

Bexar Grotto Meeting

Date: 9/11/17

Attendees: 43

Arron called the meeting to order at 7:03pm

Visitors

Josh Treibs came from Fredericksburg. He heard about the group when he went to Robber Baron yesterday with a grotto member.

Jason Rodriguez is interested in caves and has been in many in the surrounding areas. He's working on an environmental science degree.

Phillip last went into Enchanted Rock cave. His first one was Robber Baron when he was a Boy Scout. Melissa just joined the Texas Master Naturalist program. Her first cave was Robber Baron. She would like to get more active in caving.

Deena is Melissa's sister. This is new to her and she is here to learn more about caving.

MaryAnne was invited by Leia. They were at Good Sports buying shoes when Leia told her about the group.

Stephanie lived about ½ mile from Robber Baron for most of her life. Her boyfriend Daniel convinced her to check it out. She is a scientist.

Daniel was invited to Robber Baron by MJ.

Jacob went caving with Daniel, Lindsey, and Dave in Robber Baron last week.

Brian Sullivan grew up in the area. He has always been interested in Robber Baron. He saw his friend Jacob on SnapChat in the cave.

Treasury report provided Pam:

Lockbox has been renewed for \$132 so our balance is \$14,338.46.

Organization Reports

TSS – Nothing to report. The TSS is the Texas Speleological Survey. It's the database and scientific arm of Texas caving. They keep track of every bit of information around the state as a resource for cavers and other individuals. If you're interested, Marvin has publications for sale. If you discover caves, we appreciate getting feedback about that. We have an online submission form with that data.

TSA – Now is the time of year we're doing elections. Linda Palit and Ellie Thoene are looking for nominations for the TSA. Unlike the TCMA, the TSA is more oriented towards getting people caving and trying to organize activities and projects throughout the state. The meetings are less formal and occur three times a year. They will meet at TCR in three weeks. If you would like to be an officer, they're looking for nominations. The Bexar Grotto is asked to nominate a newer caver within their grotto for the Chuck Stuehm Award, which will be awarded at TCR. The officers of this grotto could look into that and nominate an enthusiastic new caver. The officers will take all the nominations, discuss it amongst themselves, and vote on one person. In the past the award was a toy Yoda. Arron will send this out to the grotto members. Send your recommendations to any one of the officers.

TCMA – We're looking for new board members. The term for board members is 3 years. We like everyone to be involved on a committee. It is helpful if you have served on a board before. We have in-person meetings 5-6 times a year and attendance is very important. Let Gregg know if you would like to

be on the board. We will have a members' meeting at TCR on Saturday morning. There will be an official announcement later. The TCMA owns and manages a number of caves around Texas, including Robber Baron. Our main mission is conservation and management, as well as gaining responsible access for responsible cavers. We're always looking to acquire new caves and karst properties. We have two properties in San Antonio. We also have a very popular preserve in west Texas (Deep and Punkin). We have a couple caves in Austin (Godwin Ranch, Whirlpool, Avery Ranch).

NSS – We are a chapter of 9,000 members based in Huntsville, Alabama. This is the parent organization. We promote exploration, study, and protection of caves. We have brochures if you're interested in finding more about the NSS. We're going to buy a cave in Tennessee in a couple of months. We just sold a property that was willed to us and the funds will help us pay off our headquarters, of which we've paid off 90 percent. We own about 18 caves across the United States. We publish a monthly newsletter and hold a national convention. This year's convention will be in Helena, Montana in July. TSS is the regional organization of the NSS. Membership includes a member manual and annual report. Get on caves.org for more information. One of our members has just been elected to the UIS. Membership is \$50 a year.

Bracken: Bracken Cave is north of San Antonio and is the home of the largest colony of bats in the world. It's owned by Bat Conservation International. The bats are still here and we're still doing bat flights. The Nature Conservancy gives us acreage to use as well. Now that things are cooling off we will be scheduling karst survey. We walk the property looking for holes in the ground to crawl into. If you're new and would like a day out in the wood to look for caves, this will be a good opportunity. We now have a 100 foot cliff face to climb on. Keep an eye out and sign up for the newsletter and calendar. Harvey only dumped five inches of rain on the property.

Old Business

Amy needs four or five more volunteers to clean up at TCR dinner. Please let MJ know.

Bennett purchased 13 lights and had \$30 leftover to buy batteries. He has not purchased the batteries yet.

Nobody has seen anyone at Robber Baron lately.

New Business

Joe Mitchell: If somebody who lives close to the cave has a lawnmower, the grass is in really bad shape and needs to be mowed. Mike Harris volunteered.

Bennett: We should probably buy some more kneepads and gloves. Mike Harris has some gloves that can be used. He has a bag full. We'll still need kneepads.

Casey Culpepper from SAFD: Casey wants to give a shout out to Lindsey, Dave, Gregg, and Marvin. They took a trip to Woodsboro and they did some great work and represented the Bexar Grotto very well. He is helping to lead another trip. If you are looking to volunteer to help in any cleanup effort, be on the lookout on Casey's Facebook. If you want to help there are plenty of opportunities to do so. You can help clear brush, move flood damage out of people's homes, distribute supplies, or anything else that is needed.

The Colorado Bend SP website has an announcement that states that they will be closing some caves. Rob will look into this in expectation of the upcoming anniversary.

Announcements:

The Hydrogeo workshop is this weekend. It's a great opportunity to meet new people and get involved. Jordan is the volunteer coordinator. Volunteers get a T-shirt, book, breakfast Saturday and Sunday, and dinner Saturday. There will be 40 different modules related to environmental science, hydrogeology, and geology. There will be two drill rigs, stream gauging, dye tracing, caving, and a keynote speaker. So far we have 150 showing up.

Long sleeve grey shirts: \$20, short sleeve: \$15, Hydrogeo workshop are \$5 but if you join tonight you get a free T-shirt.

Leia is writing Bexar Facts and would like caving stories and member highlights.

Upcoming Trips:

September 13th: There will be planning meetings for the Hydrogeo workshop. Contact Geary Schindel.

September 12-14th: Rob will be taking Boy Scouts into Robber Baron in preparation for Deep Cave. Contact Rob if you'd like to assist.

September 15-17th: Hydrogeo Workshop at Cave Without a Name. There is a website that has been put together for volunteers. Attendance is \$50. Harmon's BBQ will do the catering. They will do all the work. Talk to Jordan and Stephanie about volunteer opportunities. There will be discussion after the meeting as well as work allocation.

September 23: Marvin has a trip at Henderson Ranch at 9am. They will meet at Spring Branch and Rittiman Road. We'll do ridgewalking, dig some holes, and look for new caves. Arron will try to dive a sump. Talk to Marvin or Arron.

September 23-30th: International Association of Hydrogeologists in Croatia

September 30th: TCMA Fundraiser "Save the Caves" at Buffalo Billiard's in Austin at 7pm.

October: The first full weekend in October (October 7th and 8th.), the Government Canyon trips will start again. The trips are once a month and the goals are to walk the entire property to identify sinkholes and caves. There was an agreement established before the park opened for cavers to go and walk the entire property, explore caves, document karst features, and collect bugs in the caves. This project is still ongoing. We walk, look for caves and sinkholes, and explore the caves and sinkholes. There are some caves Marvin would not take you to if you're a first timer. We've dug into a number of nice caves. There are thousands of acres that nobody has ever looked at. Your cave is out there waiting for you to find. At this time we have 61 caves as well as a number of good digs and sinkholes. We're actively exploring the deepest cave. He will give a program on Government Canyon. Wear the right clothes, including jeans and hiking boots.

October 12-15th: 39th Annual Texas Caver's Reunion at Paradise Canyon on the Medina River. Parade Theme: Vikings. It is an opportunity to spend time with about 300 Texas Cavers to come together and have fun. There will be speleolympics, costume contest, a parade, vendors, and rope climbing contests.

October 13th, 14th, 15th: Colorado Bend's 30th Anniversary; a number of caves will be open. If you want to participate at Colorado Bend you need to contact one of the trip leaders. Go to the TSA website for more details and contact Chris Pena or Will Quast via the website to make sure nothing has changed.

There will also be volunteer opportunities opening up in the fall at the caves and property. It is usually the 2nd weekend of the month.

October 20th-22nd: Rob will take BS Troop 501 to Deep and Punkin.

October 28th: There is a joint NASA and WEKS foundation sponsoring LCATS. They're doing an event at Robber Baron. They get high school students who are interested in science to build an instrument that will be used in space. Joe Mitchell doesn't have a time yet.

November 3, 4, 5th: Recreational trip to Deep and Punkin. The trip is currently full but you can get on the waiting list. See Greg Mosier. He will send an email at the beginning of October to the original cavers who responded. He expects that a few slots will come available so keep your ears open.

November 11th: Robber Baron Open House; we will need lots of volunteers. Every 18 months we have a public open house at the cave to allow the public into the cave. It's also a big fundraiser for the TCMA. We usually put 400-500 people through the cave in about 6 hours. We have to station people throughout the cave to monitor the people. We also have tables for BCI and Master Naturalists, etc, at the site. We also print photos of attendees in the cave. Once Hydrogeo is done we will get started on the open house. We will need some help in advance of the event for planning. We will need about 40-50 volunteers. Joe Mitchell will send around a sign up list in the future. In the immediate future Joe needs some help with the advanced planning and advertising. If someone lives close to the cave who could handle a handout for material around the cave entrance, we could provide this to neighbors who live around the cave. He'd like to do it in early October. Jacob said he could help. Joe also likes to have tables from various organizations there. We've had Master Naturalists there in the past. If the Master Naturalists would be interested in having a booth, please let Joe Mitchell know. In the past we've had an after-party for volunteers. Rob is offering his house for an after-party.

December 31: NSS is holding a New Year's Eve ball in Huntsville, AL.

Trip Reports

Josh went caving for the first time. He is very interested in it. They did the Bitch Passage and triple torture.

MJ went to Robber Baron with Daniel and his group. Lindsey led the group and he was impressed because she was a "girl" and "did better than most guys would." They were pretty stoked for the power caving. He was sore the next day.

Little Ross went to Robber Baron. He saw the graffiti room and the dinosaur room. He went through the squeeze parts. He saw two bats. Little Ross had to lead people back and he did a good job.

Joe and Arron went caving in Sutton county. They dug into this pit that was a collapsed dome. He caught an Eastern coachwhip. There was also a family of bull frogs. There were many vent tubes in the bottom. Victoria spent an hour chipping away at rocks. Joe brought the Cave-A-Tron. They surveyed 108 meters. There was a walking passage full of pristine formations, pearls, and brimstones. They also checked out Writing on the Rocks Cave. Somebody in 1883 wrote their name into the limestone bedding plane as well as their hand. On the hillside it drops into a large rattlesnake pit and a bat hibernaculum. There is a room in the back where the bats tend to roost. It has not been investigated.

Program Announcement

Hydrogeo planning

Arron adjourned the meeting at 8:01pm.