

# **TRIP REPORT FORM**

## **AGGIE SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**DATE:** 10.20.23 - 10.22.23

**STATE:** Texas

**SPECIFIC AREA:**

**TEAM LEADER:** Bobby Randolph, Will Flack

**TEAM MEMBERS:**

**TIME ENTERED:** 11:30am

**CAVE:** Powells

**COUNTY:** Menard

**EXIT TIME:** 5:00pm

### **PURPOSE OF THE TRIP**

Recreational

We entered the cave one by one down the shaky ladder, that some people had concerns about, until all 14 of us were in the cave. We got to see two lizards hanging out at the bottom of the ladder as well as a decently sized spider in its web, which hung at eye level. I led the stomach crawl through the opening passage until we reached the first room where we could crawl on our hands and knees and eventually crouch through. After taking in the breadth of the expansive room, which included massive mounds of soft cricket poop as well as hundreds of cave crickets on the ceilings, I led the group through another stomach crawl before climbing down into the large walking passage. The ceiling is about 20 or more feet above the ground in this passage, so we were able to freely walk through most of it on the way to the Sculpture Garden. Before we could enter the final passage to the room, we had to stomach crawl through the tightest squeeze in the cave. I made the group as I went through to make sure we were going the right way. The way was right, and I crawled back to grab my bag before crawling through a third time. This was the first cave for four members of our group and the first time going to Powells for six others, so the crawl took a little bit of time for the whole group to get through. After everyone got through, we continued to the Sculpture Garden. Upon arriving at the room, I discovered that the sculptures had been torn down, except for some in the back of the room that dated back to the 70s. Although the sculptures were gone, we took a short rest before the room got too stuffy, forcing us to leave. I led the group back the way we came, including the tight squeeze once again, until we reached where we had climbed down.

We climbed over the rocks and continued down the right side of the walking passage to go to the underground river. We passed many critters on the wall including crickets, isopods, and even a millipede. As we were taking in the incredible view, we

approached a new climb. I had the group stop as I bouldered up the wall to get a better view of where we were going. I could see the continuation of the passage from my vantage point but determined that it was too difficult to climb the way I had to get to the rest of the passage. Bobby and I determined that it was easier and safer to have the group turn around and climb up the rocks that we had originally climbed down when we first entered the walking passage and have them come to where I was sitting to continue. As they were crawling through the room on the way to meet me, the group decided to stop and take a water break. As they relaxed, Drew talked about the geology of a certain portion of the rock layer that was visible. I turned off my light and crawled to where they were to try and scare them. When they decided to keep going, most of them crawled past me before I revealed myself hidden behind them. Unfortunately no one was scared and they were instead confused on how I got there. Sad. I crawled past the group to go up front to help direct the group to the next portion of the passage. To continue, we had to climb down a different rock pile that was more sketchy than the original one, especially for shorter members. Bobby took the lead as I remained in the back to help the group get down. After spending time getting down, we continued to the river. Unfortunately, the river room had extremely bad air as Bobby couldn't even light the lighter to check. We immediately turned around and I led the group back to the original room we were in at the beginning. Climbing up the rock pile took longer than going down as shorter people had to step on a taller members shoulder to get up and over. Once we were all up we returned to the room and took another break, this time eating our cave snacks. We then did lights-out as I gave a little talk before playing a song. After the song, we sat in complete darkness and silence, except for some loud snoring coming from sleepy cavers. After about 20 minutes we decided to turn lights back on. Most of us wanted to go through some of the maze portions of the cave while others wanted to go out. Three members left while the rest started the maze.

Bobby took the lead for the maze as I had never done this part of the cave before. We saw a lot of cool survey markers, at least I think they're cool, and also saw some historical trash. We were able to walk through most of that portion of the maze before returning to the original room. Another member decided to leave the cave as the remaining ten of us went to a new section of maze. This section was mostly hands and knees crawling through the soft cricket poop. We kept crawling for about 20 minutes until we reached large holes in the ground. We realized these holes led straight down to the walking passage we were in earlier and were very careful crawling around them. We then decided it was time to go so I led the group to the original room before leading them out of the cave. After we climbed up the ladder one by one, we turned the cave off and I locked the gate, wrapping up the cave trip.



*Saturday Sunrise. Photo by Will Flack*





*Lizard at bottom of ladder. Photo by Will Flack*





*Traveling through walking passage. Photo by Will Flack*





*Millipede in walking passage. Photo by Will Flack*





*Small water break. Photo by Will Flack*





*Drew teaching geology to the group in the distance. Photo by Will Flack*





*Traveling through walking passage of the maze. Photo by Will Flack*





*Fossil found in ceiling of maze. Photo by Will Flack*