

# CAVE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

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## CRF NEWSLETTER

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The CRF Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Cave Research Foundation, a non-profit organization incorporated in 1957 under the laws of Kentucky for the purpose of furthering research, conservation, and education about caves and karst.

### Newsletter Submissions & Deadlines:

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## President's Column

### By: Kayla Sapkota

Hi Friends,

“Mapping is more than measurement—it’s the transformation of mystery into knowledge, turning voids into data and darkness into understanding.” -- unknown

Sometimes I think to myself, why caves? Maybe you do the same. Maybe our ancient ancestors did, too. There's something about taking the unknown and making it familiar - shining a light into darkness, if you will. We make maps using our tablets, sketchbooks, Distos, BRICs, Tandems, and tapes. We gather data to bridge the unknown. But we do other things that are just as meaningful. We make memories. We build teams and lasting friendships. And those are a big part of answering the question for me. So, why caves? It's about the connections made: both scientific and human.

Muddy Smiles,  
Kayla Sapkota, President



*Dani Lotz in a decorated passage in an Ozarks cave. Photo by Nathan Curran.*

### On the Cover

Mark Jones squeezes out of a breakdown entrance in Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho. See Mark's report on this year's expedition in this issue. Photo by Fred Wilkinson.

## REGIONAL EXPEDITION REPORTS

### Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve Butte County, Idaho, September 2025

By: Mark Jones

#### **September 6:**

The 2025 September Cave Research Foundation Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve Expedition began with Andrew Erickson, Mark Jones, Paul McMullen, and Fred Wilkinson hiking out on the Blue Dragon Lava to survey several caves identified by Todd Stefanic, the Wildlife Biologist and Research Coordinator, with the help of the Wilderness Volunteers. Mark and Fred surveyed a known cave doubling its length to over 200 feet and two recent finds – one for 80 feet and the other to 100 feet, so far. Meanwhile Andrew and Paul got five new caves inventoried for a total of 350 feet.

#### **September 7:**

Returning to finish their previous survey Mark and Fred planned to knock it off quickly, but instead they spent the entire day crawling 350 feet on their bellies. The effort was worth it though with significant bat guano being found. Nearby Andrew and Paul knocked off three more caves for 500 feet of survey. They also spent the day surveying in low crawlways.

#### **September 8-9:**

The Archeological Team of Craig Williams, Bre Henderson, and Chase Barber joined Andrew, Mark, Paul, and Fred surveying and conducting archeological assessments of two caves in a remote area in the monument. The pop-up trailer served as the headquarters of the campsite for the three-day excursion with tents surrounding it.

The first cave was in an unusual spot but was worth the effort. After two days crawling through surface tubes, we were relieved to be spending two days walking in a significant lava tube for over 2,700 feet. Some ceiling breakdown was encountered, but it was not much of a nuisance. This cave is an important refuge for a variety of animals, both terrestrial and subterranean. The most important were the five Townsend's big-eared bats that were documented. Historical graffiti was documented in isolated sections of the cave.

#### **September 10:**

The third day of camping had the team venturing to another nice lava tube with walking passage. A trench collapse separated the cave into an eastern section 75 feet long and a western section nearly 1,000 feet in length. The last 200 feet dropped to a comfortable hands-and-knees crawl in soft sand. This cave was very popular with birds as well as woodrats.

#### **September 11:**

Returning to the monument's headquarters the group split with Andrew leading Chase, Bre, and Craig out to document some lava features south and Mark taking Paul and Fred on a hike around the North Crater Trail to knock off some of the smaller leads. Andrew's team surveyed one cave for 70 feet and monitored four others. Mark's team surveyed four known caves, two that had important fauna usage.

#### **September 12:**

Andrew, Chase, Bre, and Craig spent the day documenting an important site from the monument's files. Paul and Fred continued to survey the caves in the North Crater Flow. In the evening the 4th Annual CRF Fish Feast was held in appreciation of the staff at Craters of the Moon. Following the meal a presentation was given by Craig and Bre on their archeological work.

#### **September 13:**

Although the archeological team departed for home, Eric Harrison joined Andrew, Mark, Paul, and Fred for the weekend to survey more lava features. Mat Gornentz and Ariana Mallory with the National Park Service also joined our team for the day. Andrew, Mat, Eric, and Paul surveyed four caves with over 130 feet of survey. Mark, Ari, and Fred knocked off a hanging survey from July for over 150 feet before Paul and Mat joined in surveying 200 feet in an interesting surface tube with two levels. Obvious bat and woodrat usage was noted. Nearby Andrew and Eric got a related 70-foot surface tube recorded. Meanwhile Paul finished another 70-footer.

#### **September 14:**

Andrew and Eric met Jessie Mendoza to survey a small pit, the shortest survey of the expedition at 12.5 feet, but were rewarded with a surprisingly nice cave for 200 feet. Mark, Paul, and Fred continued to survey three small caves along the North Crater Trail. This team was also surprised with 370 feet of survey as well as bonus cave faunal usage.

#### **September 15:**

After the very successful mule train from 2024 Todd worked with Ryan Edwards, a local packer, to provide the services we required to document and monitor lava features east of Echo Crater. Gage Merkel joined Andrew, Mark, Paul, Jessie, and Fred for the week. The 2nd Annual CRF Mule Train Expedition began with Ryan and Cody Hamilton loading the caving and

camping gear while we sauntered down the Wilderness Trail. East of Echo Crater Andrew, Paul, and Jessie cut across broken lava with their vertical gear to survey some caves while Mark, Gage, and Fred battled sagebrush to wait for the mule train to deliver their cave gear. As we waited Gage discovered a new cave in a mound of lava that measured sixty feet. The known cave was a dusty dry crawl with plenty of woodrat scat that totaled 300 feet. The other team had success with their initial cave, but ice and loose rocks prevented them from surveying in the second. The knowledge gained from this will be used to prepare for future exploration. Both teams arrived at the campsite before sundown.

#### **September 16:**

By camping close to a cluster of significant caves the group was able to begin surveying within a few minutes of camp. Mark, Paul, and Fred surveyed a large lava tube with excessive breakdown that filled most of the passage. Several lava formations were encountered in the 400 feet of survey. Mountains of woodrat scat and numerous middens were found in the entrance area.

At a nearby cave Andrew, Jessie, and Gage doubled the length of a known cave to 400 feet when they not only pushed through a maze of breakdown but found a backdoor! Three Townsend's big-eared bats were found during the survey. Woodrat scat and middens in this cave would rival any other in the monument.

#### **September 17:**

Andrew, Jessie, and Gage surveyed two small caves and two nice lava tubes, both over 200 feet. One of the larger caves boasted a peeled-wall crawl, a variety of lavacicles as well as other lava features. The other had a large room filled with breakdown in the middle. Bat guano and woodrat scat were discovered in both these caves. Mark, Paul, and Fred focused on surveying the Bridge of Tears as the monument will be celebrating the centennial visit by the Limbert Expedition next year. In addition, a comfortable 200-foot cave and an uncomfortable 100-foot cave were surveyed. Woodrat activity was noted in all the caves.

#### **September 18:**

Andrew, Jessie, and Gage surveyed several dusty, dry small caves with little redeeming value, but did find three new surface tubes that were more interesting. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time to survey them. Meanwhile Paul had discovered a nice hands-and-knees crawl surface tube that Fred helped survey. Later, Mark and Fred ridgewalked the area but were skunked by the Blue Dragon Lava.

#### **September 19:**

After a fabulous camping trip in the wilderness, it was time to trek seven miles back to rejoin society. On the way seven caves were

surveyed, five known and two newly discovered. There was little to pique our interest in the smaller caves, but the longer caves captured our attention. The longest cave was two hundred feet long with rafted blocks, lava gutters, extruded lava, and colorful lavacicles. Significant bat guano and woodrat scat and middens were also noted. While both new caves were 100-foot dusty dry crawls, one had a large bone bed filled with elk bones, the other had a row of webworm strands along a damp wall.

This concluded a very successful week of work at the monument. We're looking forward to the 2026 CRF 3rd Annual Wilderness Mule Train next September.

#### **September 20:**

Samuel DeGrey joined Paul and Fred in surveying and monitoring more cave leads along the North Crater Trail. One of the numerous possibilities was a low priority lead in the red clinker rather than in the pahoehoe. Instead of being a bust, this was the biggest discovery of the expedition! A mishmash of lava mixed to form three tiers of narrow canyons with five entrances. A large perennial pool with submerged ice was found at the lowest level. The convoluted passage required three days to properly survey. Not far away Andrew and Jessie were surveying other cave leads. Unfortunately, their leads were less spectacular, but they did enjoy a nice day on the lava. Mark spent the day entering data.

#### **September 21:**

Paul, Jessie, and Fred returned to survey and inventory yesterday's interesting discovery while Andrew and Mark hiked out the Cave Wilderness Trail to map and monitor a Wilderness Volunteer discovery from July. Both teams were rewarded with surveys that will make interesting maps.

#### **September 22:**

Paul and Fred finished their survey in the North Crater Flow. Nearly 300 feet were recorded in this new discovery. Meanwhile, Mark and Andrew hiked through thick sagebrush to document three caves in a northern section of the monument. 350 feet were garnered by this team.

#### **September 23:**

Andrew, Mark, Paul, and Fred hiked out the Cave Wilderness Trail to survey some caves reported by the Wilderness Volunteers in July. Andrew and Paul surveyed two caves for 350 feet, while Mark and Fred got 400 feet in four caves. Both teams spent the day on their bellies in low, tight, "cheese grater" crawls. The only reward was the discovery of bat guano in a few caves.

#### **September 24:**

The final day of the expedition was spent by Andrew, Mark, Paul, and Fred surveying five

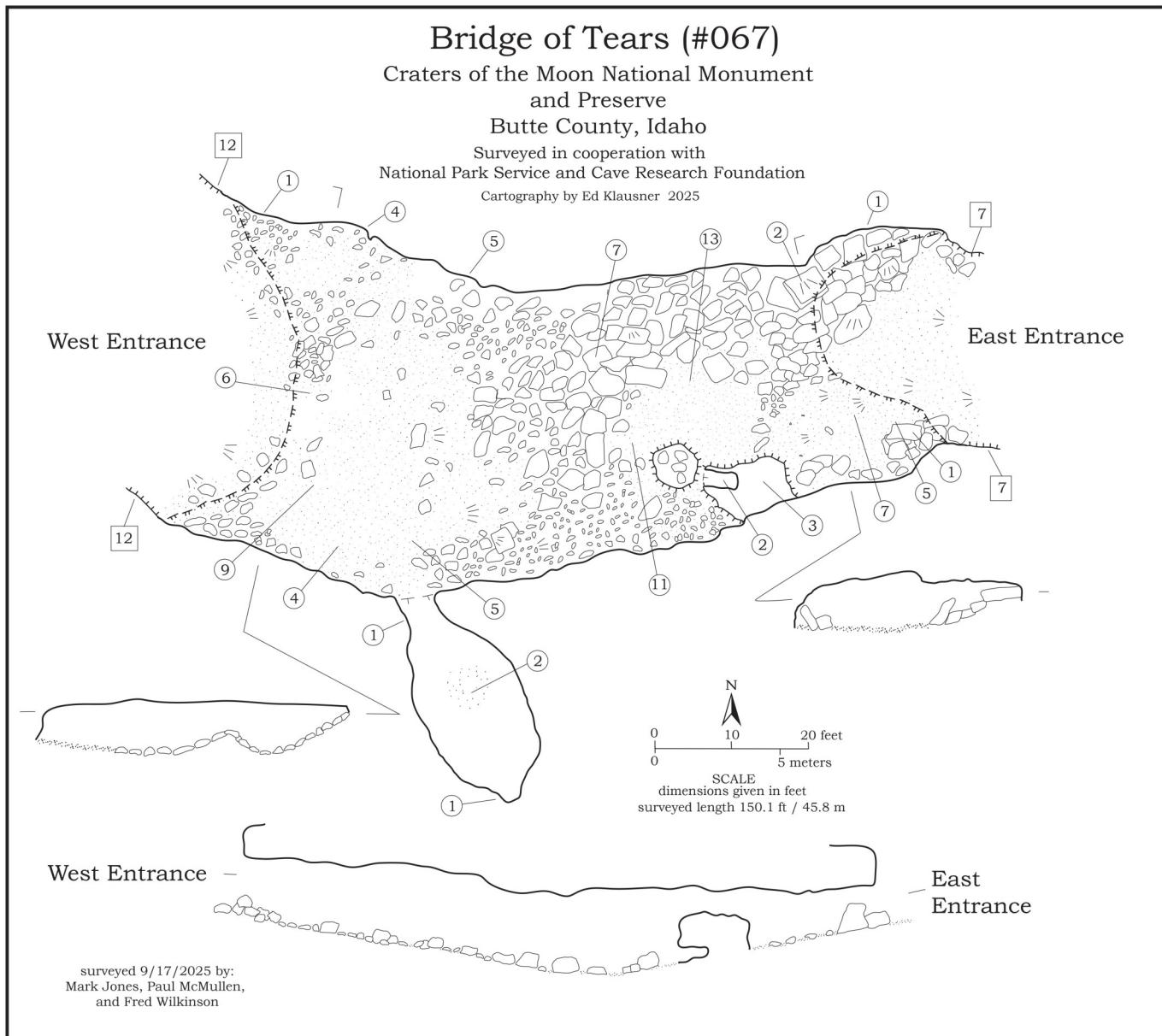
small caves with little redeeming value except for some bat guano.

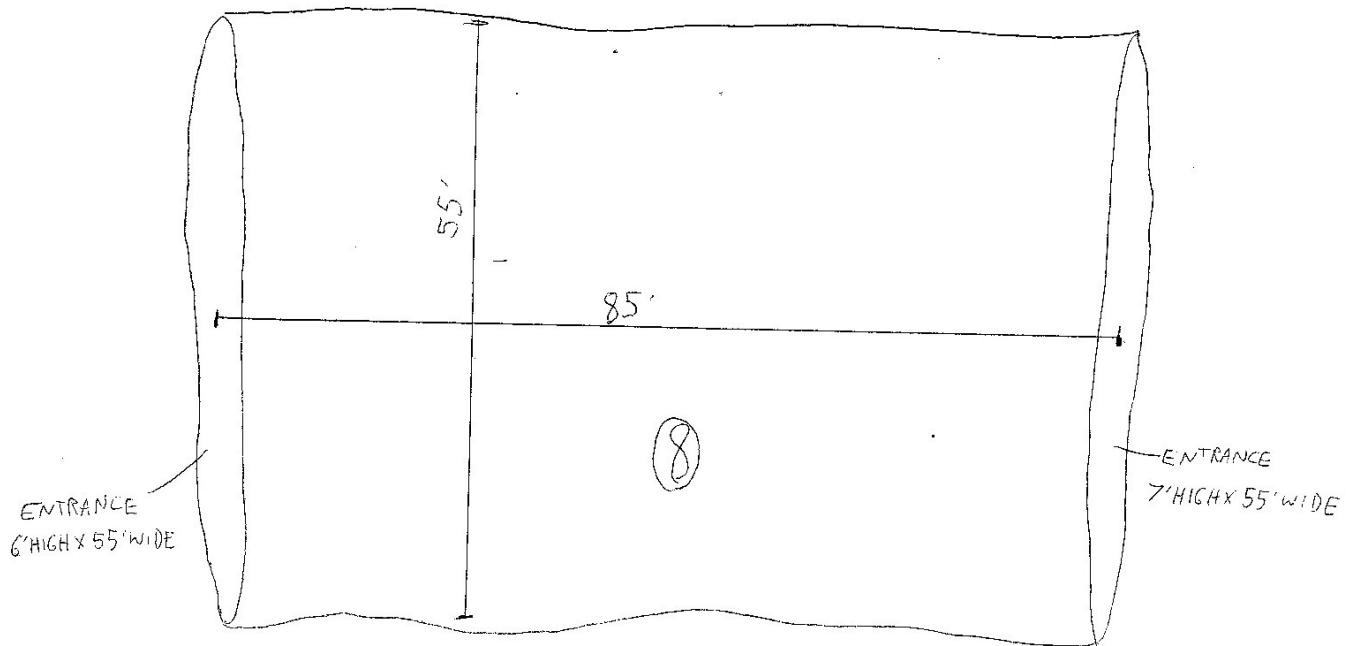
### Summary:

The September 2025 CRF Craters Expedition was very successful with 74 caves surveyed for a total of 12,880 feet. The surveys ranged from 12.5 feet to 2,701.4 feet, with 41 less than 100 feet long and two over 1,000 feet in length. Most of the caves were pristine with little or no visitation. Very little graffiti was found in the caves and much of it was historical. A separate report will be filed by the archeological team. During the expedition the CRF confirmed that

the caves in the Monument are important to a variety of creatures including woodrats, bats, pika, marmots, coyotes, owls, ravens, pigeons, camel crickets, spiders, webworms, and ants.

The team is grateful to the staff at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve for all their help, with special thanks to Todd Stefanic for his assistance during the year. Thanks to Ryan Edwards and Cody Hamilton for providing the mules to pack our gear out past Echo Crater. Dave Jones is once again acknowledged for providing the delicious fish for the annual fish feast.





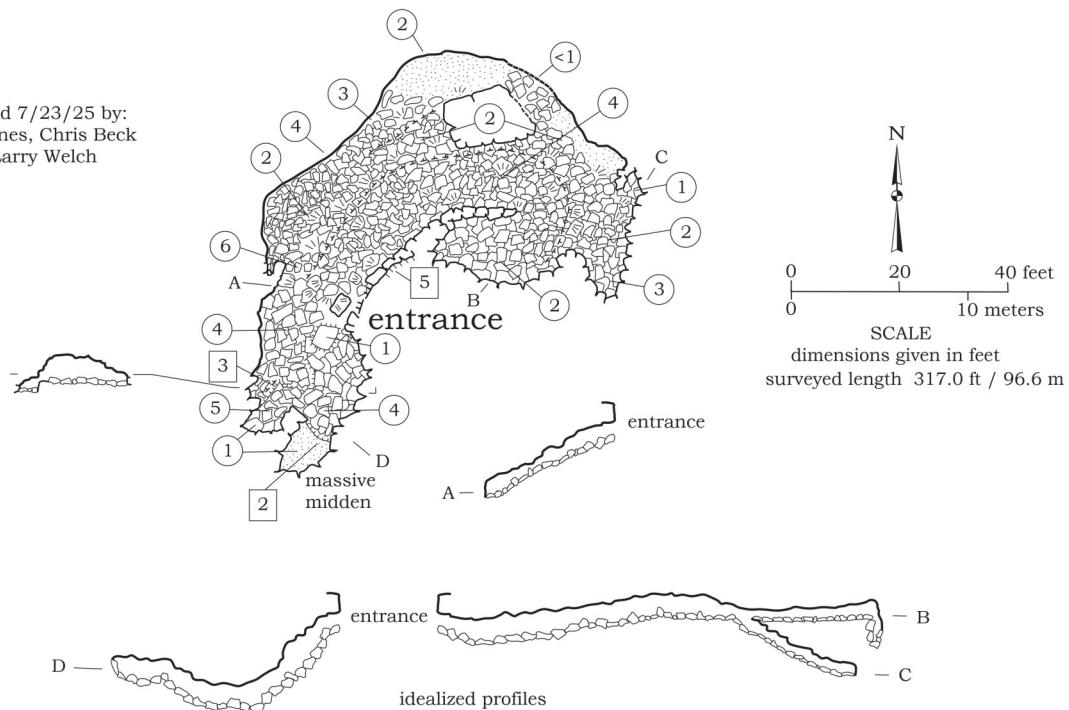
**Top:** #067 Bridge of Tears Cave. Historic Bob Limbert photo from his expedition in 1926. **Bottom:** Bridge of Tears Cave draft map.

#573

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve  
Butte County, Idaho

Surveyed in cooperation with  
National Park Service and Cave Research Foundation  
Cartography by Ed Klausner 2025

surveyed 7/23/25 by:  
Mark Jones, Chris Beck  
and Larry Welch

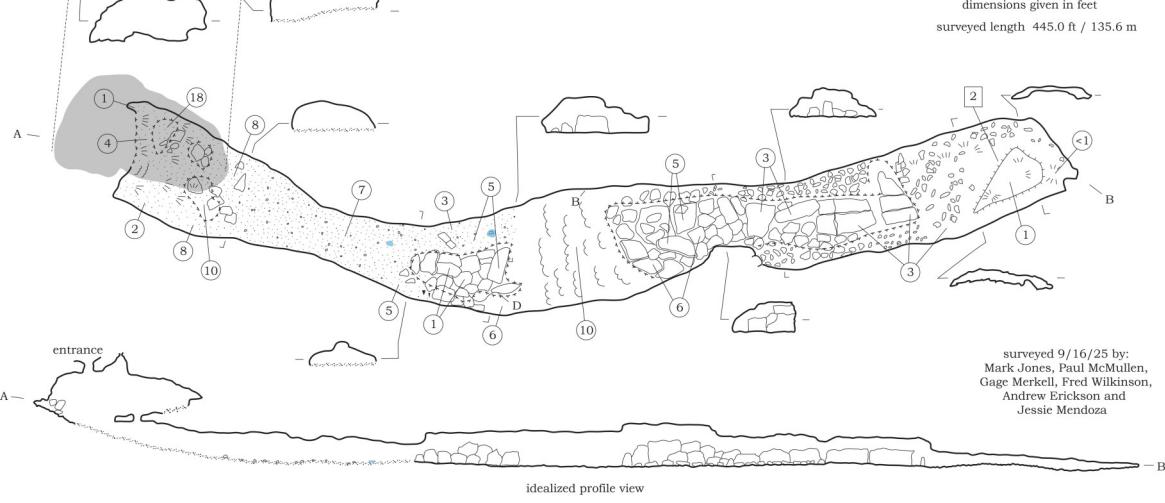


#058

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve  
Butte County, Idaho

Surveyed in cooperation with  
National Park Service and Cave Research Foundation  
Cartography by Ed Klausner 2025

SCALE dimensions given in feet  
surveyed length 445.0 ft / 135.6 m





**Craters of the Moon: clockwise from upper left:** Cody Hamilton rocks Jenny's pack while Ryan Edwards watches; Gage Merkel surrenders!; Ari Mallory in a "comfortable" crawl; Paul McMullen enjoys being on point; Fred Wilkinson in a dusty dry crawl; Ari Mallory in a new discovery. Photos by Mark Jones.



**Craters of the Moon:** clockwise from upper left: An alert Townsend's Big-eared Bat; Delicate lava formations; Lava tube with a rooted ceiling; Frosted deep canyon. Photo by Paul McMullen; Lava roses; Coated ceiling. Photos by Mark Jones except where indicated.

## Ozark Operations Activities, June-October 2025

By: Scott House, with Kayla Sapkota

*The summer was filled with water, as a series of bad storm patterns flooded the Ozarks week after week, cancelling or rerouting a number of trips. In between storms, high temperatures made it difficult to get useful field work done.*

### **OZARK NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAYS**

*CRF Ozarks works with the Ozark National Scenic Riverways (NPS) under a cooperative cave management agreement. Trips usually originate from the NPS/USFS shared field office at Winona.*

#### **July 15, 2025:**

Dan Lamping, Henry Lamping, and Margaret Lamping monitored Buffington Cave off the Jacks Fork. They also looked at Buffington Spring which, owing to the weather pattern, was a gusher. Later they picked up trash along the Alley Spring trails.

#### **July 16, 2025:**

Henry, Dan, Margaret, Rick Haley, Korey Hart (and family) floated from Pulltite to Sinking Creek on the Current River. Along the way, they monitored a couple of caves, or tried to. The entrance to a cave that has blind fish in it was completely clogged with massive beaver dens. Another, unfortunately popular, cave had numbers of humanoids in it and the water was high, as befit the weather.

#### **July 17, 2025:**

A largish group of folks (Dan, Henry, Margaret, Scott House, Korey, Sylvia Hart, and Ethan Hart) monitored several caves around Blue Spring on the Jacks Fork. The weather cooperated.

#### **July 18, 2025:**

The weather did not cooperate but a threat of rain did not stop a large crew (Dan, Henry, Margaret, Scott, the Harts, plus Casie Spencer, Andrew Mayer, Sabrina Morris, and Emily Rounds) from hitting the Current River in canoes and kayaks. Scott, Casie, and Emily surveyed a new cave that was relatively short, while most of the rest surveyed another new cave nearby plus monitored a couple additional caves. After the surveying and monitoring was done, the weather decided to get nasty again, and the last several miles consisted of paddling in a severe thunderstorm with lightning and heavy rain. All survived.

#### **July 19, 2025:**

Andrew, Sabrina, Casie, Emily, and Ben Wolf monitored several caves in the Barn Hollow Natural Area on the upper Jacks Fork.

### **MARK TWAIN NATIONAL FOREST**

*CRF work on Mark Twain National Forest (U.S. Forest Service) is performed through a cooperative agreement covering inventory, survey, monitoring, and gating. The Mark Twain covers 1.5 million acres, and the bulk of it contains caves. Much recent work has been focused on four forest districts: Ava, Houston/Rolla, Willow Springs, and Eleven Point. The old agreement expired in May, slowing the trip schedule down considerably. A further complication was the appearance of a national unauthorized gathering of Rainbow People which is usually a disaster for the Forest Service (cave trips into the area were cancelled.) A new agreement is now in place.*

#### **July 29, 2025:**

Jim Cooley, Peter Schnegelberger, and Josh White attempted to monitor a cave on Eleven Point RD, but were thwarted by road closures relative to the recent Rainbow People unauthorized campout.

#### **July 31, 2025:**

Jim and Peter made it to the cave (via a longish hike) and found the FS had posted a sign at the entrance and there had been no intrusion.

### **MISSOURI DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION**

*CRF and MSS work under a permit to collect survey data on MODoT rights-of-way.*

#### **August 16, 2025:**

Kohl Mitchell and Caleb Mundwiller continued the survey of Lost Boys Cave, Marion County, adding over 300 feet of tight (always) passage to the map.

### **L-A-D FOUNDATION**

*CRF works with L-A-D Foundation and their wholly-owned arm, Pioneer Forest, to help manage caves on their land.*

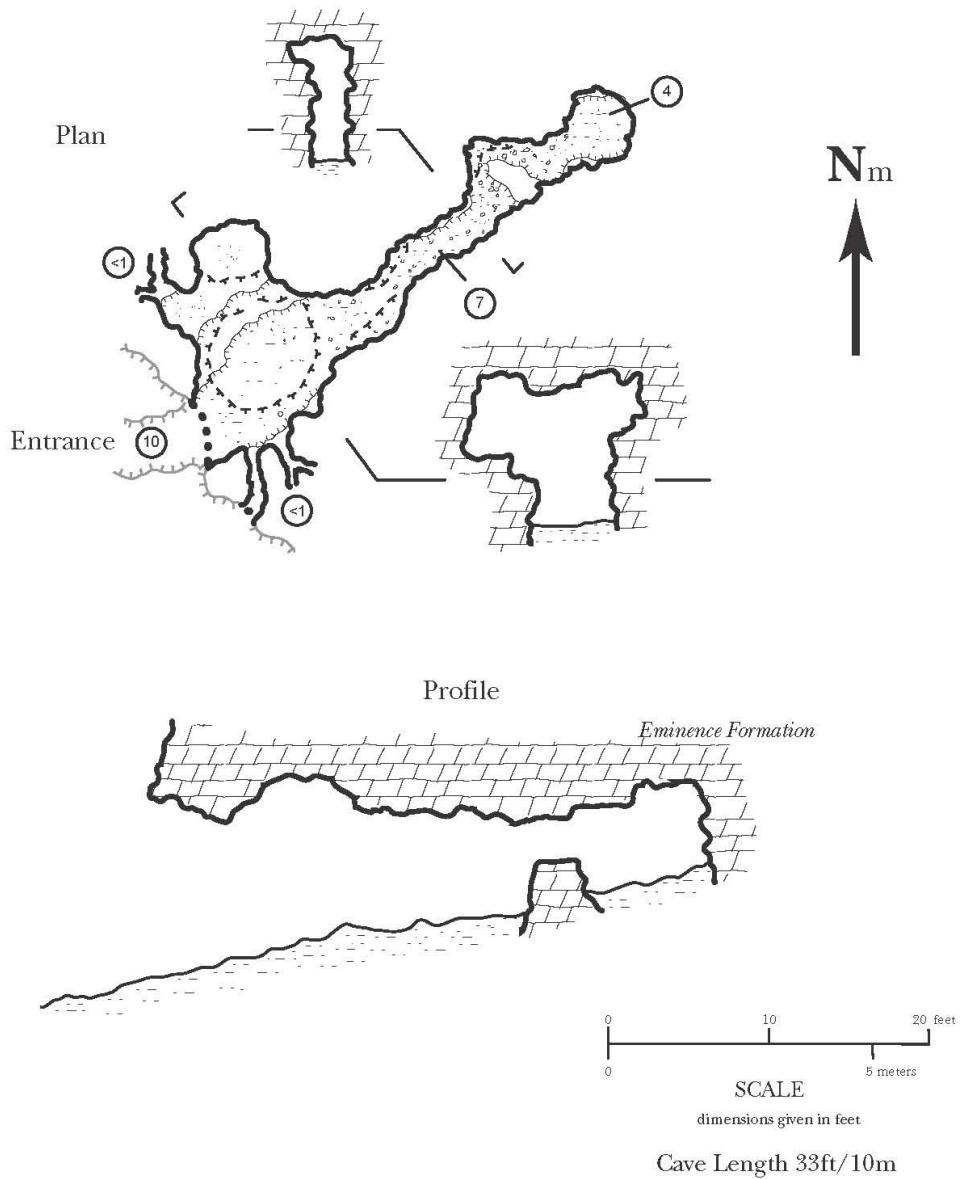
#### **July 13, 2025:**

Dan Lamping, Margaret Lamping, Henry Lamping, Rick Haley, and Elliott Guenther surveyed a couple hundred feet in Lancaster Cave, Texas County. This is an interesting cave, located high in the geologic column and a distance from a major stream.

#### **September 13, 2025:**

After their Powder Mill trip was cancelled due to the likelihood of downpours, Nathan Curran, Chad McCain, Dani Lotz, and Gretchen Asselmeier surveyed upper and lower levels in

**RIVER CANE CAVE**  
Shannon County, Missouri  
SHN-739  
Surveyed 19 July 2025 by  
S. House, C. Spencer, E. Rounds  
of  
CAVE RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
in cooperation with  
Ozark National Scenic Riverways  
L-A-D Foundation  
Cartography by Scott House



Plundered Canyon Cave. Gnarly survey was done and leads are left to be finished.

See elsewhere for trips to monitor caves along the Current River; many of these are L-A-D caves within the boundaries of Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

#### **MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION**

*CRF and MSS work under unfunded permits to collect survey data on MDC lands. Ancillary support comes from CRF and cooperating federal agencies.*

#### **June 28, 2025:**

Jim Cooley, Mike Kovacs, Bill Gee, Peter Schegelberger, Shane McCurdy, and MDC's Katharine Bouska mapped in Chrisco Bank Cave in Shannon County.

#### **July 14, 2025:**

Dan Lamping, Henry Lamping, Margaret Lamping, Rick Haley, and MDC biologists Katherine Bouska and Chloe Smith monitored Cave Hollow Cave and Keyhole Cave in Shannon County.

#### **July 26, 2025:**

Jim Cooley, Mike Kovacs, Candace Kovacs, Peter Schegelberger, Jessica Wilson, and Jerel Waters continued mapping in Chrisco Bank.

#### **August 10, 2025:**

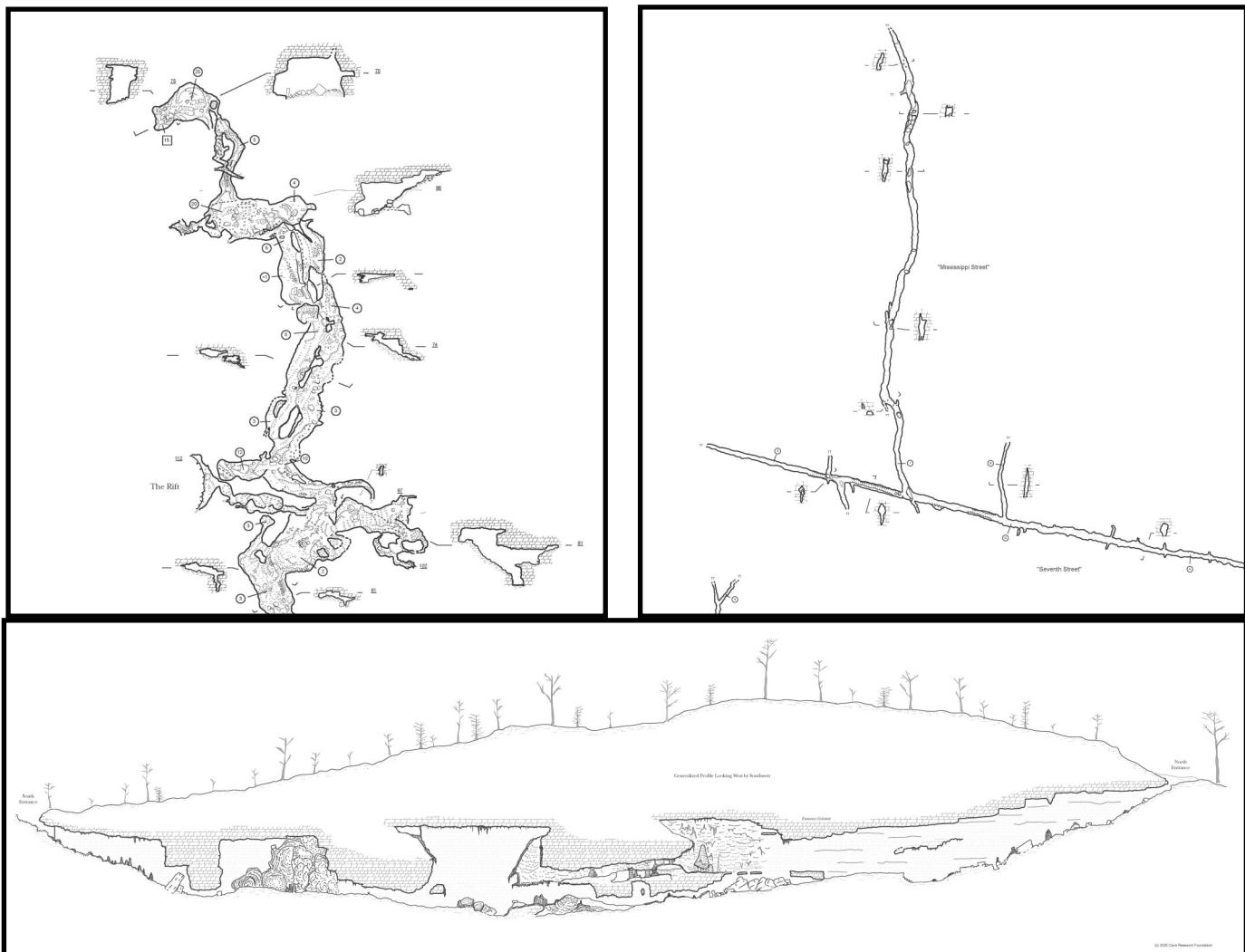
Kohl Mitchell, Jack Rufener, Sean Zimmerman were going to map in wet Spring Cave in Boone County, but the summer rainy weather dissuaded them. Instead, they mapped in nearby Tower Cave, finishing the survey.

#### **September 6, 2025:**

Kohl, Sean, Jerel Waters, and Maria Rodriguez did manage to get into Spring Cave where they mapped more than 800 feet of passage. More trips will be needed to finish this cave.

#### **September 13, 2025:**

Two parties entered Powder Mill Creek Cave. One consisted of Jim Ruedin, Adele Ayers, and MDC biologist Chloe Smith. They searched the first mile of passage for cave life, finding plenty of salamanders. Some gray bats were also in attendance. A second team of Dan Lamping, Spike Crews, Joe Sikorski, Tony



**Ozark cave map crops:** *Upper left: Fisher Cave. Upper right: Lost Boys Cave. Bottom: SHN Martin Cave.*

Schmitt, Kohl Mitchell, and Derik Holtmann monitored the truly named Hellhole Passage. A third party was planned but was sent to a different objective owing to the uncertain weather forecast.

## ELSEWHERE

### **June 20, 2025:**

Nathan Curran and Elliot Englert surveyed in St. Louis County's Heinecke Cave, the 10<sup>th</sup> survey trip into this cave beneath subdivisions. Trash removal included an antique spoon.

### **August 9, 2025:**

Kohl Mitchell and Anthony Duncan did a bio-monitoring trip into Boone County's Rutherford Cave. They reported good numbers of salamanders and other cave life. This was in support of a general cross-Missouri study along the I-70 corridor.

### **September 7, 2025:**

Nathan Curran and Dani Lotz continued the survey in Heinecke Cave, finishing off a couple of leads. Trash removal this time included several vape pens, proof of a close, modern connection to street drains.

## BUFFALO NATIONAL RIVER

Reports by Kayla Sapkota

### **June 21, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Charlotte Boehme, John Davis, and Ben Damgaard mapped 418 ft of clean-up leads in the New Maze section in Fitton Cave. Matt Beeson, Mike Beeson, Bud Beeson, Nathan Burton, and Zachary Burton split up to map 269.1 ft of clean-up leads in the West Crystal Passage section in Fitton Cave.

### **July 19, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Ben Damgaard, Shane O'riley, Kevin Liow, and Christine Saw mapped 342.8 ft of clean-up leads in the New Maze section, and Dillon Frieburger, Charlotte Boehme, and Erik Stinnett mapped 343.4 ft of clean-up leads in the Inverted Bell section, drastically narrowing down what remains to be mapped in Fitton Cave.

### **August 2, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Pradeep Sapkota, John Davis, and Dillon Frieburger mapped 200.1 ft in a stream lead and checked a few other clean-up leads in the Grand Central section of Fitton Cave, while Christine Saw and Kevin Liow tied to previous survey and resurveyed (adding much detail) in the Lloyd's Lead section.

### **August 9, 2025:**

Max White, Ashley Mitchell, Charlotte Boehme, and Sam Pruitt mapped Southwest Shelter and much of Cliff Hollow Shelter Cave, netting 113.6 ft of survey.

### **August 13, 2025:**

Kevin Liow, Trevor Bussard, and Riannon Col-

ton mapped 521 ft in Devil's Den Pit. Max White, Sam Pruitt, Ashley Mitchell, Charlotte Boehme, Perla Romero, Dave Milner, Mollie Ratliff, and Ethan Robbins divided up to map in Cliff Hollow Shelter Cave and Pillar Shelter, surveying 171.9 ft. Kayla Sapkota, Ben Damgaard and John Davis mapped 140.2 ft.

### **October 18, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Claty Barnett, and Aaron Thompson mapped 1,316.8 ft in a mine. John Davis, Katy Baumgardner, and Olivia Clark monitored two mines and three small caves. James Gould, Laney Edwards, Joanna Cooke, Joseph Marin-Suarez, Malachi Hall, and Jolie Holmes monitored and inventoried two other mines, four prospects, and two other cave features.

## ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

### **June 23, 2025:**

Mike Ross, Kayla Sapkota, Aaron Thompson, and Claty Barnett spoke about cave mapping and cave safety as part of a professional development training day for AGFC education/outreach employees.

## ARKANSAS STATE PARKS

### **July 3, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Macy Vogt, and Meghan Gallo met in the afternoon to map a stream-level section of War Eagle Spring Cave at Withrow Spring State Park. With a late start, the intended survey was not completed, but the crew was able to assess changes to the cave and immediate area due to road/bridge construction, which included additional sediment in the stream crawl and a new path to the cave for the most part. We parked across the creek and waded over to the entrance. The constriction was still passable.

## ARKANSAS: PRIVATELY OWNED

### **July 4, 2025:**

Kayla Sapkota, Meghan Gallo, and Derek Thompson visited Onyx Cave, a privately owned show cave in Eureka Springs, to wrap up the survey. The crew netted 123.8 hard-earned feet in a low, very cold stream survey.

### **July 20, 2025:**

Macy Vogt, Kayla Sapkota, Joseph Jordan, and Charlotte Boehme made a return trip to Marble Canyon Cave in Carroll County, AR, to check some places on the working map and sketch a portion of the Nov. 2023 survey. The crew determined that one lead could be enlarged and that it would add footage to the map.

### **August 10, 2025:**

Meghan Gallo, Macy Vogt, and Charlotte Boehme (with permission of the owner) slightly enlarged a section of Marble Canyon Cave and added 158.5 ft of muddy survey to the map. A return trip is needed, as it still goes.



**Ozarks: clockwise from upper left:** After cave relaxation at Winona with (L-R) Spike Crews, Kohl Mitchell, Gretchen Asselmeier, Chad McCain, Nathan Curran, Dani Lotz; After cave relaxation at Winona, part 2, with (L-R) Tony Schmitt, Joe Sikorski, Andrew Mayer, and Derik Holtmann; Cavers in a downpour on the Current River; Margaret Lamping examining delicate speleothems; Dan Lamping's map of Tumbling Creek Cave on display at the Ozark Underground Lab. Why we make maps! Photos by Dan Lamping.