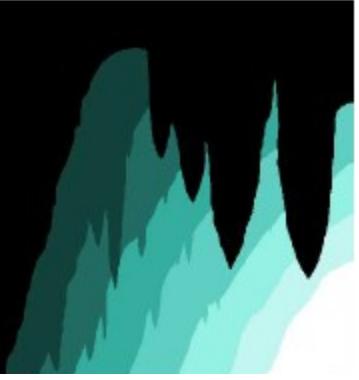


Western Cave Conservancy

Protecting the West's Last Frontier

Vol 10 No 2 Fall 2016



WE CAN USE YOUR HELP

Mark Bowers, WCC PR Director

Would you like to help the WCC, but don't have the time? Would you like to donate money, but never seem to have extra at the time you are thinking about donating? Or, would you like to help with no money and almost no time out of your day? The WCC has an account with Amazon Smile. Amazon Smile allows you to donate a portion of each purchase you make on Amazon to the WCC (i.e., Amazon donates money when you make a purchase). This is at no cost to you and only takes a couple of minutes to set up.

How to set it up:

1. Open a browser on the web and type smile.amazon.com in the address bar
2. Sign into Amazon using your normal login for Amazon
3. Scroll down to the section labelled "Or pick your own charitable organization:"
4. In the bar below the above title type "Western Cave Conservancy" and click "Select"

5. Select the button next to the Western Cave Conservancy.

6. Select "Yes, remember this as the default when ordering through Amazon"

That is it. You are now donating money to the WCC each time you place an order with Amazon through that account. Just remember to start your orders at smile.amazon.com. You can opt-out at any time or change charities. I'm not sure how it works if you do not have an account, but I am sure that it is a similar process. We would very much appreciate your support in this manner where it costs you nothing and takes almost no time to set up.

WCC IS CHANGING ITS ADDRESS!

Since its founding 15 years ago in 2001, Martin Haye and Dan Snyder have received WCC's mail at their address in Santa Cruz, California. During that time they've been painstakingly fixing up their 100+ year old house. That project is nearing completion and Dan and Martin are moving. The WCC appreciates them providing a stable mailing address for all these years. All postal mail should now go to:

**Western Cave Conservancy
PO Box 230
Newcastle, CA 95658**

On that note, the new address is likely to be just as stable and long lasting: you may recognize it as being that of Secretary Marianne Russo. Marianne volunteered to take over the important function of receiving the Conservancy's mail. Even in this age of electronic everything, many donors prefer to use the good old postal service -- and so do the IRS and other government agencies. Thanks Marianne! WCC will soon have a new phone number as well, but our email and website addresses will not change.

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WCC MAKES A SPLASH IN ELY

Marianne Russo

Photos by C. Chavdarian

The WCC was very well represented at the 2016 Annual NSS Convention in Ely, Nevada. We became an official sponsor of the event earlier in the spring by making a donation to the event committee and for this action we received some special consideration. Our booth was located right across from registration in the large central room at the White Pines High School which served as the cafeteria, and was adjacent to the main entrance. This meant that almost every convention attendee had to pass our booth coming and going, eating meals or checking in with registration. We also were allowed to sell merchandise which is normally restricted to convention vendors. We received a full page ad in the NSS News ahead of time, as well as several notices in the convention program and daily newsletter. All this and popcorn too! Convention chairman Matt Bowers acquired a small professional grade popcorn machine and this turned out to be an irresistible lure through the week



with the smell of fresh, hot popcorn wafting throughout much of the building.

In addition to the great location and lure of hot, fresh popcorn our success also was a result of the dedi-

cated participation of many WCC directors and volunteers who spent much of their convention time staffing the booth, working the popcorn machine, running errands, setting up and closing down each day.

Vice President Mike Spiess, Treasurer Martin Haye and Public Relations Director Mark Bowers all arrived early to staff the booth at a public event, the Speleo-Fest, in



Photo: C. Chavdarian

downtown Ely. While this was not a particularly profitable venue for the WCC, it was a contribution to the PR success of the convention and a nice gesture of respect to the city of Ely. Mike, Mark and Martin were joined on Sunday by Secretary Ma-



Photo: C. Chavdarian

rianne Russo, Land Research Director Chuck Chavdarian, Sharon Bowers and Seda Chavdarian to set everything up at the convention site. By that afternoon we were in business!

Also stepping up to assist making

our presence a success were WCC members Kathy and Dale Lankford and Howard Hurt. Kathy donated numerous hours making popcorn

and both she and Dale helped with setting up and shutting down on several days. Howard Hurt contributed a wonderful idea and a significant monetary gift by providing a pink tod-

dler wading pool filled with ice and bottles of water on several days. The water was free; simply a gift to dry and thirsty cavers and the WCC got most of the credit, by default. **THANK YOU HOWARD!** One of the many anonymous cavers who stood in line for the free popcorn is to be thanked for the outstanding idea to install a "donation cup." This simple idea ended up being a real money maker.

Speaking of money, we collected approximately \$1500.00 during the week. About half of this was from sales of logo items and the popcorn donations (which on some days was about \$100). The other half consisted of memberships and other donations. Of special consideration was a donation of \$250 and a variety of items for sale that were presented to us by Mike Walsh of the former Texas Cave Conservancy. These items and the money were left over after the dissolution of that conservancy and he decided to pass on these things to the WCC. This was a very generous gesture; thank you Mike and the Friends of the Texas Cave Conservancy.

Directors Bowers, Russo, and Chavdarian spent valuable time throughout the week having constructive conversations with cavers representing

other western grottos and cave management opportunities. Director Chuck Chavdarian did even more to promote the conservancy by attending the Cave Conservancies Roundtable meeting where a variety of current issues are discussed and ideas shared. He also gave an excellent presentation during the Conservation Session summarizing the various ways that the WCC works to protect caves. Finally, he provided a continuous running video at the booth which provided much of this same information, along with a movie of the gating of our recently leased caves.

Bringing the WCC to the Convention was a big undertaking. A lot of preparation ahead of time was required and most of the credit here goes to Mark Bowers who found and acquired our wonderful display setups and various sale items. Chuck Chavdarian produced all of the photos which decorated our display while Mark produced all of the signage. A special note of thanks goes to Director Martin Haye who provided the equipment and training for booth staff to be able to accept credit card payments which really increased our opportunities for sales and donations. During the convention the booth was staffed every day from about 8:30am to 5:00pm by at least one, but normally two or three people, which allowed staffers to leave periodically to attend sessions or run other errands. In total, hundreds of hours were spent by over a dozen volunteers! It was most definitely time well spent and I for one feel it has given the WCC some renewed energy.

NEWSLETTER PHOTO ESSAY ON WELLER BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

By Marianne Russo

Electrification: "Getting the power installed at the Weller fieldhouse entailed a lot of brush and tree clearing between the existing power pole and the building. For the high limbs we hired a professional tree trimmer with a cherry picker and he made short work of the things that were out of our reach. We had a couple of truck-loads of fire wood to give away afterward but PG&E was able to string the new line and get us on line without a

Photo: C. Chavdarian



Photo: C. Chavdarian

Photo: C. Chavdarian

Photo: C. Chavdarian

problem."

Fieldhouse Misc: Bruce Rogers and Pat Helton helped on several occasions with wiring, insulating and the sheetrock installation. Jerry Johnson has spent many hours modifying the door frame to accommodate a screen door which real-



Hired tree trimmer working on large high tree limb near power pole.
Photo: M. Russo



Screen door is working. Photo: M. Russo

ly helps reduce the mosquitos and small annoying black flies that get into the building.

Stool Shed: The stool shed interior was improved by the addition of insulation (free left-overs from Johnson-Russo house construction) and leftover sheetrock from the fieldhouse project. New roofing shingles were laid over the old roll roofing material which was getting very worn, some of which were left over from the Tool Shed supplies. Finally a new surface was put down on the floor and painted with the same paint used on the Tool Shed Floor. It will be much nicer to use and keep clean now.

Fieldhouse Sheetrock/Insulation: As part of the county permit process we had to



Bill tapes a wall seam Photo: M. Russo

cover the walls after the wiring was installed. To make the building more comfortable in both winter and summer both the walls and ceiling were well insulated. The walls were insulated first, along with the addition of nailing strips at the corners and along the ceiling edges so that the sheetrock could be properly attached. Then in January 2015 volunteers from the Redwood Grotto and other folks who showed up spent a long weekend insulating the ceiling and putting up the sheetrock. Framing of wells leading down from the skylights to the ceiling were built and most of the joint taping was done. Even the Addison kids, Finn and Rowan did their part. Altogether there were 10 volunteers who worked under Preston Addison's expert supervision. Throughout the following months Marianne completed the taping,

plaster finishing and painting.

Weller Misc: Cute photo of Rowan and Finn Addison showing off their



Rowan and Finn Addison with dirt sculpture behind Fieldhouse. Photo: M. Russo

“History of American Indians” sculpture behind the fieldhouse. These kids are very well read and very imaginative, I was really impressed. They are very nice too!

2016 WESTERN REGIONAL CAVING TRIP:

Cave of the Catacombs and Sink Cave

By

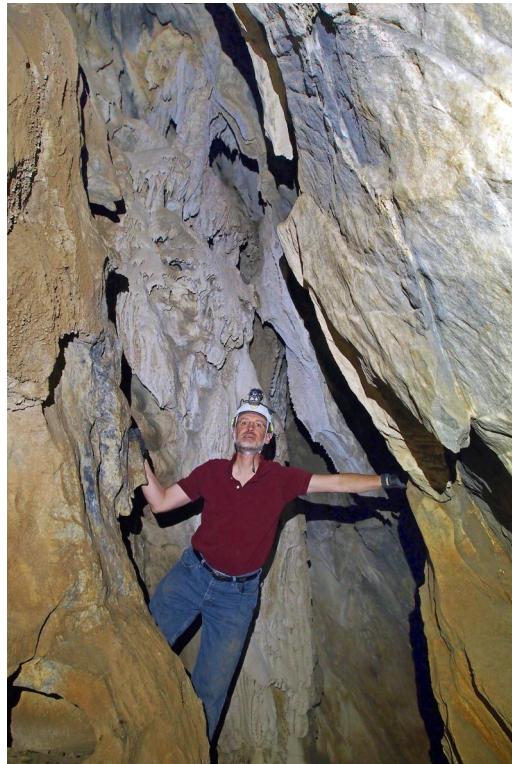
Chuck Chavdarian

WCC Land Research Director

On October 8, a trip to Cave of the Catacombs and Sink Cave, two WCC managed caves, was included as one of the many caving trips offered by Diablo Grotto at the 2016 Western Regional. The trip was led by this author and David Weaver, WCC Advisor and member of the project management team for these caves.. This was the first trip for Western Region cavers to the Mountain Ranch caves. The trip was limited to ten, and ten cavers quickly signed up for it – Mark Linn, Joanna Ralston, Sean Redmond, Neil Calmes, Barb Ruble, Steve Ruble, Jake Harwood, Zoe Harwood, Maurette Foster, and Tom Mathey.

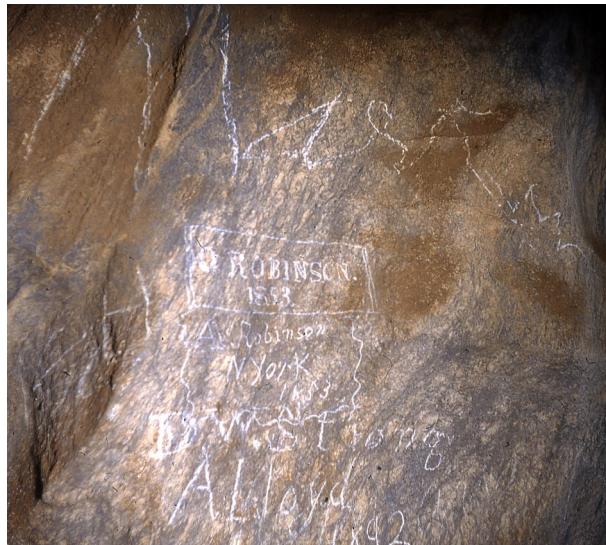
Each cave is on private property. They are sit-

uated approximately 200 yards from each other. The WCC has a lease with each landowner for



David Weaver in Cave of the Catacombs - Photo by: C. Chavdarian

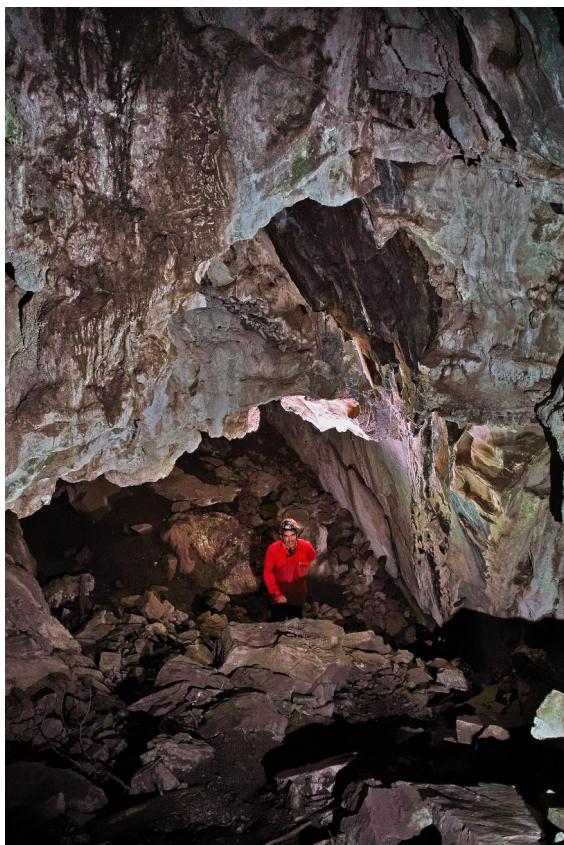
the caves, and also financed the gating of the caves in April 2016. Following our arrival on October 8, we first checked on Cave of the Catacombs to see if there was any water (the



Historical Graffiti in Cave of the Catacombs - Photo C. Chavdarian

“lake”) in the cave. At certain times of the year, the lake inside the cave can encompass nearly a third of the cave, and can be quite deep. Fortunately, on this day, the cave was dry. This was good news as it would allow the cavers to

see and essentially explore the entire cave, and avoid getting wet.



The Big Room of Sink Cave – Photo by C. Chavdarian

We entered the cave through the main gated walk-in entrance. As there are a number of fun passages inside Cave of the Catacombs, some of which loop around and include some crawls, we spent a good portion of our time in this cave. Although not highly decorated, the cave does have some nice whitish flowstone in various places. In addition, the marble along the walls and overhead is multicolored and remarkable in its varied forms. The phreatic nature of the cave has carved out the marble in a remarkable way, and makes for some impressive photos. After exploring passages, the group gradually worked its way through crawling passage into the historical section of the cave where there is historical graffiti dating back to the 1850s on the walls. After proceeding beyond the historical section, some of the cavers continued the crawl until they reached and exited from the gated historical entrance. Everyone expressed their enjoyment of the cave.

Following a break for lunch, we did the short hike to Sink Cave. After unlocking the gate at the main entrance we proceeded inside and carefully worked our way down the long slope into the main chamber of the “Big Room”. Overhead is the large 15 ft wide skylight, which includes a 35 ft drop. However, for this trip, we did not include the vertical drop into the cave. Sink Cave has a large central chamber. The cave also has some flowstone primarily near the main entrance and at the back of the cave. After exploring around the main large chamber, David led some of the cavers down through the narrow slot near the bottom of the cave. After sliding into the slot, and doing some crawling, this passage leads down to the sink.

After spending several enjoyable hours at the caves, we all headed back to the Western Regional in Sonora in time for dinner and the scheduled activities.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIPS!

Not only do you get copies of this newsletter, but you will be contributing to the next cave that we take under our wing and protect on your behalf! You will be preserving a portion of our planet and a place for our younger generations to learn how the earth formed and experience life beyond the confines of virtual reality on their smart phones.