

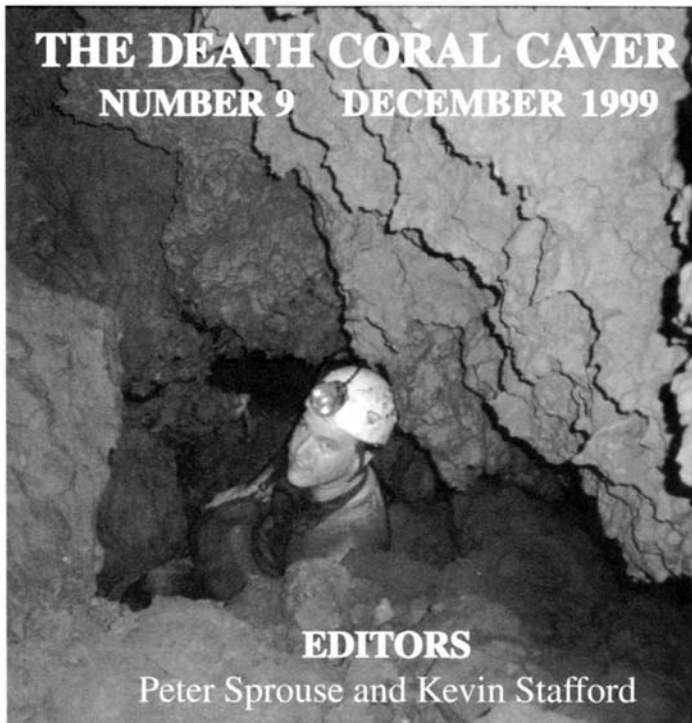
THE DEATH CORAL CAVER

NUMBER 9

DECEMBER 1999







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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Death Coral Caver No. 9 is the first periodical that I have had the honor of designing. Any comments or suggestions on this issue would be appreciated for issue no. 10. I would like to express special thanks on behalf of myself and the project to all of those who have contributed to this issue, and those who continue to provide support for PEP.

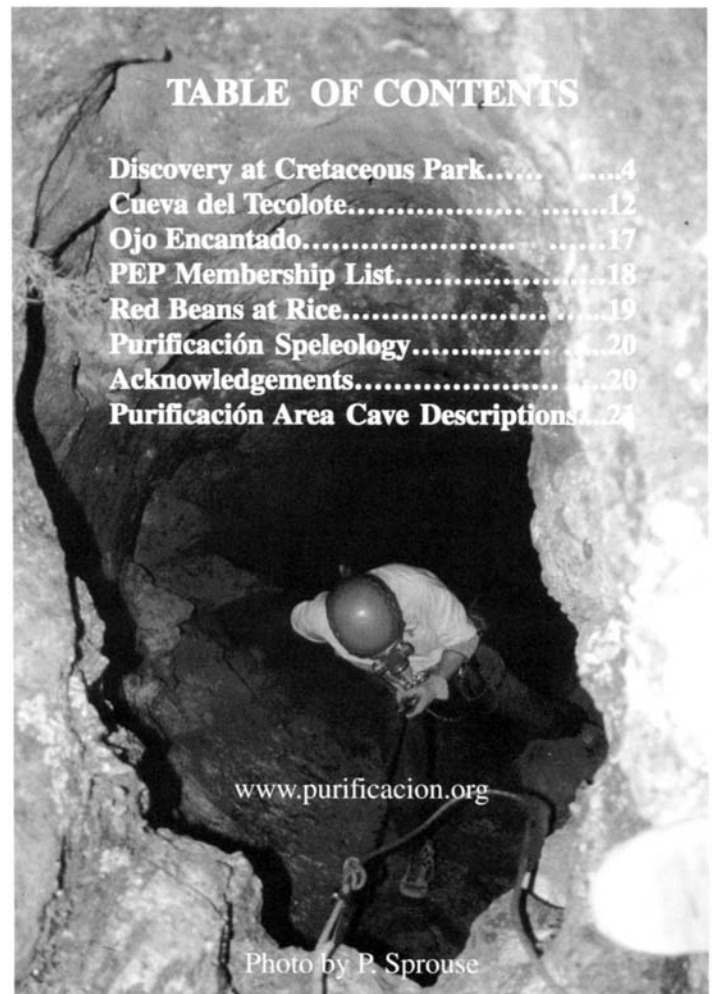
Kevin Stafford

PHOTO CREDITS

FRONT COVER: Maria Tehrany negotiates a drop in Sumidero Anaconda. 1999 photo by Peter Sprouse.

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Tim Stich lights shields in the Trojan Trunk, Cueva del Tecolote (top); Christie Rogers rappels into Sima Dos Ojos (bottom right); Laura Rosales on rope in the upper levels of Sumidero Suchomimus (bottom left). 1999 photos by Peter Sprouse.

BACK COVER: Antonio Soriano in Idionycteris Canyon, Sumidero Suchomimus. 1998 photo by Peter Sprouse.





Morning clouds in Infierno Canyon

Photo by P. Sprouse

Discovery at Cretaceous Park

by Peter Sprouse

“Peter, you’re excited!” exclaimed Cyndie Walck, as we stood by the campfire describing our find of the day. Indeed I was. Only a few hours before, Barbara Luke, Bill Mixon and I had been wrapping up the last ridgewalk of a very successful two-week expedition. By now we had a winning formula of using aerial photographs to find sinking drainages, but we had already checked the most obvious ones earlier on. So on this day it looked like we might not find anything. The three of us had hiked down into a steep arroyo bottom to find no sink, but I decided to explore a ways downstream to be sure, while the others waited. Just as it seemed like this drainage would continue on down to the coastal plain, I suddenly reached a vertical drop into a deep sink. Peering over the edge, I looked down to the left into a large sloping borehole. My whoops of joy signaled to the others that we had yet another big discovery on our hands. We soon verified that this was indeed a big cave, earning it the name T Rex.

The December 1998 PEP expedition headed for the western side of the project, Zaragoza, Nuevo León. We had been working the area around Cerro el Viejo since 1984, and in six trips had found some 54 caves (see *The Death Coral Caverns* nos. 1 and 5). But none of these had turned into the big deep caves that the massive limestone in the area seemed to promise. Our luck was about to change.

Cerro el Viejo is formed by a large thrust fault, where a block of Lower Cretaceous limestone has been pushed up and eastward over a layer of Upper Cretaceous shale. On

previous trips we had found some caves where drainages coming off of this shale band hit the limestone and sank, notably in the Chupaderos valley in an area we had dubbed “Cretaceous Park.” This time we were heading to a northern extension of this zone, on the north side of Cañon el Infierno. Our objective was a series of sinking arroyos that I had spotted on the air photos. On the day after our arrival in the area, eight of us set off north from camp to check these. A nice trail took us down the shale to the contact, where we found a large sinkhole. We worked our way across the sink, finding

some small holes, then the actual stream sink where the arroyo disappeared. No water was flowing at the time, and it was plugged with fill, but looked quite promising nonetheless. A close inspection turned up a small hole taking air, so we filed this one away for later investigation. The next valley to the north was not as incised, in fact it had a cornfield in it, but we did locate a small cave. Susie Lasko had a peek into this one, Cueva de la Milpa de Maíz, which was later mapped to 126 meters in length before it pinched.

The third valley is where it got really interesting. As we walked into this from the downstream direction, it seemed very “sinky” and incised. Soon we spotted a 25-meter tall limestone headwall, below which was a large pit. As we approached we could hear the sound of water falling deep below. Rocks dropped about 60 meters. Now this was exactly what we were looking for, a very exciting entrance that reminded me of a TAG classic. Realizing that the arroyo coming off the shale did not enter this pit, I walked a little farther upstream and found it sinking into another entrance, this one a four-meter drop into apparent going passage. These two pits seemed certain to connect, which they in fact did to form the major find of the expedition. Continuing the dinosaur theme we’d started earlier in Cretaceous Park, we named this cave Sumidero Suchomimus, after a crocodile-like species discovered recently in the Sahara.

But our day of discovery didn’t end here. At valley number four Laura Rosales and I hiked up to find a plugged 15-by-60-meter sink, something we may have to scrutinize later. Valley number five had another major stream sink, again plugged, but Walt Olenick found a large entrance just above it that immediately got named Pink Socks, after my attire of the day. Javier Vargas and I explored down a steep slope to a sucking constriction that needed hammering. Curiously, just uphill from that Susie found a small hole blowing lots of air. With plenty of good leads in the bank, we headed back to camp to hear what the others had found. Charley Savvas and Kevin Stafford had checked a sink just south of our area and found a nice cave, Cueva Jalea. It went for 132 meters to a drafting constriction.

SUMIDERO SUCHOMIMUS

After the first day’s discoveries we were naturally most excited about the big pit with the waterfall, Suchomimus. So we put together four teams, a push and a survey team for each entrance. Charley and Kevin were to rig into the pit entrance, while Javier and I rigged into the arroyo entrance. We quickly verified that the arroyo entrance “went” as we followed a scalloped canyon to a 2-meter drop. Below that a chimney over a pool led under a shower to an 8-meter drop into a larger pool. After a stoop, we rigged the 4-meter 4th drop with 7mm line. Two more short drops in succession got us to a junction where an infeaser came in from the left at the



Carlos at the skylight entrance to Suchomimus
Photo by P. Sprouse

top of a flowstone climb. Ahead was another large junction. The left way sloped up to a window into the shaft of the big pit entrance, confirming a connection. Hanging out of this spectacular window we were able to make contact with Barbara Luke’s survey team. Susie was able to toss the survey tape to us for the connection shot. Back at the junction we looked at the right lead, which continued downstream with several loops and side leads. Leaving that for another day, we headed toward the entrance to meet Cyndie and Scott, who were surveying in. We helped them map to the connection tie-in at the window, where we could talk to, but not see, Charley climbing around the corner. He reported pushing downstream in the big pit to a 50-meter drop. Barbara’s survey crew didn’t get quite that far on the first day, mapping past the bottom of the entrance drop to the first swim.

Two days later, four teams went into Suchomimus, two of them via the arroyo entrance. Javier and Soriano were the rig team in the arroyo entrance. First they tackled the inlet climb lead, finding going walking passage. They pushed up four climbs in all, stopping where they could see a daylight at the top of a canyon. Then they pushed downstream past the limit of exploration. This got to a tall canyon and a junction. Upstream at the junction went, and downstream went to a drop, beyond which they could see another drop. But they were out of drill power, so they quit. Meanwhile Bill “Carlos” Nasby, Laura, and I first surveyed downstream, tying up various loops up to the previous limit of exploration. Then we mapped up the new inlet route through fine passage reminiscent of Cueva de La Llorona, with sloping, flowstone-covered drops. At the top of the drop series we couldn’t see the reported skylight, it being late, so we photographed back.

On the surface, I met Bernhard coming out of the big pit entrance. They had pushed down an 80-meter pit and through 1000 meters of borehole to a four-way junction. They picked one way and pushed it to a blowing flowstone pinch that needed enlargement. They mapped back 50 stations but a long hanging gap remained to Barbara’s survey. Behind them,

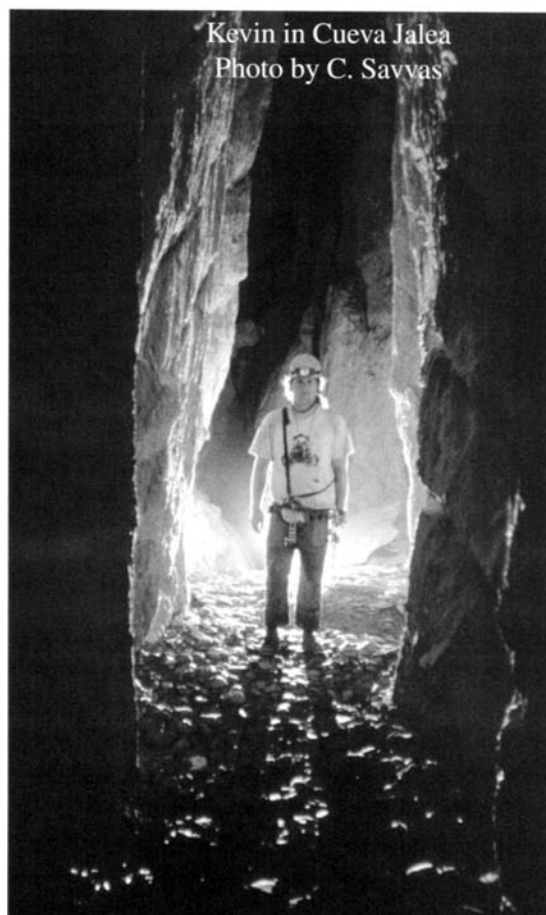


the cave was over two kilometers.

Soriano and I kept going back to the upper canyons of Suchomimus during the latter part of the expedition. After de-rigging lower Plethodon Canyon, we headed back upstream to check a climb on the left side. Flowstone was coming out of a high canyon, which Soriano got into with a boost. It was another walking canyon taking off, so we started mapping. We named it Idionycteris Canyon for the type of bat Soriano identified there. It was nice walking stuff, and we quit after 200 meters with it still going. On our last day in the cave, we continued ahead in Idionycteris Canyon to a big dome. We were able to climb partway up it and see a good canyon lead taking off, but the climb needed protection, so we continued under the dome in our same canyon to where it climbed up to a cemented breakdown blockage. Soriano tried climbing over it, but it got too tight. Then we went back to a climb on the left, before the big dome, that went up to a guano-floored room where I collected some myrmecodesmus millipeds. This gave name to the small canyon going off, Myrmecodesmus Canyon, which went but it was much smaller than others we'd been in. After a bit, we got tired of 1.5 meter shots in the endless meander, and left it for next year. Altogether we had mapped 2614 meters in Sumidero Suchomimus, vaulting it to longest in the state of Nuevo León. And 317 meters depth wasn't too shabby either.

Barbara, Cyndie, and Maria had mapped steadily down short climbs and the big 130-meter Jungle Gym drop series.

The next day saw only a little activity at Suchomimus, when Carlos, Javier, and I did a search for the new skylight entrance, using the computer-processed cave survey as a guide. Soon we found it and mapped down a rift to tie into the survey. We then did an overland survey between all three entrances. When we did get back into the cave a few days later, it was with three teams. Charley, Kevin, and Maria mapped back from their previous survey after failing to find any open leads at the bottom of the cave. Barbara, Laura, and others mapped up to Charley's team to close the survey gap. Carlos and I mapped downstream in the upper section, while Javier and Soriano rigged ahead. After a wet crawl we reached the canyon where the passage split. We mapped into the downstream one, a fantastically beautiful meander with a small flowing stream. We named this Plethodon Canyon, after a slimy salamander I spotted. Soon we caught up with the chilangos where they had connected into the main entrance pit at a spectacular window. This was the top of the waterfall that we heard on the first day outside the main entrance pit. We left the survey tie-in for later and all went back to the upstream Plethodon Canyon. With four of us, the survey went very fast. This was more tall, meandering canyon with an occasional large dome. We quit when the book was full and



SUMIDERO ANACONDA

A few days into the trip, we set off down the road from camp to check a sink near Infierno Canyon that had looked promising on the air photos. An old road went right into the sink, and we knew immediately by the big headwall that we had another major cave on our hands. At the base of the headwall was a nice walking passage going off. When we followed the arroyo back up from the entrance, we found water flow sinking into the limestone at the shale contact just



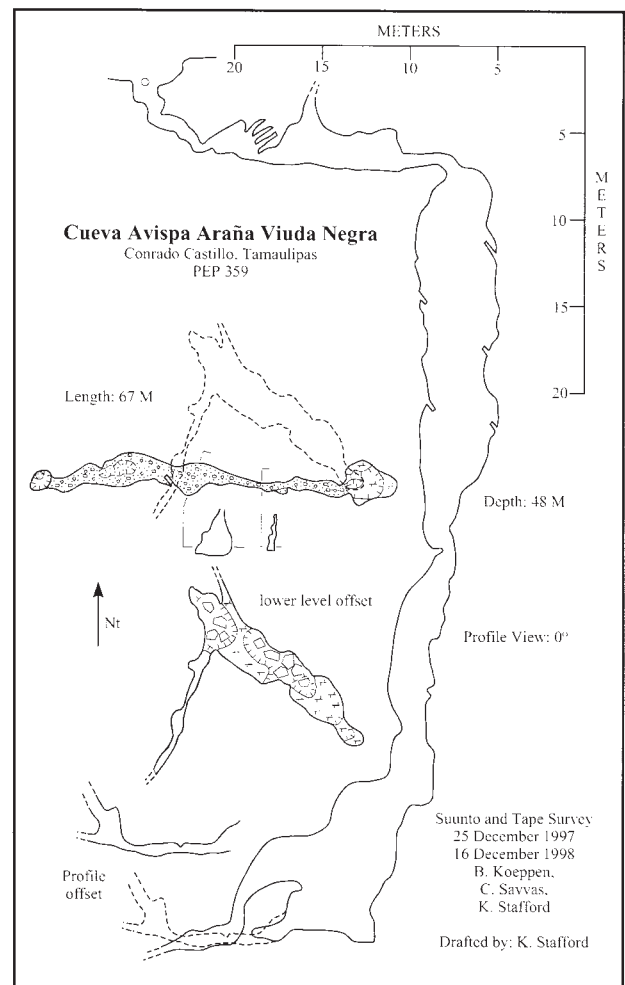
30 meters upstream. The next day we put a survey crew into it, consisting of John, Bill, Scott, Walt Olenick, and Rae Nadler. Sumidero Anaconda, as it was now called, was clean washed with good air-flow. Susie showed up and replaced Bill, Walt, and Rae, to

map down two drops of the Zebra Series through bedrock crossed with calcite fractures. The push continued the following day, with Bernhard and Cyndie rigging while Susie, Laura, and John mapped. Three more drops got them to the bottom of the Zebra Series, where a flowing stream was fed by waterfalls from above. They went through a low shower, called the Rabbit Wash, some crawlways and a swim. Another drop stopped them, out of rope for the day. The next trip John, Scott, Susie and Cyndie continued the survey down the next drop, 14-meter Bunny Falls. Then they were in the walking-sized Bouncin' Bunny Boulevard, which led them to a loop called the Boneyard. The passage narrowed to a tall stream canyon at Giraffic Park. When they quit, cold and tired, the cave was 712 meters long and 157 meters deep.

Anaconda was looking good, so the next trip saw two teams going in. Bernie and Cyndie rigged ahead while Susie, Maria and I mapped down the next two pitches. Then we were in tall, straight, narrow canyon passage with a flowing stream. The walls were clean, scalloped bedrock, with a stream down the middle. We met the rig crew coming out

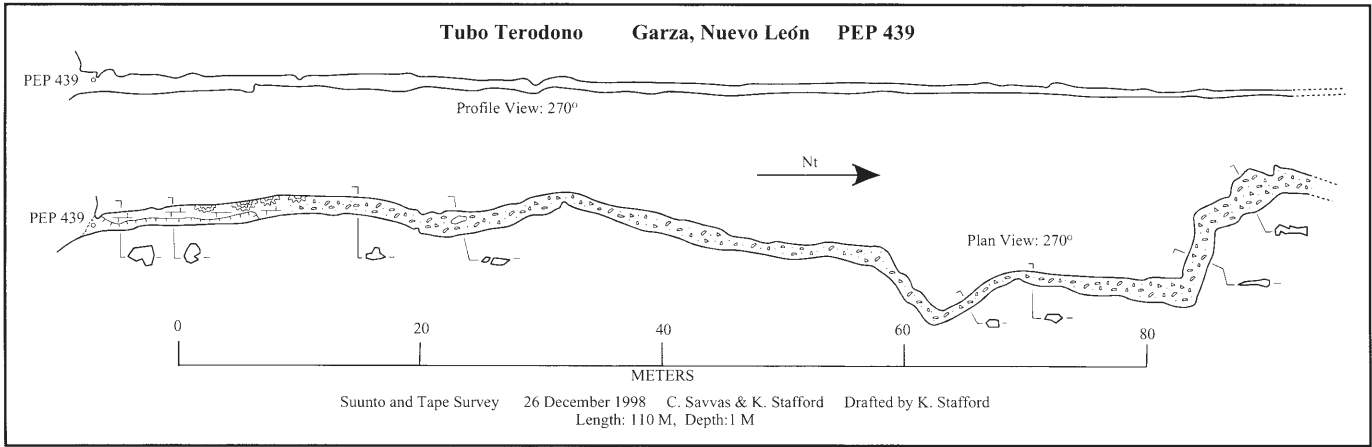
after they had run out of rope once again. A 12-meter pit got us to the top of an impressive 30-meter pitch. Water-filled gours went right up to the edge of the pitch, leaving you looking off into blackness as if on the end of a diving board. Once at the bottom of this it was one shot to the top of the next 10-meter drop, where the rig crew had run out of rope.

The next push was to be the last. John and Carlos rigged down to a flowstone pinch with no airflow. Scott, Maria and Cyndie carried the survey to the top of the last drop. On the next trip Susie, Barbara and Laura finished mapping Anaconda and mostly de-rigged it. Cyndie, Scott and Bernhard finished the de-rig. No leads remained, but since the ceiling of the high canyon passages was out of sight most of the time, who knows what kind of infeeders there may be.



MORE CAVES

Even before the official start of the expedition, Kevin, Charley and Bernhard were in the project area pushing leads near Conrado Castillo. On the Cuchilla el Angel, the ridge where Sótano de la Cuchilla is located, they continued the exploration of Cueva Cerceta del Dragón, which Kevin had been working on for a few months. Unfortunately it pinched.

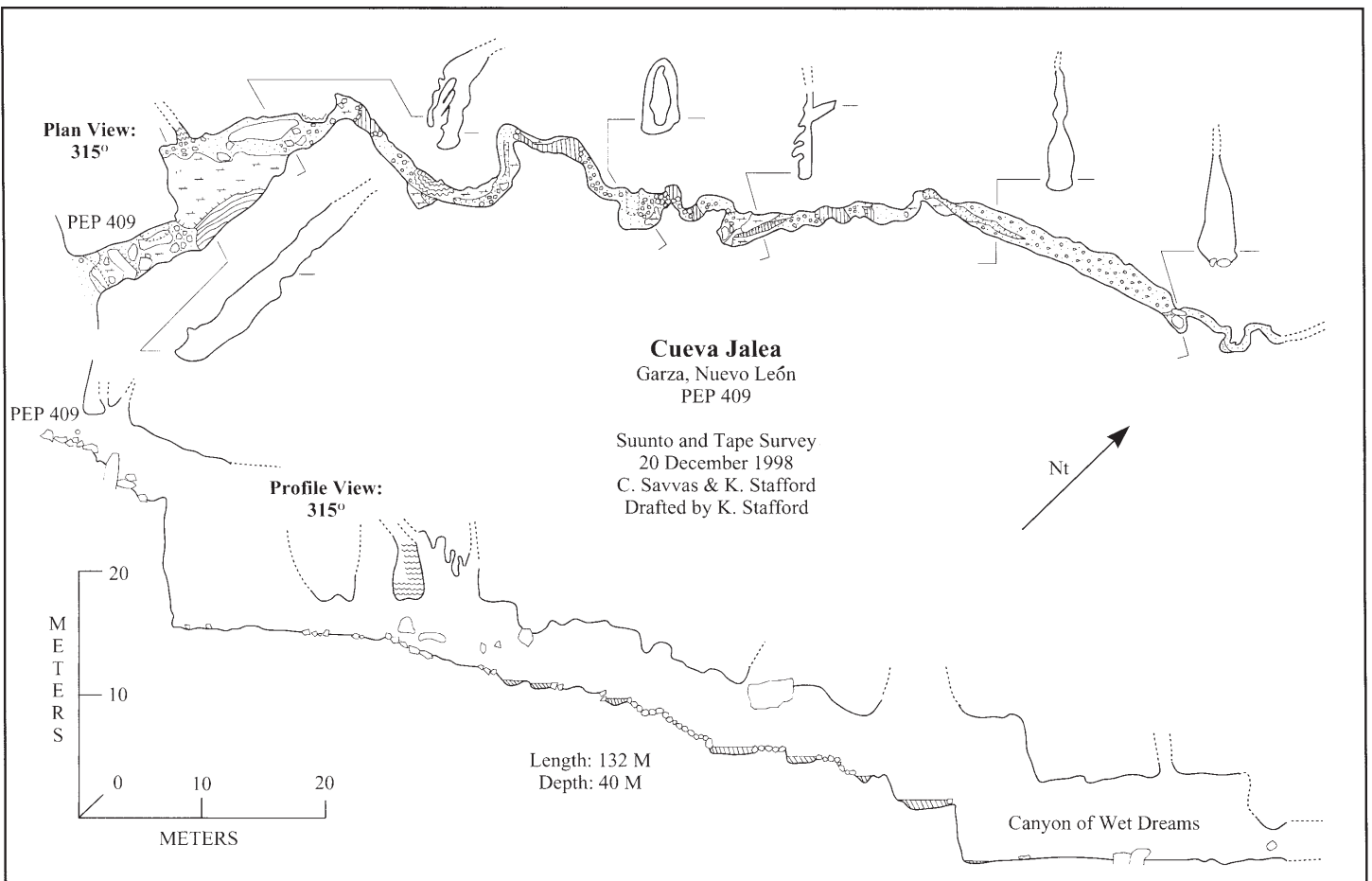


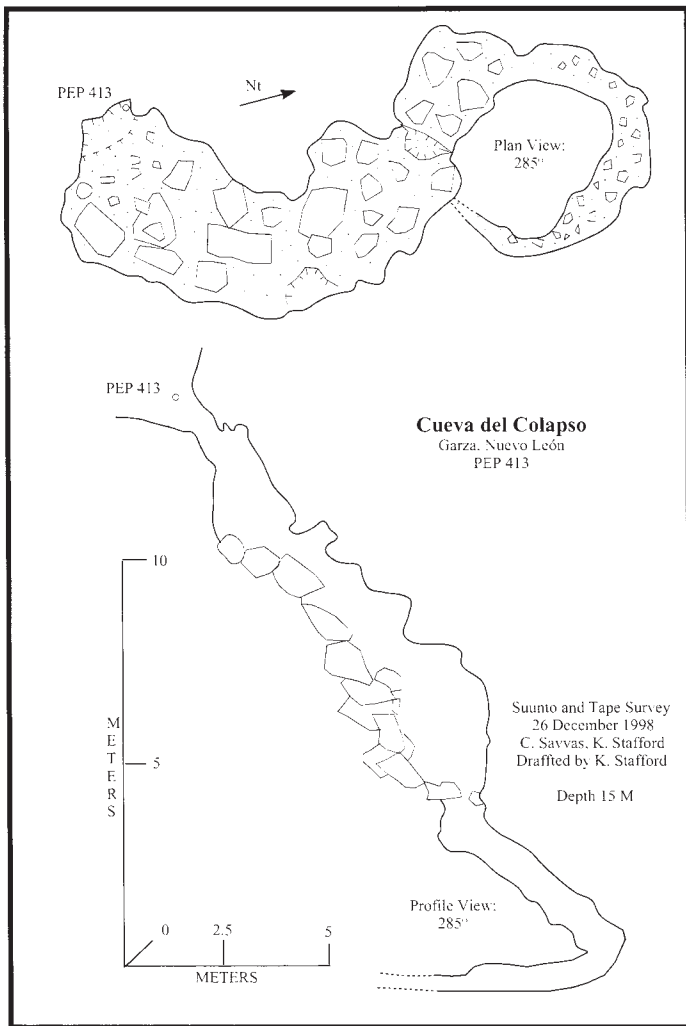
Near La Ventanita they pushed the drop found the year before in Cueva Avispa Araña Viuda Negra, dropping into a canyon passage. Downstream it was plugged, and upstream got to a blowing pinch. Moving west to Tinajas, they went into another lead from the year before, Cueva de Katrina. This one also pinched.

Various other shale contact caves and sinks were checked in Cretaceous Park, with varying results. The very first sinking valley that we checked on the first day was revisited by Carlos, Javier and me. We dug a while on the stream sink, but boulders blocked our way, so we set about looking on the slope above it, and Carlos immediately found a pit. This

dropped 20 meters to two very low and breezy crawls, one of which clearly came from the stream sink. The downstream crawl needed about an hour of digging to get into. It led to a wet belly-crawl, promising but miserable, so we left it for another time. We named this cave Pozo Plesosaurio.

Ridgeworking beyond our "sweet zone" had decidedly poor results. Several hikes were made in the karst plateau east of the contact, but with no concentrated drainage almost no entrances were found. Only one 12-meter pit, Pozo del Primer Intento, was mapped. The limestone was also harder to get around in due to the vegetation. It was scrubbier than on the shale, with lots of nasty cat-claw acacia. The surface





was effectively drier since all water immediately sank. By contrast the moister shale made for tall trees and open understory.

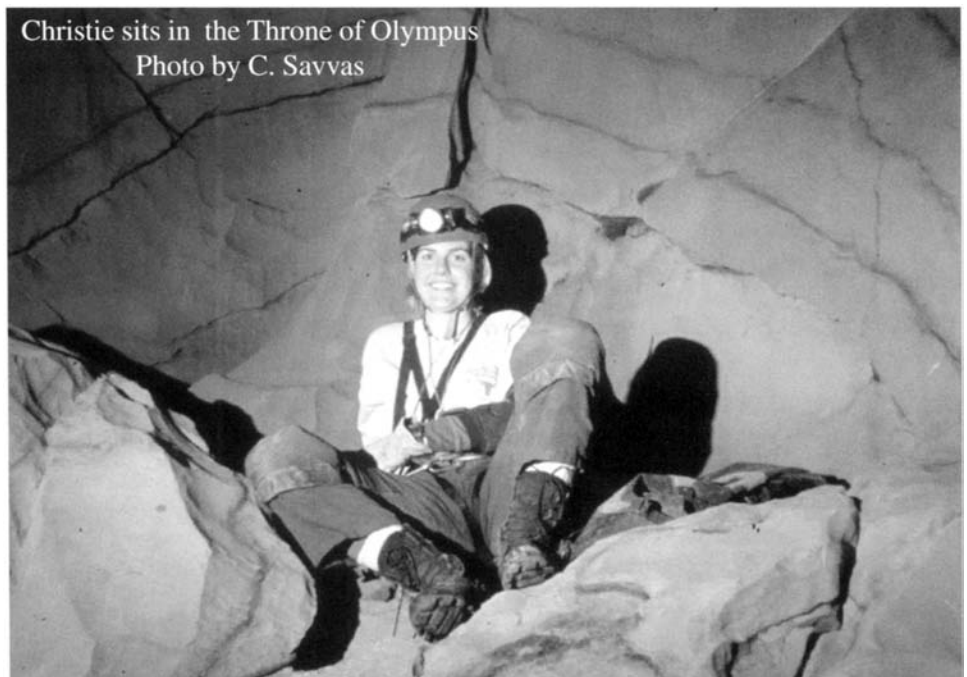
To the south of Infierno Canyon we decided to close the gap along the contact to “Lower Cretaceous Park,” the area we had covered in past expeditions. We checked a lot of sinks, but none went any distance. Charley and Kevin mapped one short cave, Cueva del Colapso. On the way back they also mapped a temporal resurgence cave in Infierno Canyon first explored by Scott. Cueva Pterodono got too low after 100 meters, and may connect to a blowing sink we saw north of Leonel’s house. It seemed that the rocks are more folded south of Infierno Canyon, creating multiple shale/limestone contacts, and making it harder for caves to get a decent start.

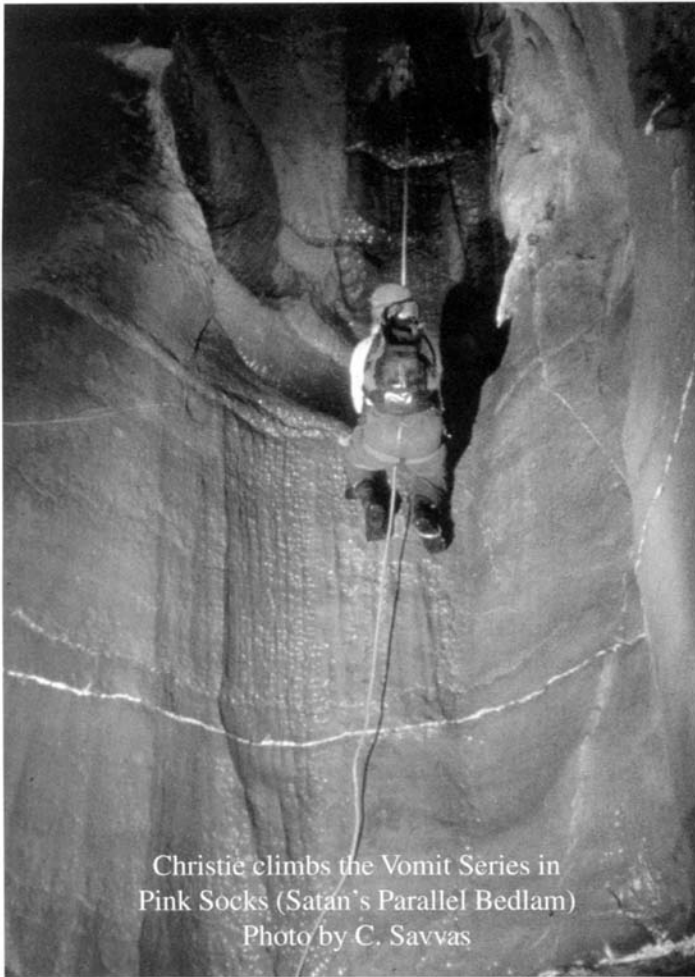
CANYON DESCENT

One of our goals on this trip had been the exploration of Cañon el Infierno. This is the major surface drainage in the area, with limestone walls that eventually soar to a kilometer in height as it winds its way eastward toward the Río Purificación. On our first day in the area John, Bernhard, Soriano, Cyndie, Scott and Maria began the canyon descent. They got about 1500 meters into the canyon, crossing some very cold pools and doing one drop. They mapped a small cave, Cueva de Vestirnos, that crossed the canyon. The next day, John, Maria, Bernhard and Soriano went back, making great progress, getting about five kilometers into the canyon. They rigged several small pitches and two larger ones. The pools and swims were very cold. After a break to do some caving, John, Laura, Bernhard and Charley explored farther down the canyon, seeing a large cave entrance 100 meters up the wall that would be difficult to get to. All of the canyon explorers commented on how cold the water was. Bernhard and Laura then tried to reach this cave from the top, but after a hike across the karst plateau they found the descent to it jammed up with spiny vegetation.

A DINOSAUR WITH PINK SOCKS

One day Susie, Scott and I opened up the lead at the bottom of Calcetes Rosas (Pink Socks) to intersect a stream canyon, walking size and looking great. Fifteen meters downstream it hit a 7-meter pit, and it was getting bigger. Just above this cave, Scott squeezed into the blowing hole for two body lengths, but it got too tight. Charley, Kevin and Christie took up the pursuit of Pink Socks, and pushed down six drops to -87 meters. It continued through a wet crawl with great air. On the next trip (joined this time by Soriano) they mapped





Christie climbs the Vomit Series in Pink Socks (Satan's Parallel Bedlam)
Photo by C. Savvas

Kevin and Christie to move the survey along. They got quite a bit deeper to -221 meters, stopping at the top of a 60-meter pitch with the sound of water below. This was a very enticing carrot for the next expedition.

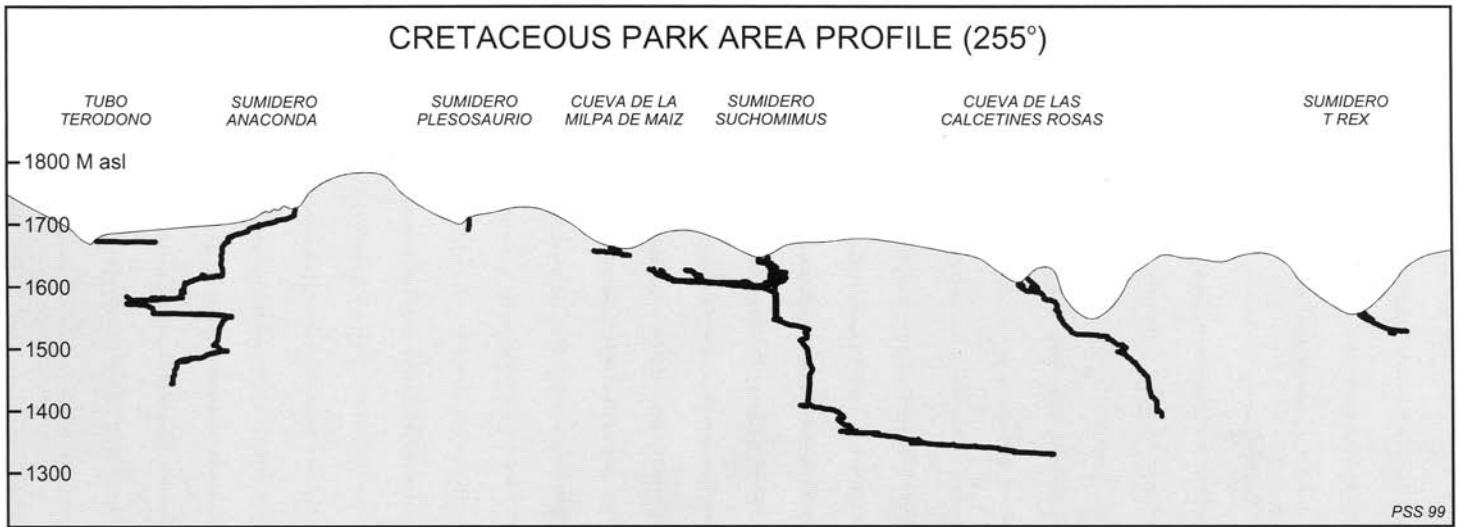
Toward the end of the trip, Bill, Barbara and I hiked north of Pink Socks to look at more arroyo leads I'd seen on the air photos, and found the very exciting Sumidero T Rex. The next day, seven of us hiked back over to give it a closer look and begin a survey. Maria, Barbara and I mapped 23 stations in the entrance passage, while Bernhard checked ahead down the main drain. He came back breathless and excited, having fallen down the first climb. "It's a Bosch cave!" he said, relishing the prospect of another vertical wonder.

When Kevin, Charley and Christie dragged back from Pink Socks, we piled into the trucks for the drive down to Zaragoza for a last meal together before going separate ways. This had been our finest expedition in recent memory, with discoveries that will reverberate for decades to come. The contact caves have a very distinctive and beautiful aspect about them. The aggressive, undersaturated water coming off of the shale carves very smooth and sinuous passages, largely devoid of stal. Many of the canyons are made up of continuous meanders and abandoned oxbows, a classic stream morphology reminiscent of the Mississippi River. Very neat stuff.

through the 50-meter crawl to where it opened up and went several ways, including deeper. They also mapped the inlet near the entrance, and got to a small hole to the surface where the arroyo sank. By this time, Kevin and Charley were getting pretty obsessed with this cave, and on the very last day of the expedition, they returned to Pinks Socks with little rest. On an all night trip they pushed on, with Charley rigging ahead and periodically returning to

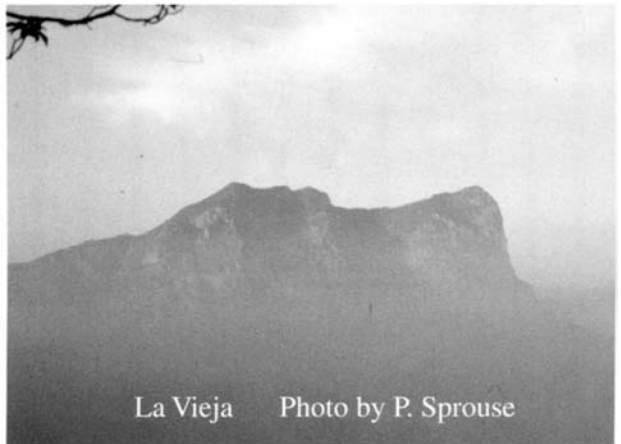


1998-1999 Christmas Expedition Photo by P. Sprouse



EXPEDITION SPELEOMETRY

Name	length	depth
Cueva Cerceta del Dragón	130 m	70 m
Cueva Avispa Araña Viuda Negra	66	48
Cueva de las Calcetines Rosas	562	222
Cueva Jalea	132	33
Sumidero Suchomimus	2614	317
Pozo Primer Intento	12	12
Cueva del Colapso	13	9
Cueva de Vestirnos	31	9
Sumidero Anaconda	1246	278
Cueva de la Milpa de Maíz	126	12
Sumidero T Rex	130	33
Pozo Plesosaurio	21	17



Cueva del Tecolote

March 5-14, 1999
by Ray Keeler

Participants: Peter Sprouse (TX), Susie Lasko (TX), Matt Oliphant (CA), Nancy Pistole (CA), Charley Savvas (TX), Bev Shade (TX), Pete Hollings (Canada), Jack (Solo) White, Bill Stephens (TX), Aaron Addison (TX), Kevin Stafford (TX), Laura Rosales (Mexico), Gustavo Vela (Mexico), Antonio Soriano (Mexico), Tim Stich (TX) and Ray Keeler (AZ)

I flew into Austin on March 5th and was picked up by Jack "Solo" White and Jean Krejca. In the eight years since I had last seen Solo, there were no noticeable changes. He was still the solitary character I had known before, with (like me), an unchanging love and fascination for Cueva del Tecolote. Cavers arrived over the next few hours at Peter Sprouse's and Susie Lasko's new ranchette in Austin, Texas. Matt Oliphant and Nancy Pistole had some minor delays as they drove straight through from southern California, so we met them south of Austin for a late dinner before starting the all night drive to Ciudad Victoria. At the border crossing in Reynosa we discovered Solo's hospital birth certificate (not state issued) was "unacceptable." until a long conversation occurred with the agent and \$20 changed hands.

After another four hours to Victoria we picked up Laura Rosales, Antonio Soriano, and Gustavo Vela at the bus station after their ten-hour ride up from Mexico City. We located the new road to Rancho Nuevo and La Boca, and headed up the mountain. A short break was called at the Río San Pedro, then we continued up the mountain to the village of Los San Pedros. I must admit that riding on the back bumper of Bev's truck offers a wonderful view of huge limestone cliffs and steep forested slopes. She had even installed handles on top of the shell for riders.



Entrance to Tecolote Photo by R. Keeler

We arrived at Los San Pedros at 6:30 pm, promptly dashed to the cave entrance and climbed down into the entrance room via the 12-meter track permanently installed on one side of the entrance pit. Then it was off to cook dinner and set up camp. Charley, Solo, Bev and I were elected to do the rig trip. We got the first six nuisance drops rigged in a three-hour effort, with Charley installing some stainless bolts with his Bosch drill. At Flowstone Falls we left the ropes for the remaining six drops/climbs to camp and all of the rest of the group gear we had with us, which would be picked up on our way in the next day.

Everyone was up fairly late Sunday morning and each went through the mechanics of preparing his camp duffles ... the weight - space - needs - wants - second guessing. Solo set



Susie at tire jam below Isopod Drop
Photo by P. Sprouse

vigilancia's house and headed into the cave (can't get underground before noon) for the six hour slog to Camp I, picking up the group gear along the way. Below Flowstone Falls is a short swim and canal section. Soapsud Sump was completely dry, requiring a rope to get out. This was followed by the Isopod Drop, Ides March (35-meter pitch), Anxiety Canyon and Salon del Puente (25 meters). There was a white plastic bag hanging from a stalactite in the ceiling above the Salon pitch showing that big water passes through. Camp I lies after a flowstone climb in a long, wide, flat trunk passage and there everyone found their favorite place to call home. The trip into camp was trouble free. Peter and Susie rigged up siphon hoses for our water supply from a pool on a ledge above camp.

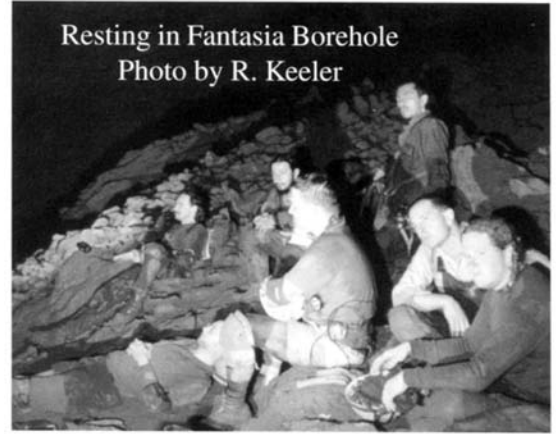
Day 1 (March 8):

Solo was excited. Eleven years before, he had left a good lead at Jellybean Junction. Solo led Matt, Nancy, Charley and most of the "push" ropes the long

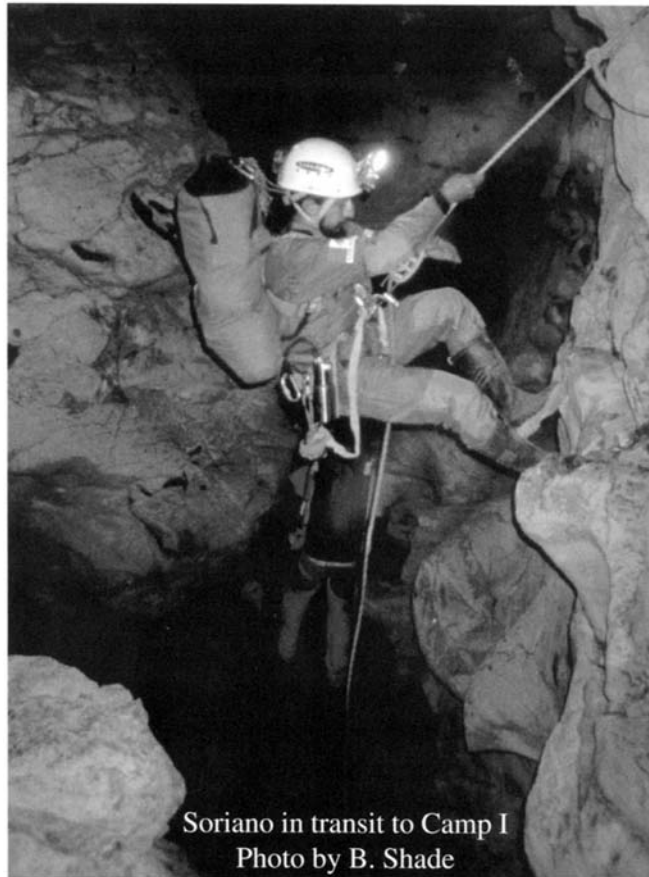
up a hanging scale. Bev came in low at 32 lbs., I came in high with 56 lbs. (must have been the Girl Scout cookies). Peter talked with the comisario, Mariano Torres, who came by camp with all the ejidatarios. We parked the vehicles at the

route, which consisted of one drop and a couple of climbs, to the end of the existing survey. Peter led the three other teams out to the Mickey Mouse

Maze to continue the 80 some leads left from trips nine and ten years before. Unfortunately, he discovered in the Fantasia Borehole that he had left the survey notes back in camp. A fifty-minute rest and picture break was declared and we enjoyed relaxing in the huge passage while he went back to camp to retrieve them. After the Yucky Poodle Trunk, Eye of the Needle, Dumbo Junction and Bullwinkle's Borehole, we had reached a part of the maze that had become confusing. After a couple of wrong turns in Goofy's Borehole, we were in the Gargoyle Gallery and split into survey teams, agreeing to meet back at 9:30 pm to travel back to camp together (and not get lost). The Mickey Mouse Maze has two defining characteristics: it is either extremely sharp and brittle or slip on your butt muddy, and it is always confusing.



Resting in Fantasia Borehole
Photo by R. Keeler



Soriano in transit to Camp I
Photo by B. Shade

Bev, Kevin, Laura and Tim mapped the Missouri Crawlway, which started getting bigger. They picked up 142 meters, and named the area South Park, to continue the cartoon theme. They stopped at a T junction, left several leads and vowed to return. Susie, Gustavo, Pete and Peter mapped a short loop in the Goofy's Borehole area, then mapped three loops near Dumbo Junction, helping fill in the myriad of passages and got 169 meters with some good leads. Soriano, Aaron, Bill and I went up the Gargoyle Gallery climb headed for Slimey's Pit. We decided it was too spooky to go down without a rope and opted to map a backup lead as there were less than four hours left before the "return to camp" rendezvous.



Aaron and Bill at the Gargoyle Climb
Photo by R. Keeler

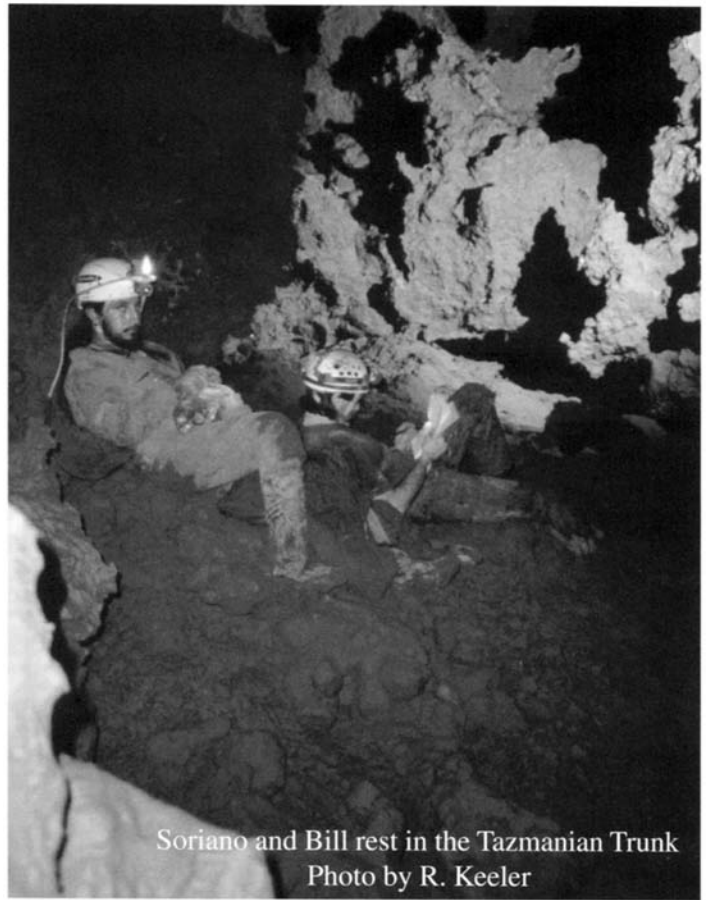
After two shots, we were crawling, followed by a point where Aaron had to hammer to get through. Bleak. After five more crawling stations we suddenly popped out of the muddy crawl into a 16-meter-wide room with leads and bigger rooms, heading southwest. We stopped after 209 meters, leaving the main passage still going and several walking side leads. We met the others for the three hour trip back to camp, arriving after midnight and a 12-hour day.

Charley's team dragged back in from Jellybean Junction at 6 am after an 18-hour trip. At Jellybean Junction, Matt had re-checked a ten-meter flowstone climb using the rope left rigged 11 years before. Near the top he started saying "uh-oh ... uh-oh aaaaagh" as he discovered that all that was left of the rope at the rig point were two to four strands of the core. This led to the discovery of the Jellybean River, a 7-to-10-meter wide, flat river trunk heading straight south and upstream, and started reeling off 20-to-30 meter survey shots for 739 meters. It was still going when they quit.

Day 2:

Three teams went out, Charley's crew slept all day, having been out all night. Everyone had gone to 27-hour days except Charley's team who went to 30-hour days. It's not

hard when the travel times are long. Bev, Kevin and Laura returned to South Park and added 219 meters, stopping at a large, going, sharp trunk passage. At the end of the survey Kevin checked ahead for 200 meters to "see if it went." It did. Susie, Gustavo, Pete and Peter, went out to the Spine Line to look at side leads. They mapped several loops, then looked at the breakdown area. They were able to map through it for a sizeable loop, getting 281 meters for the day. Soriano, Bill, Aaron and I continued where we had left off, headed southwest and leaving walking leads in what we called the Tazmanian Trunk. The passage is sharp, brittle and exposed in places, and 7 to 10 meters high by 4 to 7 meters wide. After 411 meters we stopped at a short pool where a big lead headed to the right (NW), then arrived at camp at 6 am, completing a 15-hour trip. It was now taking 4 1/2 hours to get back to camp.



Soriano and Bill rest in the Tazmanian Trunk
Photo by R. Keeler

Day 3:

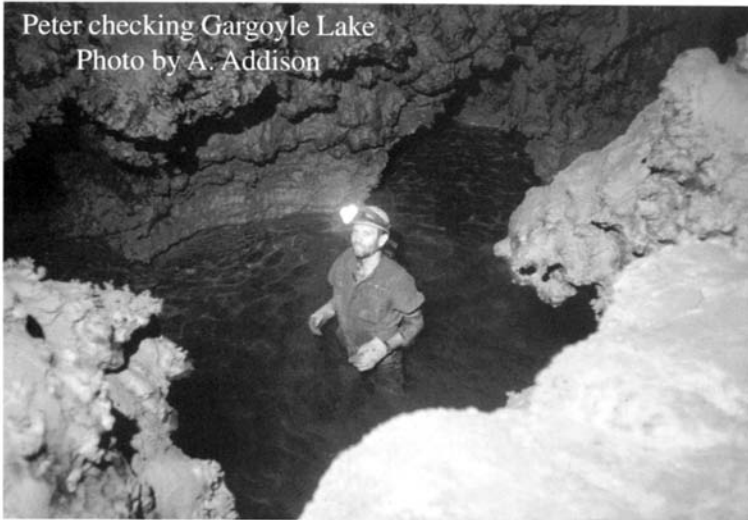
I had picked up a chest cold and stayed down for the next 28 hours, not even hearing Matt, Nancy, Solo and Charley leave at 10 am for the Jellybean River, packed for a long trip. Bev, Kev, Tim, Laura, Susie and Peter headed out the Fantasia Borehole for the D & D Maze. Laura pulled a muscle in her back on the way out, so Susie accompanied her back to camp. The rest of them surveyed loops in the D & D Maze.

Kevin pushed a lake lead to connect to “John & Beyond.” Bev checked leads back toward the Fantasia Borehole, an area now known as the Trojan Trunk, because it has shields. Only one crawl went, but they left it for another time. They shot lots of photos in the trunk, and got 139 meters of survey.

The Jellybean team returned at midnight. They had nice long shots for 297 meters to a big sump. Matt swam out to the end to confirm the sump, which would have to be dived or possibly lowered by removing a 60-centimeter thick bedrock dam. The passage had continued almost due south for over a kilometer. They returned tired but happy with the find.

Day 4:

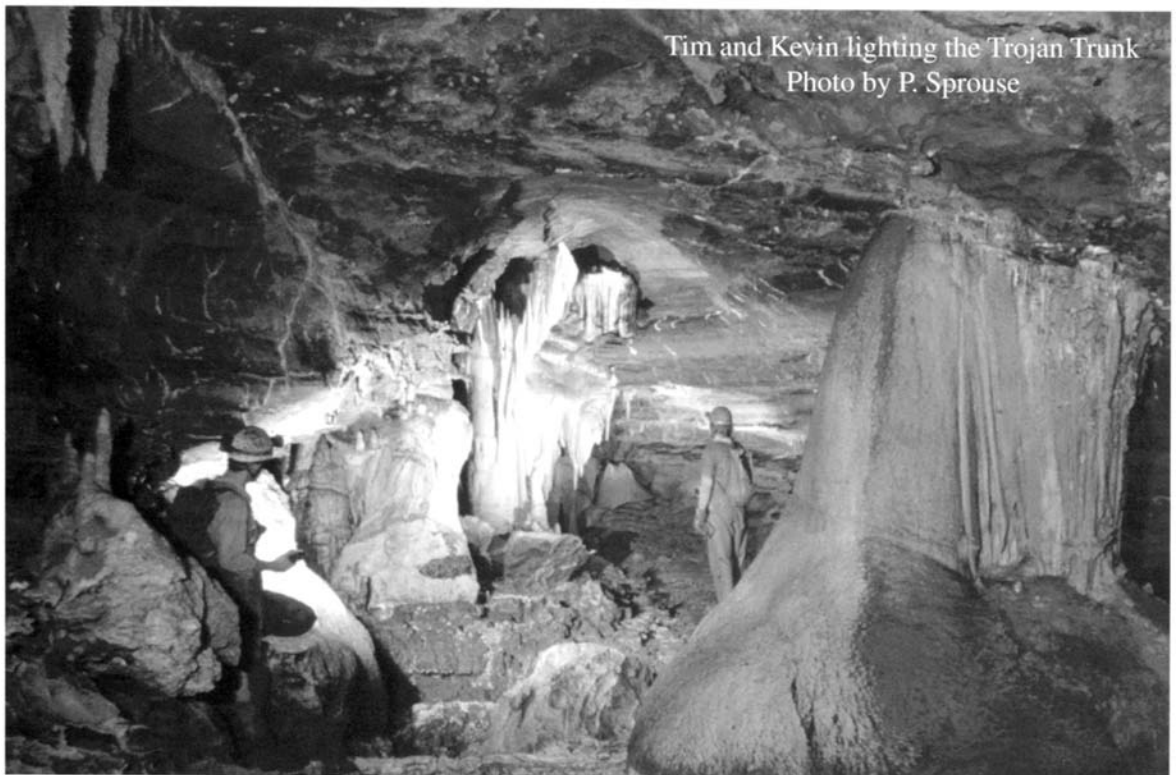
Five teams left camp for an all-out push; two teams to South Park and three to the Tazmanian Trunk. Susie’s (Kevin and Laura) and Bev’s (Matt and Pete) teams continued in South Park doing a leapfrog survey and mapping almost 500 meters to the northwest. They found some comfortable passage and mapped a couple of nice loops, coming in with 297 and 159 meters respectively. If the passages continue to trend to the northwest and if they go far enough, they would get in the neighborhood of other caves known on the surface. Peter, Nancy and Soriano were dropped off at the start of the Tazmanian Trunk, about 300 meters into our previous surveys. They found several nice loops and a much easier bypass to the crawls, coming out at a traverse around the top of Slimey’s Pit. They then mapped another loop in Bullwinkle’s Borehole which may provide a bypass to the Yucky Poodle Trunk, and ended with 273 meters. Charley, Solo and Bill



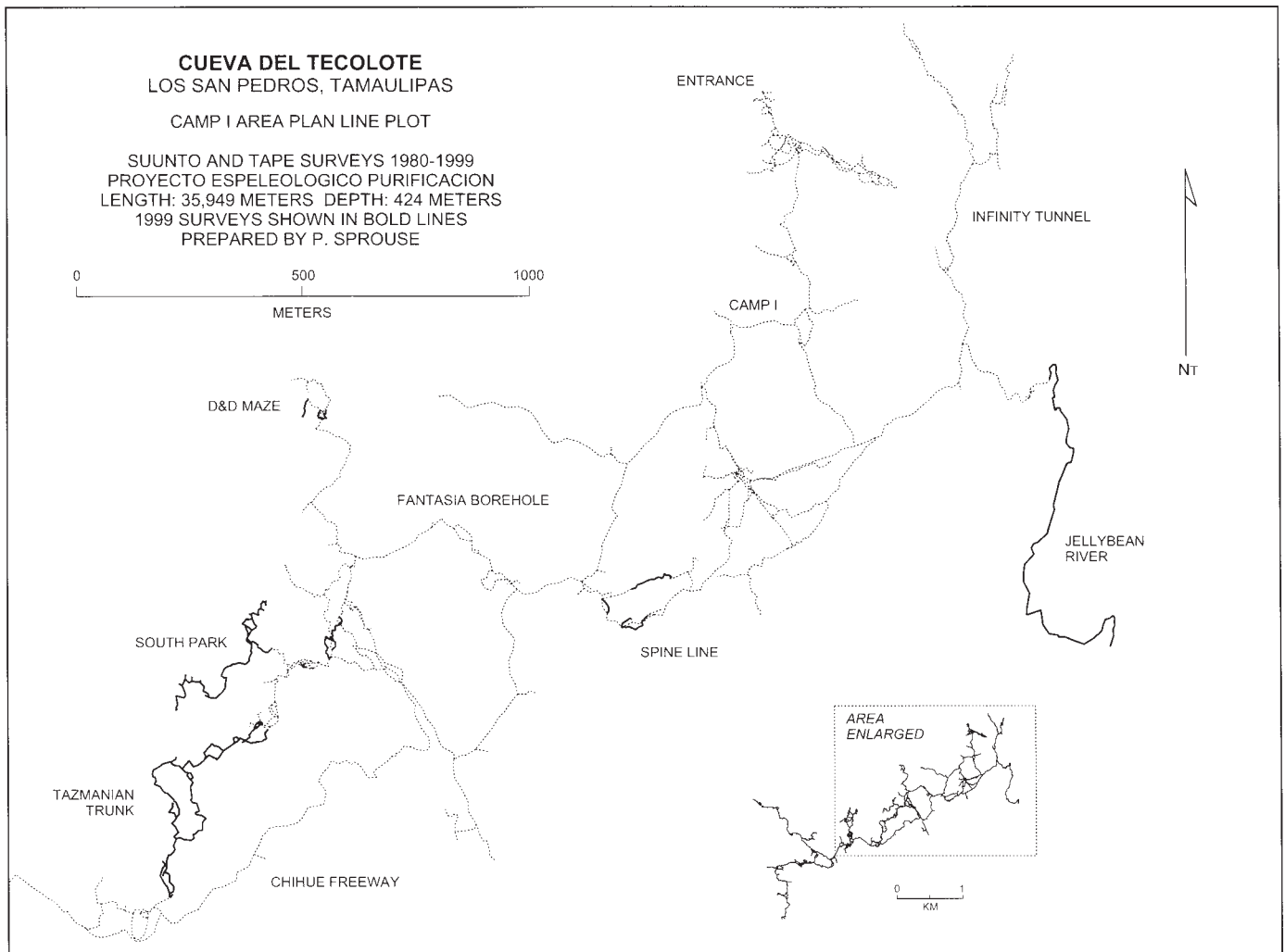
Peter checking Gargoyle Lake
Photo by A. Addison

went to the end of the survey with Aaron, Soriano and me. They took the big, walking upstream lead that got progressively bigger and some good sized rooms naming the area “7 of 9”. They had to backtrack some to a drain to find where it continued. Solo took a pretty bad fall and they spent some time bandaging up the 25- by 7-centimeter gouges in his back before continuing. They ended up with 353 meters.

Aaron took over sketching for me as we continued downstream where we had stopped. The character of the passage quickly changed. We lost the floor for awhile and got back into the slippery mud. The large dimensions were reduced to a hands and knees sloppy drain. Suddenly Gusa yelped and said, “Pit with water.” I figured we would be roped or sumped out. When we got to the edge with enough light, we were looking down on a large pool room with convenient ledges to climb down. The big, wide pool room with big leads to the left and right meant we had connected into the Chihue Freeway, the major water conduit for the cave. We washed the muddy survey tape and prepared to continue mapping. Aaron was sitting high on a mud bank when I heard “oops” followed by silence, then bloop in the water below. While shaking his hands to dry them, his wedding ring had slipped



Tim and Kevin lighting the Trojan Trunk
Photo by P. Sprouse



off in the wet chill. After a focused search, the ring was recovered, and the Golden Ring Pool was named. While we were looking for the ring an isopod came over, probably feeling the motion in the water and knowing that disturbed sediments meant possible food.

After looking around, we found a tie-in station to the left, did a short tourist walk down the Chihue Freeway, then started mapping to the right. After 50 meters and a steep mud slope, we were stopped by 2-to-3 meter climb. The passage continued with a 5-to-6 meter ceiling with the air going up at half a meter a second. With the connection, access to this area would be better via Nonad Lake and the Chihue Freeway. On the way back we met Bill, Charley and Solo at the beginning of the Tazmanian Trunk, mapping out of a side lead. This allowed them to avoid retracing their survey and saved them over an hour of caving. We dragged in at 6 am. Altogether the day produced 1330 meters of survey, making it 3936 meters for the expedition.

Day 5 and Leaving:

People started rustling about 4 pm. There was a nice party at Peter's and Susie's camp site as we admired the new lines

on the map from the "Peter Plotter" and ate beef jerky, girl scout cookies and Jack Daniels. Then a couple hours of quiet time with packing starting at 10 pm. Charley, Nancy and Matt went back to the Fantasia Borehole to take flare pictures and follow us out, de-rigging with Kevin and Bill.

The rest of us started out at 1 am, with the first of us getting to the entrance at 6:30 am and the rest working their way out over the next four hours. After drying gear and packing we headed down the mountain, stopping again at the Río San Pedro for a much needed swim. Following dinner in Victoria, Matt, Nancy, Charley and Soriano crammed their gear and themselves into Matt's truck and headed south for the Cueva Cheve Expedition. Laura and Gustavo were dropped off at the bus station. Bev, Tim and I got back to Austin and crashed at Peter's just after 6 am. After sorting gear for travel and a nice meal I was dropped off at the airport where I stumbled to the plane and fell asleep.

Cueva del Tecolote was 32,031 meters when we started and is now 35,951 meters long and there is LOTS left to do!

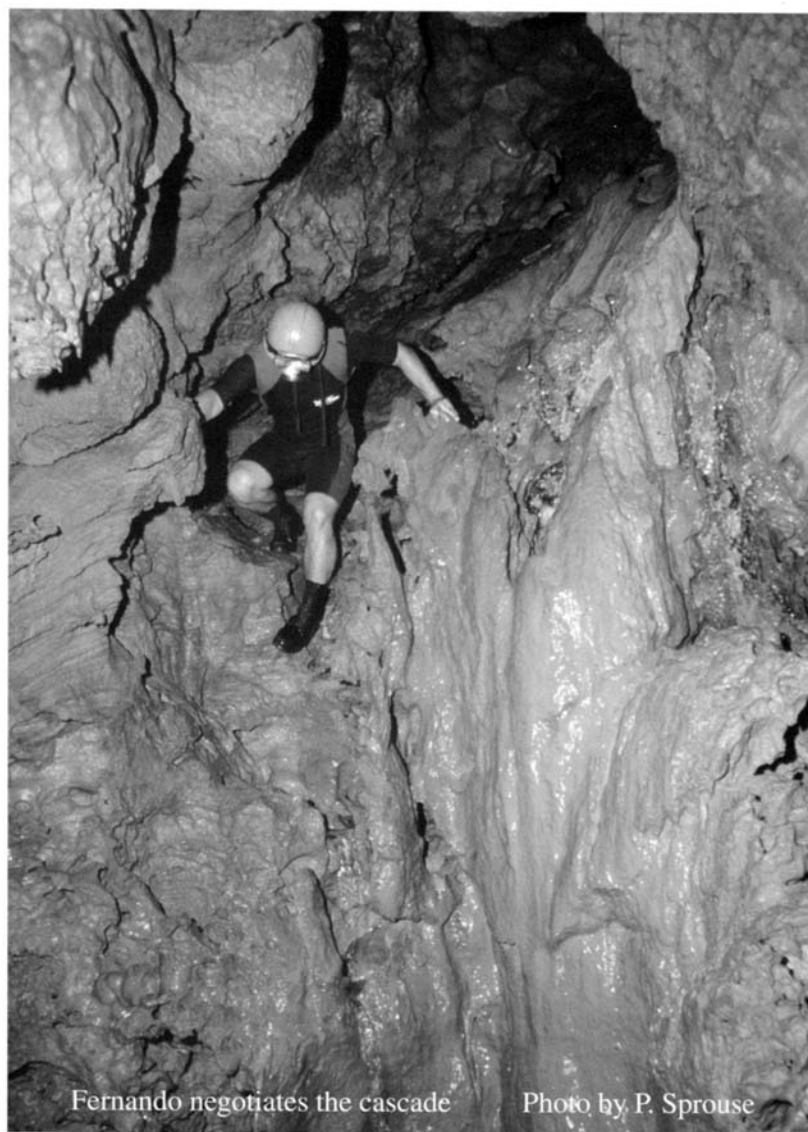
Ojo Encantado

by Peter Sprouse

Ever since Jean Krejca and Steve Taylor found the sump open in Ojo Encantado in 1998, I had been excited about the prospect of pushing this interesting cave. Charles Fromén and cavers from Houston had been the first to investigate this remote cave in the early 1980s, but had found it sumped just inside the entrance. Located in a remote canyon, no one went back until Dr. Dean Hendrickson put it on his list of sites to check for blind catfish and other aquatic fauna. Perhaps because their trip was in March during the dry season, the water had dropped enough for the cave to be open. Jean and Steve mapped about 100 meters of stream passage before running out of time.

We planned the return trip for May 1999, at the very end of the dry season, to give us the best chance of finding the sump open. Rather than doing the arduous hike over the Sierra el Burro, I wanted to try going up Cañon el Trejo to get to the cave. Going on the trip from Austin were Christie Rogers, Jubal Grubb, Cathy Winfrey and me. In Victoria we picked up Laura Rosales who'd come up from Mexico City, and four biology students from Victoria Tec, José "Yogi" Jiménez, Aldo "Caldo" Guevara, Jorge Esau Lira Garza, and Fernando "Campeche" Vanoye. In the village of La Reforma, we collected Anastasio and son Rogelio Urbina as guides, then followed old roads in from the west and camped at the mouth of Trejo Canyon.

The next day we got an early start on our hike up the canyon, which I expected would take us four hours or so. This turned out to be one of the bigger miscalculations I've made. Once in the canyon, we found it rougher than expected, and we hadn't brought enough water. The six kilometers of canyon hiking turned into six kilometers of bouldering with backpacks. Before long, we were reduced to filtering water from scummy tinajas using bandanas. We got spread out in the canyon, eventually ending up split into two groups. The canyon itself was quite spectacular, with steep bedrock walls covered in palms. Occasionally, we could walk along gravel banks, but usually it was either boulders to climb over, or narrow bedrock slots to ascend. We passed a tall crack in the east wall with a strong guano smell, but couldn't quite get into this without a rope. Later on, we found a small cave on the east side that had some pictographs in it, thin black lines that at times resembled spider webs. Our first major obstacle



Fernando negotiates the cascade

Photo by P. Sprouse

was a sheer drop over a green pool. We were able to traverse around it up the right wall, then I set some bolts and a rope for Jubal, Laura, Cathy and Christie, who were behind.

Finally we arrived at Ojo Encantado at dark, 11 1/2 hours after setting out. It was clear to me that the others weren't going to make it to the cave that day, so I could only hope that they had found enough water to drink. The cave entrance was a spectacular oasis, with the sound of a waterfall roaring inside. It is a large gash in the east wall of the canyon, with a steep boulder slope leading down to a lake not far under the drip line. It seems that in geologic past the surface arroyo cut through the roof of the cave passage, causing a major collapse. This collapse dammed up the stream, which must filter through the collapse to continue on to parts unknown. I took a delightful swim in the entrance pool, then bedded down nearby for the night under some vampire bats.

The following day presented some logistical challenges, since we were behind on our schedule for the trip. Anastasio

took off down the canyon to advise the others to head back, since it wasn't likely they would make it up in time to do any caving. That left the rest of us half a day to do more mapping and biological collecting in the cave. Jorge and Yogi volunteered to collect cirolanid isopods in the entrance pool to be preserved in DMSO buffer for DNA study. Fernando and Aldo went in with me to continue the survey after a mapping lesson. We swam across the first lake and into the dark zone. We climbed a small cascade on the far side, and the flow was more than I had seen in any cave in the PEP area this time of year. After the second swim we found the last station on a flowstone bridge. We surveyed across a large lake and then left up into a waterfall room. Since the area was clearly flood-prone, we drilled all of our stations. We mapped up a narrow cascade to a complex upper level, with leads going at least three ways. One of these leads was a large passage that led back to a high balcony over the cascade we had climbed. As we ended the survey after only eight stations, I wondered where this water came from: Tecolote, or Asunción?

Now out of time, we shot some photos before going out to the entrance to pack. We started back down the canyon at

2:00, getting to the Green Pool at 5:00. There I taught my four companions to rappel, and we rigged a zipline for the backpacks. We didn't make it to the canyon mouth before dark, and had some difficulty finding water at times. In the flats we located the correct trail and got back to the trucks before midnight, happily greeting our companions.

The next day we packed up our camp, which Rogelio had been watching for us. We dropped off Anastasio and Rogelio in La Reforma, then drove to Jaumave for a meal. From there we went down to Los Nogales springs near the mouth of the Guayalejo Canyon. This is a possible destination for the Ojo Encantado water, although the flow was much greater at about two cubic meters per second. The springs come out of a collapse area on the south side of the canyon, so it seems more likely that they come from someplace to the south, like Carabanchel. After we had a swim, we visited with Arabella Farach in Jaumave, the environmental officer. In Victoria we met Dr. Francisco García de León, and returned his students to him. Laura got on a late bus for Mexico City, and the rest of us drove north the next day.



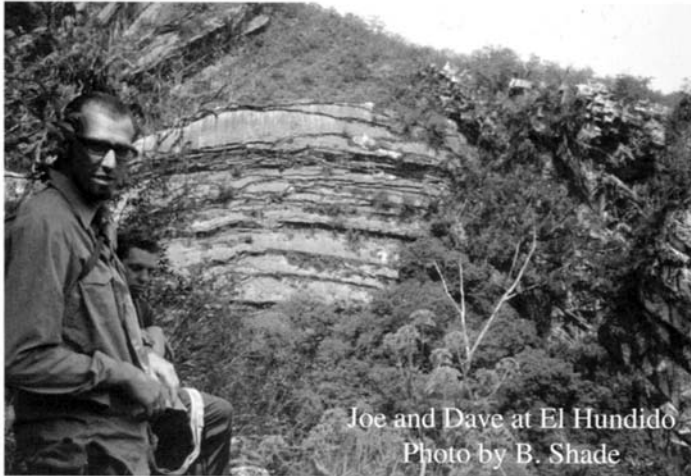
1999 Tecolote Expedition

Photo by R. Keeler

Red Beans at Rice: 2nd Annual Skippin' Finals Week

by Bev Shade

Participants: Tony Marfia (MI), Joe Meppelink, Dave Sission, Bev Shade and Bev's groovy little truck
May 2 - 9, 1999



The Rice exam period began this year on May 1. Thus it made perfect sense for our trip to begin on May 2, to insure that we could escape all of the evils of final exams. Well, it made better sense in the planning stages; during the previous week, stress and sleep deprivation began to hint otherwise. Nevertheless, by Sunday night, we were on the way to a great caving area, and all of the work was worth it.

Our border crossing at Reynosa took less than 15 minutes, and we didn't get inspected at a single checkpoint. We drove up past Los San Pedros, with a brief stop at the entrance to Tecolote, and camped Monday night at El Hundido. There were obviously some big fires burning somewhere, because for Monday evening and all of Tuesday we were dusted by a falling ashes. However, we never saw any thick smoke, so it was hard to say where the fires were.

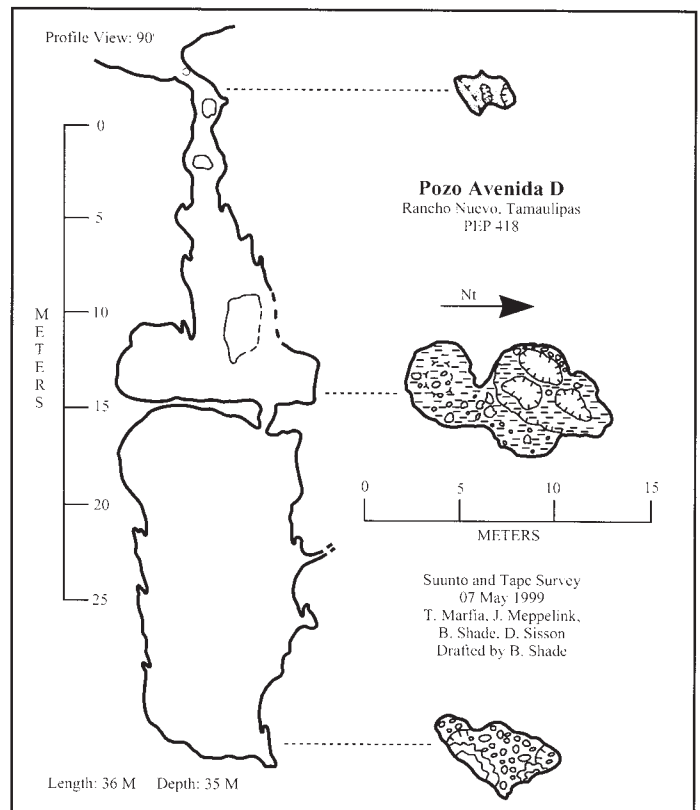
Tuesday was spent thrashing around in the arroyo downhill of the pit, because I had the bright idea of going directly to the low side of the pit and missed it. We eventually got to the right point on the pit's edge, and spent the rest of the day looking around the bottom for anything interesting in the way of leads or digs. The pit was spectacular and good vertical practice, but we did not find anything in the way of more cave.

By Tuesday night it was obvious that we would run out of water within two more days, so Wednesday we drove to the spring at Yerbabuena, which was not running, and finally got water out of the Lake Louise sump in Calenturas. This ate up most of the day. We then drove up to the ridge near Rancho Nuevo.

Thursday we went out ridgewalking and found some great pits, only to 'discover' that they were already tagged. How-

ever, we surveyed Pozo de los Martillos Perdidos, which turned out to be a shallow pit with a nice (but short) crevice passage developed along a joint and plugged with gravel and debris. The one potential dig was blocked by an enormous boulder. It was abandoned after it almost ate both of my hammers. After surveying the cave, we continued ridgewalking in the area, and did some surface survey between old and new pits. While Tony, Dave and I were working on the surface survey, Joe found a very inconspicuous pit entrance less than one meter across; tossing rocks yielded some exciting rumbles and echoes. We rigged the entrance but ran out of rope. The pit was offset, with numerous ledges and rub points, promising a complicated survey. As it was now dark, we finished rigging on Friday and also did the survey then. The pit (Pozo Avenida D) was very nice at 40 meters depth, but was also plugged with clean-washed gravel.

After finishing the survey of Avenida D, we drove closer to Rancho Nuevo and looked for some previously located pit leads. We found one that was pretty nice at about dark. It started raining then, and continued sporadically until about noon on Saturday. Saturday we drove off the mountain by way of Revilla and La Curva.



PURIFICACION SPELEOMETRY

Compiled by Peter Sprouse

Long caves	Length	Deep caves:	Depth
1. Sistema Purificación, Tamaulipas	90,470 M	Sistema Purificación, Tamaulipas	957 M
2. Cueva del Tecolote, Tamaulipas	35,949	Cueva del Tecolote, Tamaulipas	424
3. Sótano de Las Calenturas, Tamaulipas	8,308	Cueva de La Llorona, Tamaulipas	412
4. Cueva de La Llorona, Tamaulipas	3,540	Sima Chupacable, Nuevo León	402
5. Sumidero Suchomimus, Nuevo León	2,614	Sumidero Suchomimus, Nuevo León	317
6. Sótano de la Cuchilla, Tamaulipas	2,505	Sumidero Anaconda, Nuevo León	278
7. Cueva del Río Corona, Tamaulipas	2,301	Cueva de las Calcetines Rosas, NL	222
8. Cueva Paraíso Difícil, Tamaulipas	1,799	Sótano de la Cuchilla, Tamaulipas	207
9. Cueva del Borrego, Tamaulipas	1,354	El Hundido, Tamaulipas	186
10. Sumidero Anaconda, Nuevo León	1,246	Cueva Paraíso Difícil, Tamaulipas	178



Shields in the Trojan Trunk, Tecolote
Photo by P. Sprouse

The PEP would like to thank the following for assistance in 1999/2000:

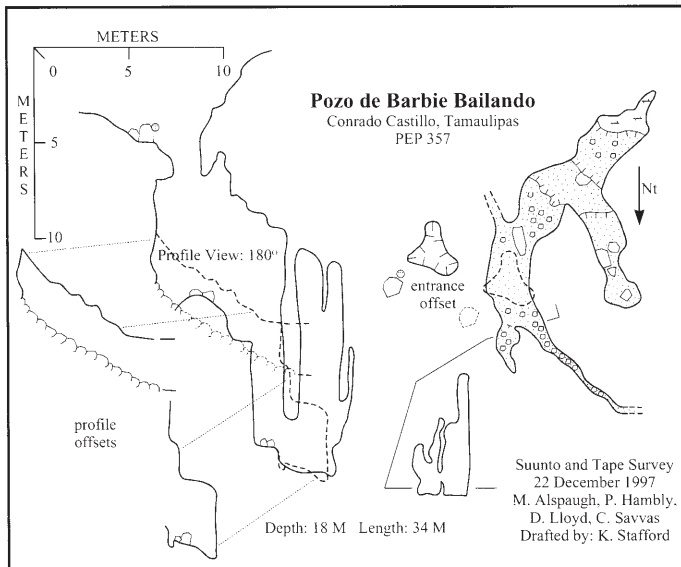
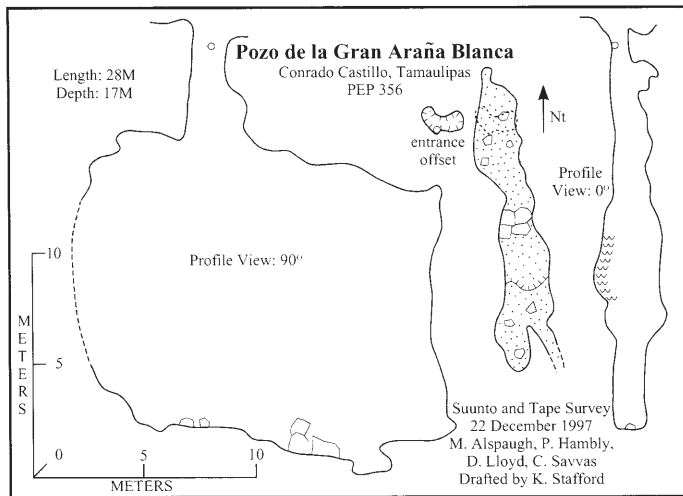
Dale Barnard
Paul Fowler
Dan Hogenauer
Ray Keeler
Jack Kehoe
Joel King
Jean Krejca
Leonard Pruitt
Terry Raines
Terry Sayther
Henry Schneiker
Edith Sprouse
Bill Stephens
Debbie Stuart
Cyndie Walck
Spencer Woods
Bentley Corporation
Margaret Cullinan Wray Charitable Trust
National Speleological Society
PMI Ropes
Richmond Area Speleological Society

PURIFICACION AREA CAVE DESCRIPTIONS

Contributions by Melanie Alspaugh, Dan Green, Kat Hawkins, Susie Lasko, James Reddell, William Russell, Tim Palmer, Peter Sprouse, Kevin Stafford, Cyndie Walck

POZO DE LA GRAN ARAÑA BLANCA PEP 356
 Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas
 Length: 28 meters Depth: 17 meters
 UTM coordinates: 452305E 2649766N

This pit is located on the mountainside 700 meters east of Conrado Castillo, on the western side of a trail at an elevation of 1915 meters. The 1.3-meter diameter entrance was covered with logs prior to exploration. Bedrock walls drop 17 meters into a fissure that ends in breakdown to the north. To the south it goes four meters to a mud plug. A small side passage at the south end pinches out. Leonor Pérez showed this pit to Susie Lasko and Peter Sprouse on 3 July 1997. Melonie Alspaugh, Pete Hambly, Dewi Lloyd and Charley Savvas surveyed it on 22 December 1997. (MA)

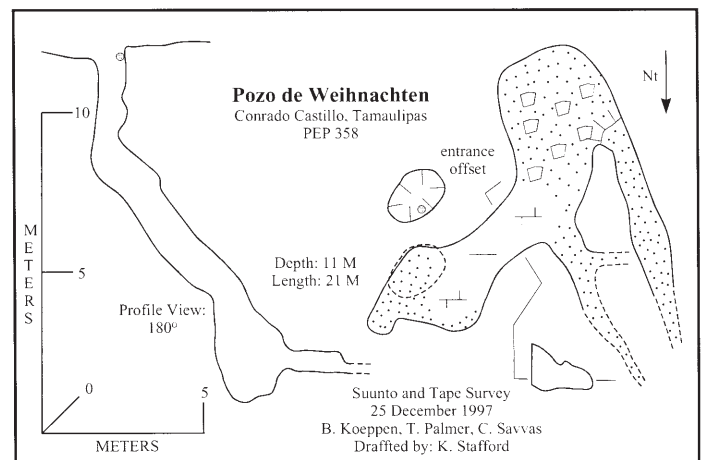


POZO DEL BARBIE BAILANDO PEP 357
 Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas
 Length: 34 meters Depth: 18 meters
 UTM coordinates: 452368 E 2649816N

This pit is located 700 meters east of Conrado Castillo at an elevation of 1937 meters. It is 18 meters deep and consists of two short drops with a soil and breakdown covered floor. There are two small continuing passages that appear to be developed on the same fracture plane, but neither one is large enough to be humanly passable. This cave was discovered and surveyed by Melonie Alspaugh, Pete Hambly, Dewi Lloyd and Charley Savvas on 22 December 1997. (KS)

POZO WEIHNACHTEN PEP 358
 Agua de las Vacas, Nuevo León
 Length: 21 meters Depth: 11 meters
 UTM coordinates: 450693E 2649144N

This pit is located 800 meters southwest of Conrado Castillo at an elevation of 2170 meters. It is a small cave with an entrance pitch of four meters, below which the cave slopes to a maximum depth of eleven meters. The cave has three continuing passages that are impassable. The cave alternates from soil to bedrock floor with minor amounts of breakdown scattered in the distal portions of the cave. This cave was discovered and surveyed by Bernhard Koeppen, Tim Palmer and Charley Savvas on 25 December 1997. (KS)



CUEVA AVISPA ARAÑA VIUDA NEGRA PEP 359

Agua de las Vacas, Nuevo León
Length: 67 meters Depth: 48 meters
UTM coordinates: 450716E 2449060N

This cave is located 900 meters southwest of Conrado Castillo at an elevation of 2175 meters. It is named after the large black spider and wasp that were found in the entrance area when the cave was discovered by Bernhard Koppen and Charley Savvas on 25 December 1997. At this time, the cave was surveyed approximately 25 meters to a tight constriction with good airflow. The following year on 16 December, they returned with Kevin Stafford and enlarged the constriction to push the cave down a 40-meter pit to a depth of 48 meters. At this point, two continuing passages were found with good airflow, but both became too small to pass after a short distance, and neither appeared to have potential for opening up within a reasonable distance. (KS)

SIMA DOS OJOS PEP 365

Tinajas, Nuevo León
Length: 35 meters Depth: 29 meters
UTM coordinates: 447637 E 2646882 N

appear much like eyes. The entrances are in a flat ledge of rock and take almost no drainage.

The two entrances, each slightly over one meter in diameter, immediately open into a three meter in diameter well about 10 meters deep. This well ends in a flat floor of dirt and small rocks. An artificially-en-

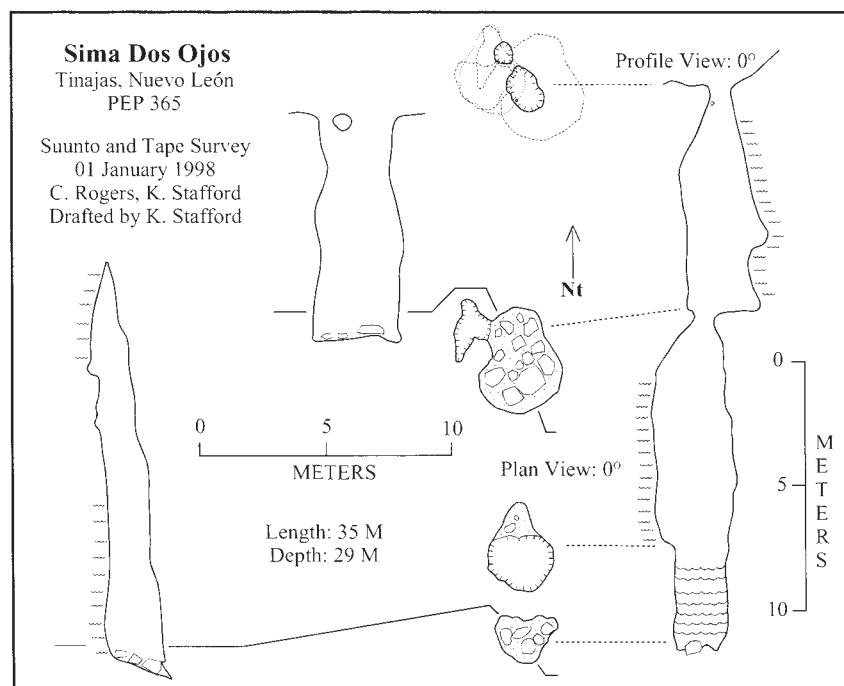


larged opening through flowstone draperies slopes down smoothly over a rock floor to an eight-meter drop to an offset. Below the offset, the pit continues down for an additional four meters to end in fill.

The cave was inhabited by several *mala mujer* birds when Bill Russell, Charley Savvas, and Julie Jenkins were shown the pit by Oscar Villanueva Ramirez in May 1997. The birds eventually left the pit when disturbed and flew to some nearby rocks. They would exit the pit through a combination of wall climbing and short bursts of flight. The cave was surveyed by Christie Rogers and Kevin Stafford on 1 January 1998. (WR)

CUEVA DE JOE PEP 366

Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas
Length: 19 meters Depth: 4 meters
UTM coordinates: 451737E 2650092N



Sima Dos Ojos is located 700 meters northeast of Tinajas, just above the valley of the Arroyo Joya del Gato (not named on the topo map, but the first arroyo south of Arroyo el Aguacate). The pit is located just south of the Joya del Gato valley, where the slope changes to the west-facing Tinajas Valley slope, at an elevation of 1638 meters. The name of the feature derives from its two closely-spaced entrances that

This small cave is located 1500 meters north of Conrado Castillo and 30 meters to the east of the main road, at an elevation of 1948 meters. It is composed of two small rooms with several small infeeders. The floor is covered in breakdown and dry silt, and there is no air flow. It was shown to cavers by Joé Ledesma, and was surveyed on 25 December 1996 by Jubal Grubb and Kevin Stafford. (KS)

POZO DEL LANTRISCO PEP 371

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 163 meters Depth: 150 meters

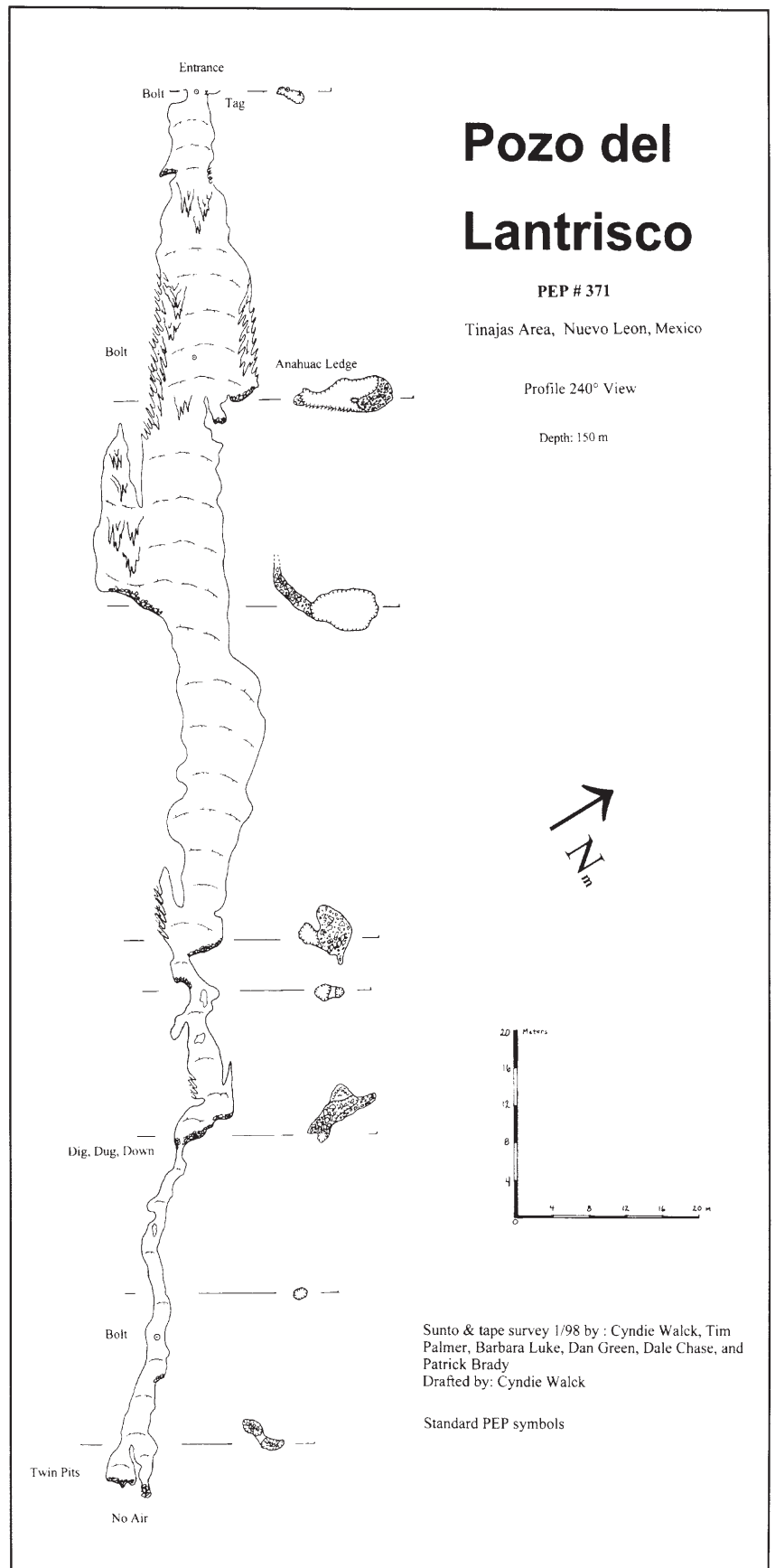
UTM coordinates: 448095E 2646095N

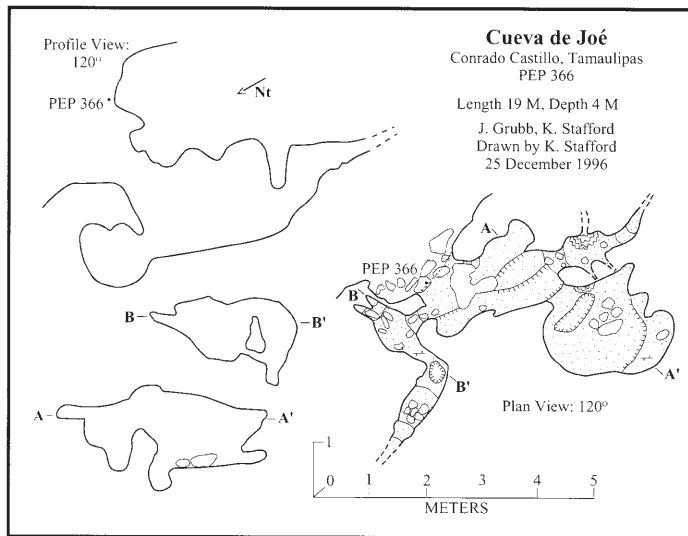
Pozo del Lantrisco is located about 700 meters east-southeast of the town of Tinajas, at 1675 meters elevation, and about 50 meters southeast of the first large karst tower above the town. The entrance to this deep fissure is about one half by two meters, aligned along a fracture paralleling the Tinajas valley. Bill Russell, Julie Jenkins and Charley Savvas were taken to this pit in May of 1997 by Oscar Villanueva Ramírez, a guide from Tinajas. Oscar informed them that the pit was at least a hundred meters deep, and that rocks tossed in bounced on and on forever. They named the cave Sima del Pedregal for the rough, rocky surface (pedregal) that surrounds the entrance.

The entrance is difficult to see even from a few meters away, and Oscar related that one night in the darkness, a person stepped into the pit, barely catching himself by his arm. Whatever else might be true, the guide was right about the rockfall. Rocks fell free for only a couple of seconds, but then bounced with a resounding, reverberating echo that filled the pit for several seconds, finally fading off into silence. The first ten meters of the pit are relatively narrow, but the pit gradually widens to about two meters, and is offset slightly at ledge about 12 meters down. Below this ledge, the pit continues almost vertically, gradually enlarging to about five meters by three meters. The pit maintains roughly this size for about 40 meters to a ledge where the pit narrows (Anáhuac Ledge). Just below this, Charley got to the end of his 60-meter rope.

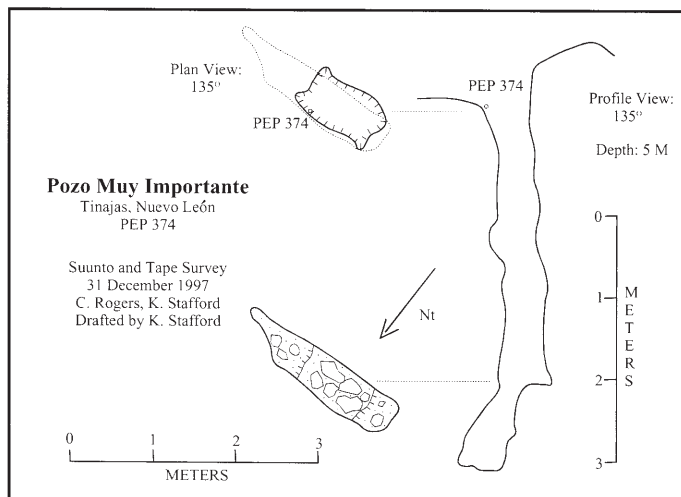
On 27 December 1997 a follow-up team were taken to the pit by Benjamín Villanueva, who used the name Pozo del Lantrisco. Dan Green, Patrick Brady and Cindy Walck began the survey of the pit. They descended the beautiful smooth-walled limestone shaft, passing occasional flowstone and two major ledges before necking down at -90 meters. At -110 meters the shaft was choked with breakdown, which became known as Dig, Dug, Down.

Two days later, Dan, Dale Chase, and Scott Scheibner managed to move the rocks with a z rig, revealing another short drop. This was pushed down to a terminus of shallow twin pits at -149 meters with no airflow on 30 December by Dan, Dale, Barbara Luke, and Bill "Carlos" Nasby. (WR & CW)





with small-to-medium size breakdown with detritus and soil. This pit was discovered and surveyed on 31 December 1997 by Christie Rogers and Kevin Stafford. (KS)



TIRO LIMON

PEP 372

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 10 meters Depth: 10 meters

UTM coordinates: 448243E 2646409N

This pit is located 800 meters east of Tinajas at an elevation of 1736 meters. It is a single drop of ten meters which lands on a bedrock floor, with a small drain hole continuing deeper. This pit was discovered and surveyed by Melonie Alspaugh, Chris Casselli, Jean (Creature) Krejca and Troy Lanier on 30 December 1997. (KS)

ULTIMO POZO DEL AÑO

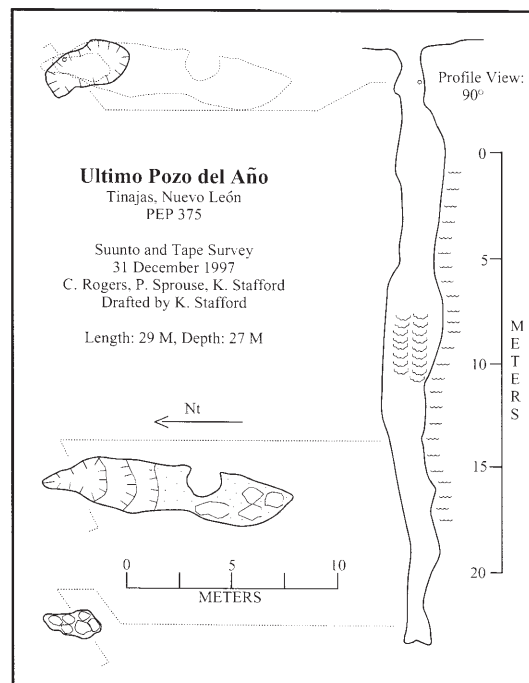
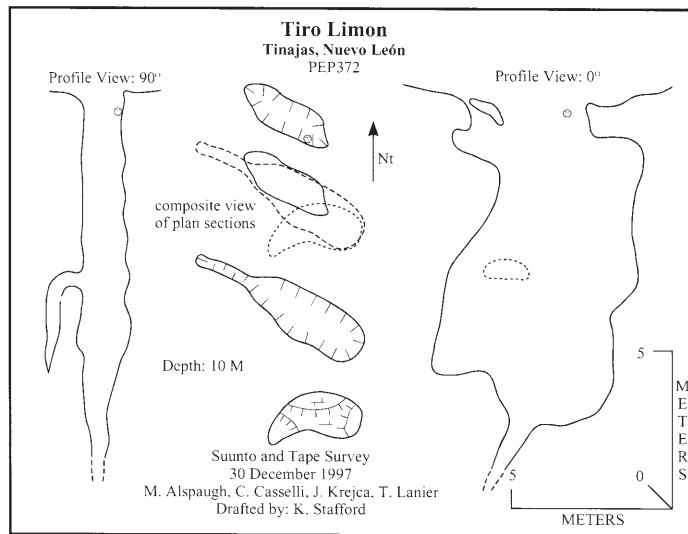
PEP 375

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 29 meters Depth: 27 meters

UTM coordinates: 447455E 2647100 N

This pit is located 500 meters northeast of the northern end of Tinajas village, at an elevation of 1555 meters. It is a shaft 29 meters deep, ranging from an oblong entrance about three meters in diameter, to a shaft three by eight meters mid-way, and two meters in diameter at the bottom. The floor is covered with breakdown and has no airflow or leads, but appears to drain water rapidly. The cave was explored and



surveyed by Christie Rogers, Peter Sprouse and Kevin Stafford on 31 December 1997. (KS)

POZO MUY IMPORTANTE

PEP 374

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 5 meters Depth: 5 meters

UTM coordinates: 447788E 2646959N

This small pit is located 800 meters northeast of Tinajas, at an elevation of 1628 meters. It is a shaft .5 by 1 meter in diameter at the entrance, and only slightly increases to .5 by 2 meters at the bottom, 5 meters down. The floor is covered

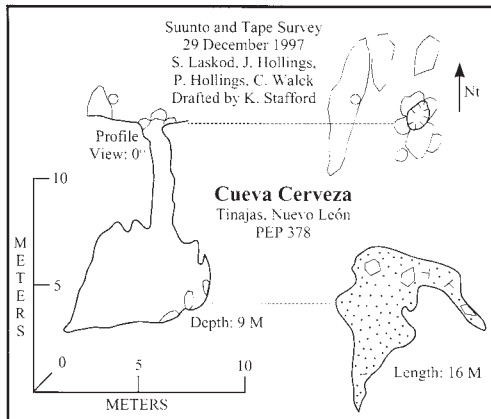
CUEVA CERVEZA

PEP 378

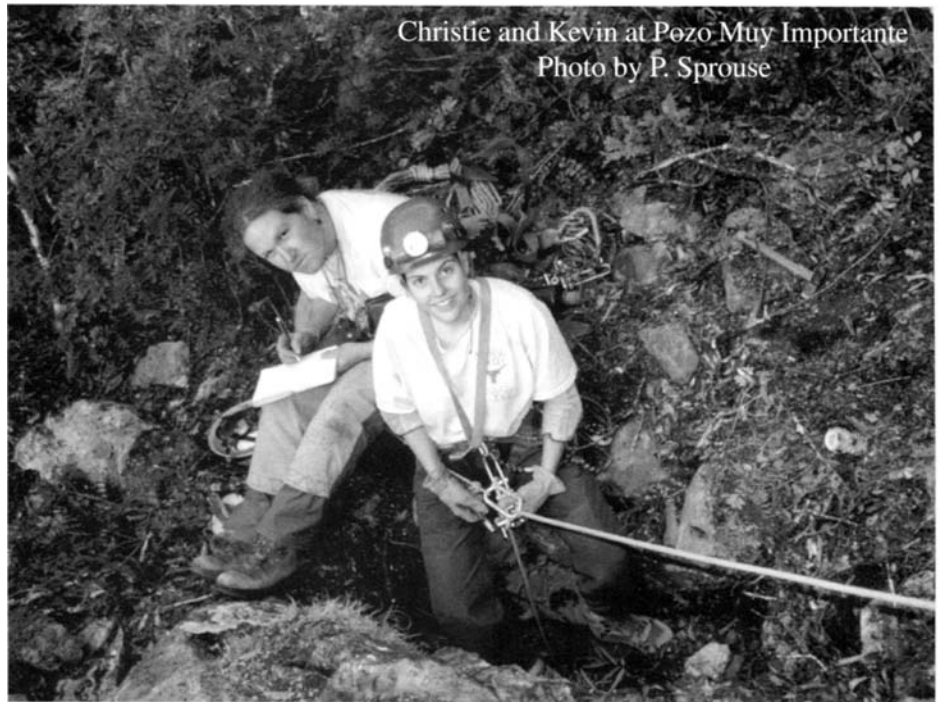
Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 16 meters Depth: 9 meters

UTM coordinates 446800E 2648035N



This small cave is located 2000 meters north-northwest of Tinajas at an elevation of 1514 meters. The cave entrance is less than one meter in diameter and is situated amongst numerous large boulders. The tag is located on one of these boulders two meters west of the entrance, because no location could be found to place the tag securely in the pit entrance area. The entrance can be easily rigged off a large boulder two meters north of the entrance and then deviated for the short eight meter drop to the cave floor. Four meters down the pit, the cave size increases to four-by-five meter and drops to a plugged floor covered with soil and minor breakdown. This cave was surveyed by Susie Lasko, Jill Hollings, Pete Hollings and Cindy Walck on 29 December 1997. (KS)



POZO DEL EPIDOTE

PEP 379

Tinajas, Nuevo León

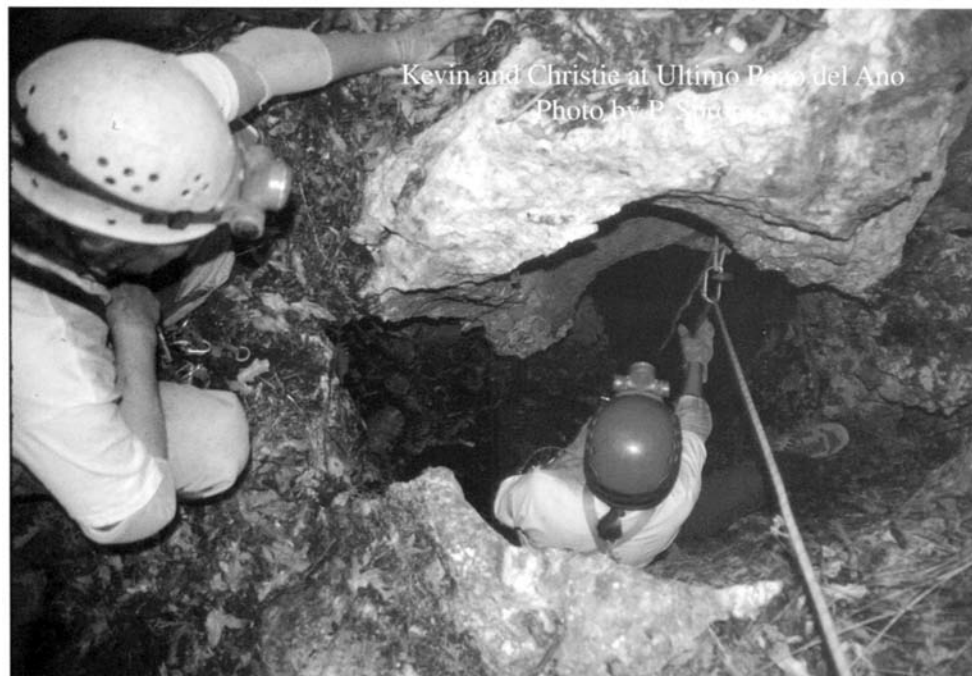
Length: 37 meters Depth: 14 meters

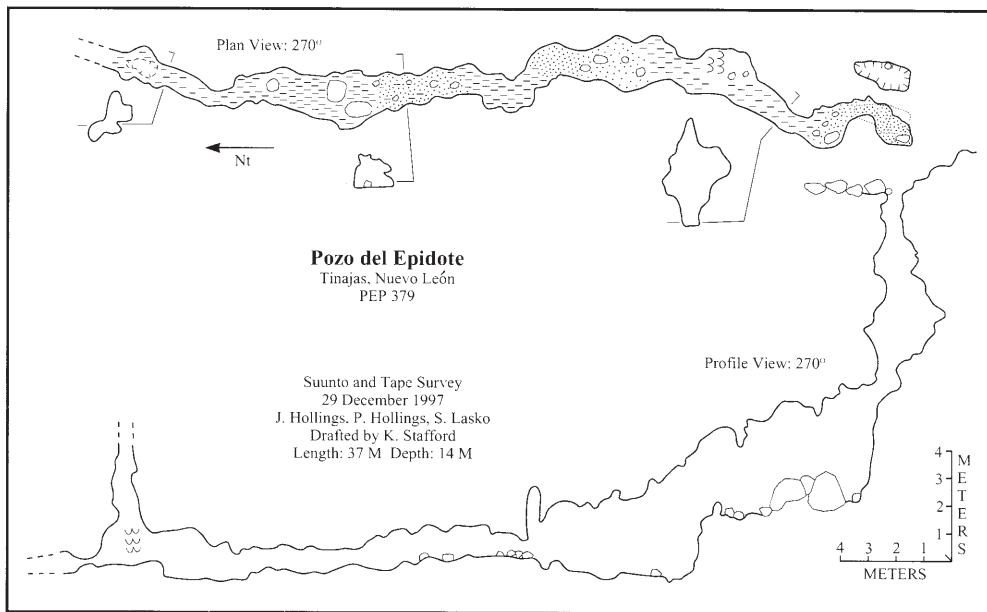
UTM coordinates: 446833E 2647759N

This cave is located 1500 meters north-northeast of Tinajas, at 1503 meters elevation. It is just below the road in the bed of the Arroyo Tinajas, about 150 meters downstream from its confluence with the Arroyo el Aguacate. The entrance is a small hole just large enough to comfortably climb into, which opens into climbable drop of about ten meters into a fissure oriented along the length of the arroyo. The

floor of the fissure is covered with fine washed-in sediment. The fissure trends south down several small climbdowns, then ends after about 30 meters at a muddy dig. Considering the position of the entrance in the center of the arroyo, the cave must receive enormous amounts of sediment during floods. It is quite possible that debris has blocked the drain, and the cave has recently filled with sediment.

The cave was first explored by Charley Savvas in May 1997. Jill Hollings, Pete Hollings and Susie Lasko surveyed this cave on 29 December 1997. (SL & WR)





evation. It is in a four meter diameter, two meter deep sinkhole. The cave has a constricted entrance on the western side of the sinkhole that drops into a series of downclimbs and stoop walking passages to a depth of 25 meters. From there, the cave continues as a series of short rope drops interrupted by crawlways through formations and breakdown, until it reaches a point where it becomes small and tight but retains good airflow. The cave contains numerous highly decorative helictites and a calcified deer antler, for which the cave was (partially) named. The cave was first discovered in October 1998 by Mike Grimmit, Ted Hill, Lucy

CUEVA MONTON DE MADERA

PEP 380

Tinajas, Nuevo León

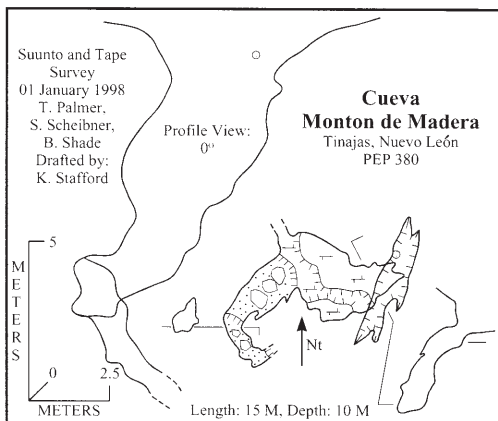
Length: 15 meters Depth: 10 meters

UTM coordinates: 447166E 2647022N

This cave is located near the wood scrap pile from an abandoned sawmill a few hundred meters north of Tinajas at an elevation of

1520 meters. It is at the bottom of a large sink that captures considerable drainage. The cave dips steeply down for 12 meters to a mud and debris choke. The level of this choke ap-

pears to be variable and would be worth rechecking at a later date. It was located by Bev Shade, Peter Sprouse and Cyndie Walck, and mapped on 1 January 1998 by Bev, Tim Palmer and Scott Scheibner. (TP)



CUEVA CERCETA DEL DRAGON

PEP 388

Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas

Length: 130 meters Depth: 70 meters

UTM coordinates: 451228E 2651441 N

This cave is located on the ridge 1500 meters north-north-west of Conrado Castillo, and is situated at 2143 meters el-

Massimillo and Kevin Stafford. Later that month a group returned with the St. Stephens Outdoor Club, and the cave was surveyed to a depth of 35 meters. At this time, the cave was taking in large quantities of runoff and appeared to be a significant hydrologic feature. In December 1998, Bernard Koeppen, Charley Savvas and Kevin Stafford returned and worked their way through several constrictions and a large breakdown area to the current depth of 70 meters. The cave appears to still have good potential due to airflow at the last constriction, the amount of water it was taking, and nature of its development. It warrants further investigation. (KS)

CUEVA ADENTRO DE LA PENA

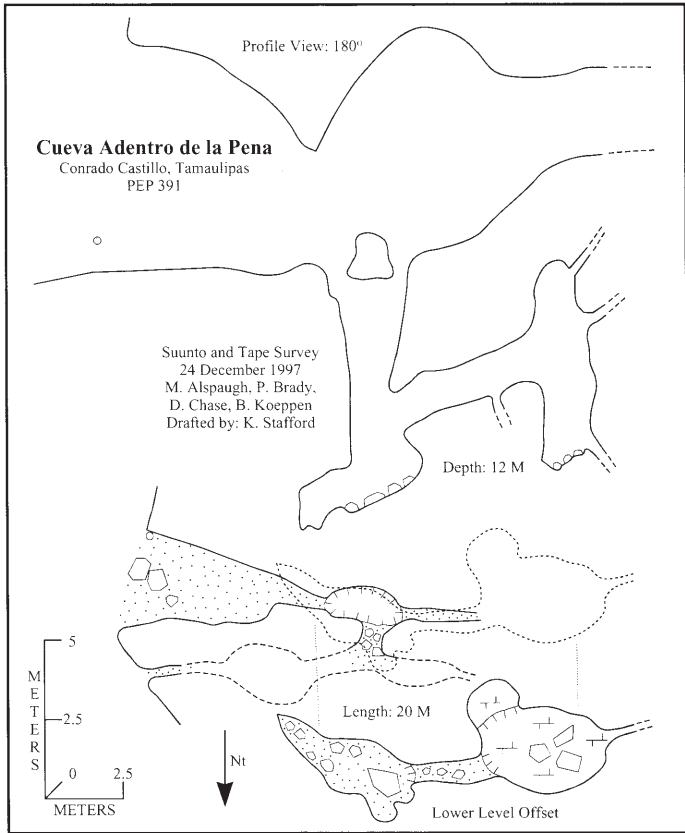
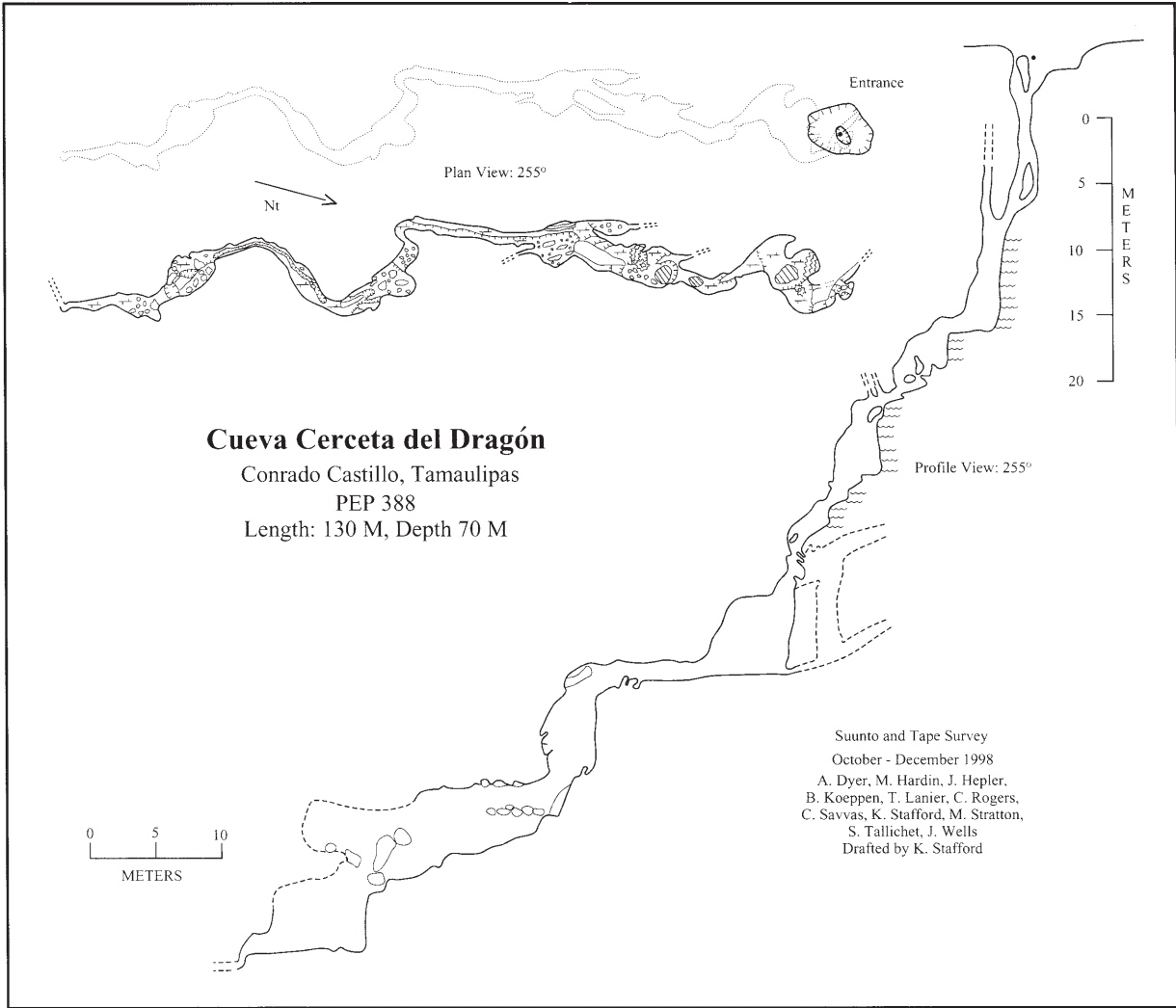
PEP 391

Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas

Length: 20 meters Depth: 12 meters

UTM coordinates: 452656E 2648767 N

This cave is located 1500 meters southeast of Conrado Castillo. It has two entrances, one is impassable, the other a three by six-meter walk-in entrance. The larger entrance rapidly decreases in width over a distance of six meters until an eight-meter pit is intersected. At this point, the main passage continues west, decreasing in size, and the secondary entrance joins the main passage from the north. At the base of the pit is a small chamber with a soil and breakdown covered floor, with a short passage continuing to the west to another smaller chamber. From this terminal chamber, three extremely small tubes continue, with one draining the chamber. This cave was discovered and surveyed by Melonie Alspaugh, Pat Brady, Dale Chase and Bernhard Koeppen on 25 December 1997. (KS)

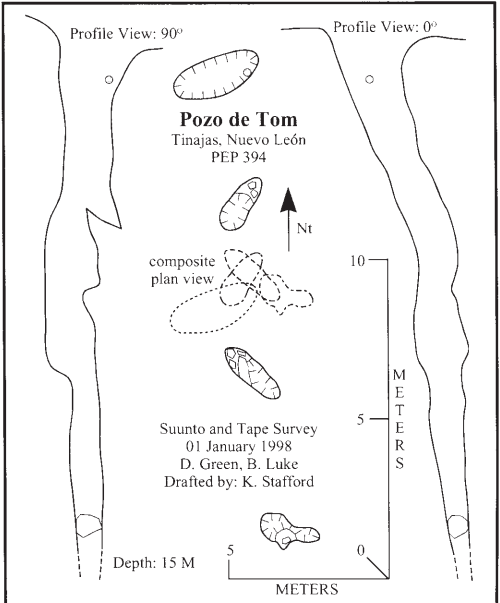


POZO DE TOM

PEP 394

Potreritos, Nuevo León
 Length: 18 meters Depth: 15 meters
 UTM coordinates: 446512E 2648241N

This pit is located 2000 meters south of Potreritos on west side of Arroyo Tinajas. The entrance is at 1515 meters elevation, and measures one by two meters. The passage can be seen extending vertically downward beyond the constriction and cool air was felt



blowing upwards from the bottom when it was mapped on 1 January 1998 by Dale Chase, Dan Green and Barbara Luke. (DG)

POZO BOZO

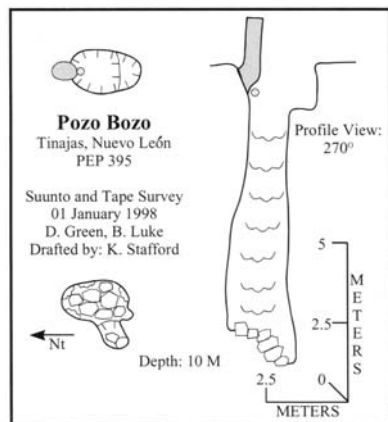
PEP 395

Potreritos, Nuevo León

Length: 10 meters Depth: 10 meters

UTM coordinates: 446490E 2648219N

This pit is 2000 meters south of Potreritos on west side of Arroyo Tinajas at 1518 meters elevation. A large prominent pine tree stands beside the 1.5 by 2 meter entrance, with a vine hanging free down the middle of the pit. The pit contains old, inactive flowstone, and has no airflow. It was mapped on 1 January 1998 by Dan Green and Barbara Luke. (DG)



POZO STELA

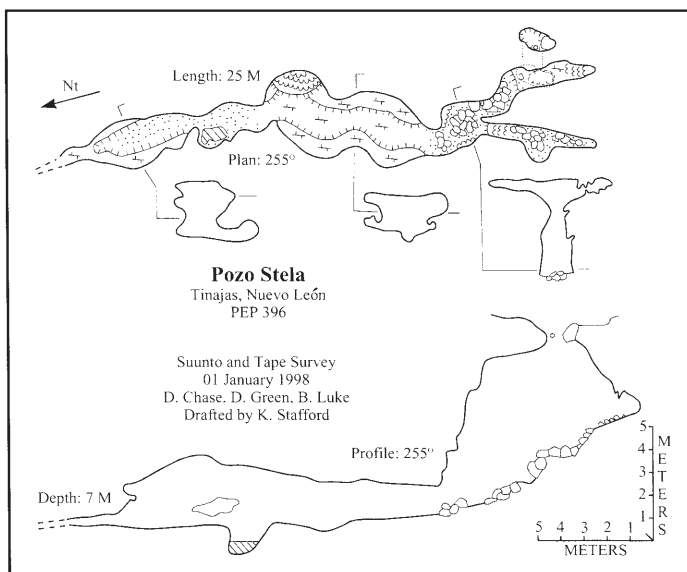
PEP 396

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 25 meters Depth: 7 meters

UTM coordinates: 446790E 2648150N

Pozo Stela is located 1500 meters north-northeast of Tinajas, at 1513 meters elevation. This pit has an entrance measuring 0.5 by 1 meter. It drops four meters to walking passage. The rooms and passages are very round, and most of the cave has a dirt floor. There was no airflow, and the air was warm. This cave heads toward a nearby sinkhole that has airflow and was dug extensively. Pozo Stela was discovered by Dan Green on 26 December 1997, and named for the commemorative stela the cavers erected in their adjacent camp. It was mapped on 1 January 1998 by Dale Chase, Dan Green and Barbara Luke. (DG)



Cave crickets: (Gryllidae)

POZO DE SPOTTY

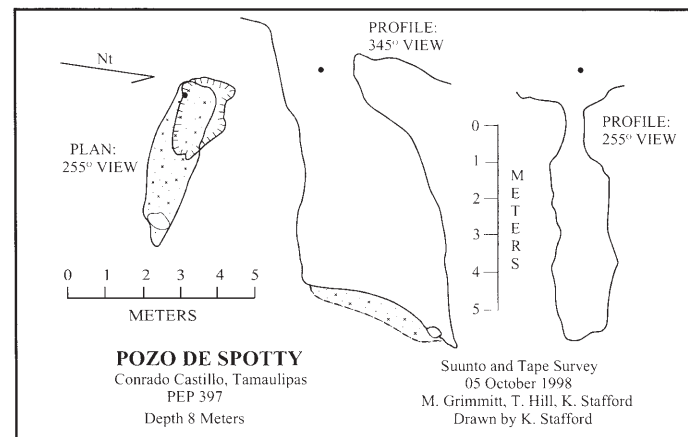
PEP 397

Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas

Length: 10 meters Depth: 8 meters

UTM coordinates: 367245E 2664210N

This pit is located on a ridge 1500 meters north-northwest of Conrado Castillo, at 2140 meters elevation. It is an eight meter deep shaft with a one by two meter diameter entrance, increasing to one by five meters at its base. The floor is covered by a thick layer of detritus and contains a small drain at the deepest point. The entrance was originally covered by a thick layer of tree cuttings from the local logging and was not initially recognizable, but after minimal digging and removal of tree branches and trunks, it was opened. It was explored and surveyed by Mike Grimmitt, Ted Hill and Kevin Stafford on 5 October 1998. (KS)



CUEVA XX

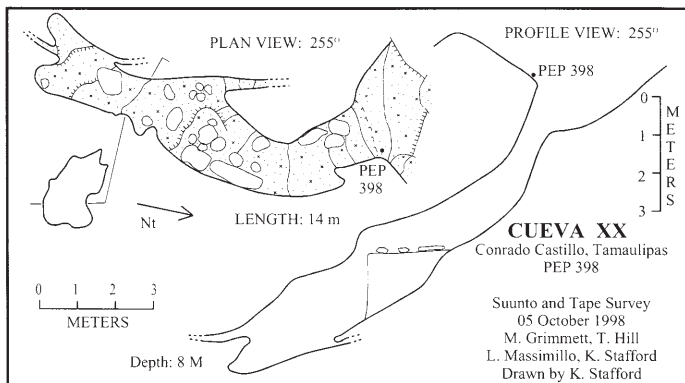
PEP 398

Conrado Castillo, Tamaulipas

Length: 14 meters Depth: 7 meters

UTM coordinates: 451113E 2651208N

This cave is located on top of Cuchilla el Angel, 2000 meters north-northwest of Conrado Castillo, at 2145 meters elevation. It is a small cave, only fourteen meters long and eight meters deep, which slopes at a 45 degree angle from a sinkhole 4 meters in diameter. The floor is covered in detritus and breakdown, with evidence of animal activity. There are two small infeeders within the cave, but neither one showed signs of air, and both were too small to be passable. This cave was surveyed by Mike Grimmitt, Ted Hill, Lucy Massimillio and Kevin Stafford on 5 October 1998. (KS)



POZO SIN PAT

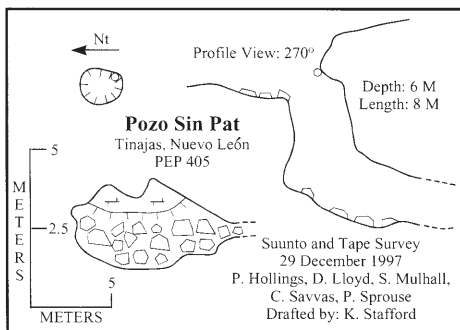
PEP 405

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 8 meters Depth: 6 meters

UTM coordinates: 447213E 2647850 N

This pit is located 1500 meters north of Tinajas. It has a 1.5 meter diameter entrance that drops five meters to a sloping, breakdown covered floor five by three meters, with a small passage to the south that is impassable. This pit was discovered and surveyed by Pete Hollings, Dewi Lloyd, Steve Mulhall, Charley Savvas and Peter Sprouse on 29 December 1997. (KS)



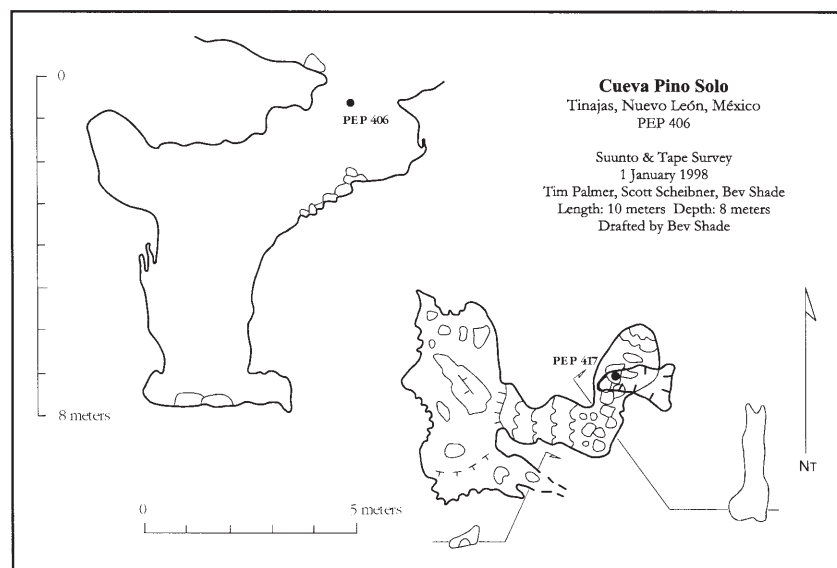
CUEVA PINO SOLO

PEP 406

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 10 meters Depth: 8 meters

UTM coordinates: 447107E 2647778N



POZO PONCHADO

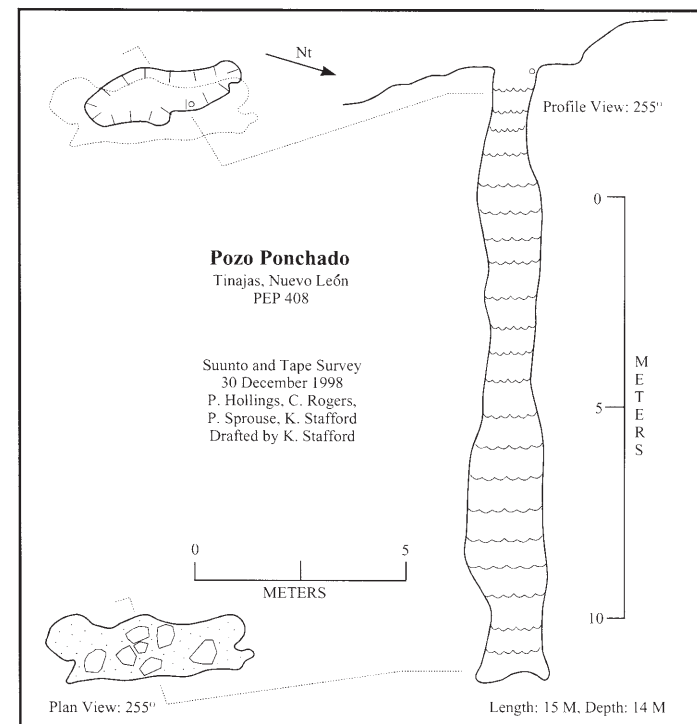
PEP 408

Tinajas, Nuevo León

Length: 15 meters Depth: 14 meters

UTM coordinates: 448274E 2646547N

This pit is located on hill 1000 meters northeast of Tinajas, at 1759 meters elevation. It is just downhill from Sima de las Malas Mujeres. The pit entrance measures 0.6 by 2.5 meters and drops straight down for 14 meters. The floor is covered with soil and debris and is slightly larger than the entrance. The walls are covered in old flowstone and the floor appears to take water around the walls. This pit was explored on 30 December 1997 by Pete Hollings, Christie Rogers, Peter Sprouse and Kevin Stafford. (KS)



CUEVA JALEA

PEP 409

Paso del Niño, Nuevo León

Length: 132 meters Depth: 40 meters

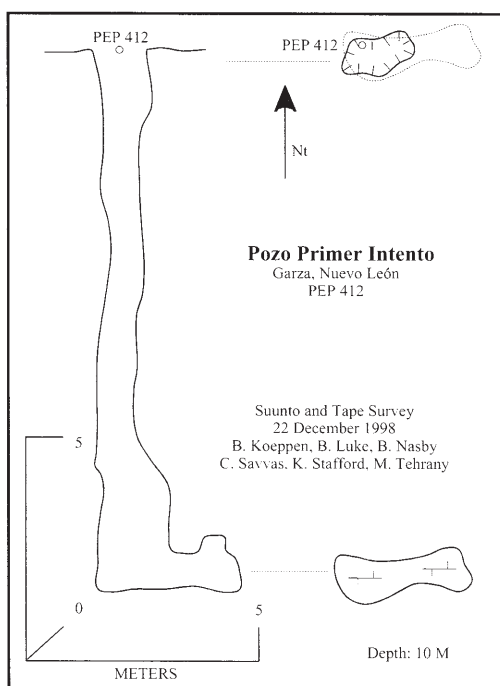
UTM coordinates: 432274E 2656268N

This cave is located 500 meters northeast of Paso del Niño at an elevation of 1740 meters. It is developed in an arroyo along a shale/limestone contact. The entrance is five meters in diameter and located at the base of a large headwall, with large boulders and tree trunks stacked around the entrance area. Immediately inside the entrance is the only rope drop at 12 meters, which can be rigged off the numerous boulders in the entrance. After the pitch, a large room developed along bedding planes is intersected. From this room, the cave continues for over one hundred meters down small climbs and intermittent pools, terminating after a large canyon passage five by ten meters in diameter. At this point, the cave becomes small and sinuous, with the air disappearing through the breakdown wedged overhead in the canyon. The cave was discovered and surveyed by Charley Savvas and Kevin Stafford on 20 December 1998. (KS)

POZO PRIMER INTENTO PEP 412

Paso del Niño, Nuevo León
 Length: 12 meters Depth: 12 meters
 UTM coordinates: 433295E 2656261N

This pit is located 100 meters east-northeast of Paso del Niño at an elevation of 1739 meters. It is a single pitch pit of ten meters terminating in a small bedrock-floored room with no leads. This was the only cave discovered east of the shale/limestone contact in the Paso del



Niño area when it was surveyed on 22 December 1998 by Bernhard Koeppen, Barbara Luke, Bill Nasby, Charley Savvas, Kevin Stafford and Maria Tehrany. (KS)

CUEVA DE COLAPSO PEP 413

Paso del Niño, Nuevo León
 Length: 25 meters Depth: 15 meters
 UTM coordinates: 432040E 2655338N

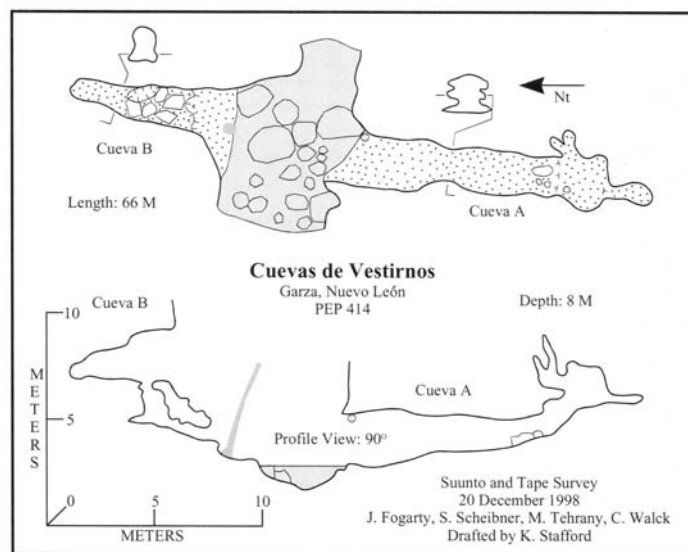
This small cave is located 700 meters east-northeast of Paso del Niño at an elevation of 1792 meters. It is largely

composed of collapsed material, with large breakdown blocks covering the floor. A constriction at ten meters depth was opened into a small crawlway that pinched within another five meters depth by additional collapse material. This cave was discovered by Peter Sprouse and surveyed by Charley Savvas and Kevin Stafford on 26 December 1998. (KS)

CUEVAS DE VESTIRNOS PEP 414

Paso del Niño, Nuevo León
 Length: 66 meters Depth: 8 meters
 UTM coordinates: 432448 E 2655885 N

These caves are located 200 meters east-southeast of Paso del Niño in Infierno Canyon, at an elevation of 1670 meters. They appear to be developed on a common north/south linear trend with the canyon bisecting them from west to east. Cave A is the larger of the two, with over 40 meters of passage and a small terminal chamber which contained a small population of bats in one alcove. Cave B is approximately 20 meters long and forms a large rock shelter opening to the canyon on the upper level. Both caves are floored with soil and minor breakdown and contain no additional leads. The canyon between them is 10 meters wide with large boulders and a single tree growing between the two caves. These caves were discovered and surveyed by John Fogarty, Scott Scheibner, Maria Tehrany and Cindy Walck on 20 December 1998. (KS)

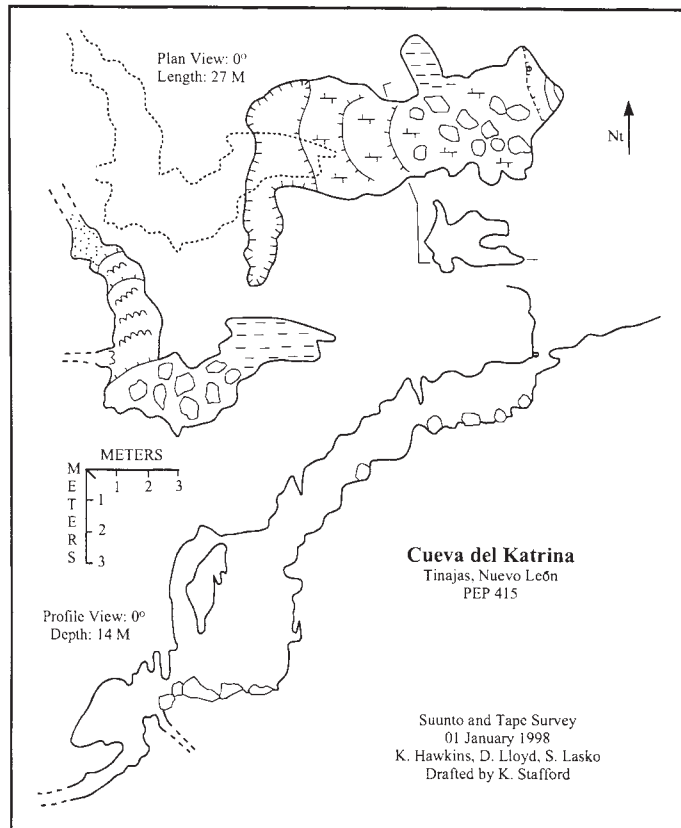


CUEVA DE KATRINA PEP 415

Tinajas, Nuevo León
 Length: 27 meters Depth: 14 meters
 UTM coordinates: 446692E 2649045N

Cueva de Katrina is located 1100 meters south-southeast of Aserradero Potreritos at 1515 meters elevation. The small, blowing entrance is situated just north of a bend in the road.

A horizontal crawl leads over boulders to a 4-meter climbdown. A short crawl then leads to a decorated flowstone descent to a low narrow crawlway. This opens into a chamber with a blowing lead at the bottom. This cave was explored on 1 January 1998 by Katrina Hawkins, Susie Lasko and Dewi Lloyd. In December 1998, Kevin Stafford, Charley Savvas and Bernhard Koeppen returned to the cave to push the blowing lead at the bottom, but it didn't go. (KH)



POZO AVENIDA D PEP 418
Las Chinas, Tamaulipas
Length: 36 meters Depth: 35 meters
UTM coordinates: 454790E 2640710N

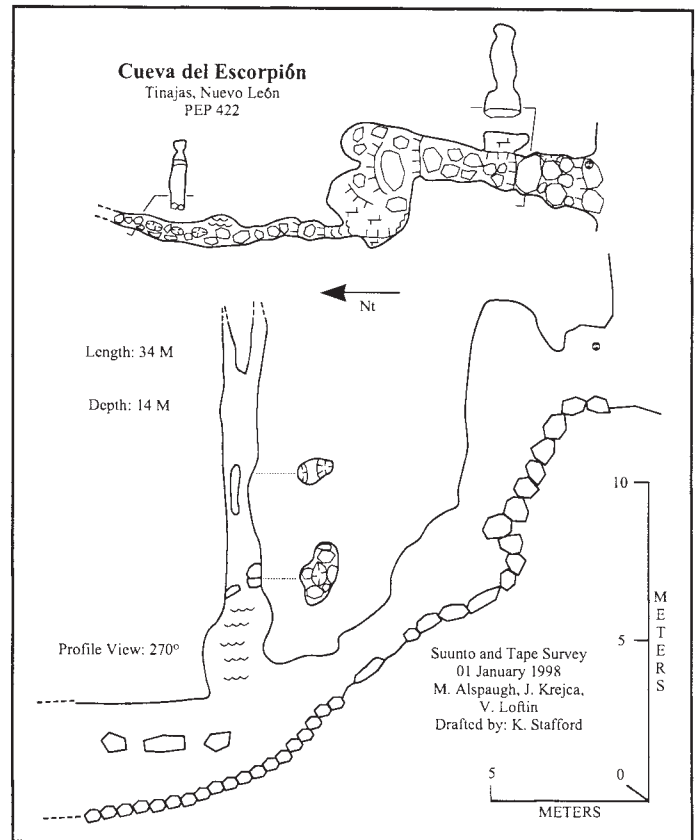
Pozo Avenida D is located 1800 meters northeast of Las Chinas at 2542 meters elevation. It is north of the road intersection known as "La Cueva". It consists of two 17 meter pitches to a clean-washed gravel floor. It was discovered on 6 May 1999 by Joe Meppelink, who surveyed it the next day with Tony Marfia, Dave Sission and Bev Shade. The name comes from one of the cavers' home street. (PS)

CUEVA DEL ESCORPION PEP 422
Tinajas, Nuevo León
Length: 34 meters Depth: 14 meters
UTM coordinates: 446872E 2647939N

Cueva del Escorpión is located 1300 meters north of Tinajas at an elevation of 1515 meters. This cave consists

mainly of a single passage heading south, with a climb up at the end. It was originally reported by Charley Savvas. Melonie Alspaugh, Troy Lanier and Vivian Loftin surveyed the cave on 1 January 1998. A scorpion was collected in the cave thus giving its name. (MA)

Scorpions: Scorpiones undetermined
Harvestmen: Palpatones undetermined (troglaxene)
Mammals: Mammal bones



TUBO TERODONO PEP 439
Paso del Niño, Nuevo León
Length: 110 meters Depth: 1 meter
UTM coordinates: 432227E 2655905N

This seasonal resurgence cave is located on the northern edge of Canyon del Niño, 100 meters south of Paso del Niño at an elevation of 1680 meters. It is a vadose tube with a shale gravel floor trending northward. The passage averages three to four meters wide and less than one meter tall. This cave appears to continue with the same characteristics for an indeterminate distance past the point of exploration with good airflow. This needs continued exploration, but will require minor trenching or smaller than average cavers because of increasing gravel fill at the terminus of the survey. This is likely to change due to the annual flow patterns through the cave, and may require more or less trenching than when the initial survey was conducted by Charley Savvas and Kevin Stafford on 26 December 1998. (KS)

