weather, good caving and good friends.

I arrived on Friday night in my new truck and was surprised that folks recognized me despite the change of vehicles. Bryan helped me set up my tent in the spot Tracy had saved for me. And, then, I went off to register and relax. The fire was the place to relax. It welcomed us to the campground and danced to the music of our personal vibes. The weather was warm and without rain. I remember most of us needed only t-shirts and jeans to be comfortable at night. That is a rare treat for a lot of us, like me, who get cold easily. Everyone was chatting it up and figuring out what to do the next day.

There were plenty of cave trips to choose from. I went to 3-D Maze Cave. We had a little trouble finding the entrance but Ken was able to sniff it out and we didn't mess around too long wandering the countryside. (While the countryside was humps of pretty, peaceful green with scattered trees and rocks in just the right places, we were actually there to cave.) The cave is not that big so we ran into the two other groups that were there. One group was composed of 14 ill-equipped students led by a guy who thought he was leading "the VAR trip" to this cave. The other group was smaller, quicker and quieter. We spent a few hours playing and poking around—a nice day. We got back just in time to shower (or, in my case, attempt to shower), eat and see the entire slide show. The slide show

was exciting as it was about the discovery of new holes in the ground in West By-God Virginia. After the slide show, the fire was again the place to be. We caught up with people we only saw at VAR and we got closer to those we see more frequently. We talked about the trips that everyone went on. We talked about the slide show, the food, the area's caves and sights, traveling and all sorts of other things.

I focus on that campfire flame and it's like it's all good in life. I remember how we really didn't need it to keep warm but it felt so good on sore muscles—sore muscles were good because that meant we did something! And, the light from the fire allowed us to see each other well to converse, to smile, to laugh, to sing and most of all just to be there—at the best VAR ever.

*Footnote: I have not been to a VAR since then. Once I do, that one may become the best VAR ever. Stay tuned.*

## A B A T S MEMBERSHIP

is only \$15 for  
non-NSS Members  
and \$10 for  
NSS Members.

Contact Raymond  
Herlong to join up.

